



## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

### Venezuela: Nurses in extreme poverty

Amnesty International launches its "Nurses to Care for You" campaign, which seeks to mobilize civil society solidarity in order to bring about changes in terms of protecting the lives of health professionals and improving the terrible conditions in which nurses are forced to work.

Nurses working in Venezuela's public hospitals are paid wages that condemn them to extreme poverty. Their salaries are no higher than 4 USD per month — in a context marked by the world's highest inflation rate and a complex humanitarian emergency.

*"Venezuelan authorities must take urgent measures to ensure that the nurses' demands are heard. Their work is essential to cope with the pandemic and the humanitarian emergency, so they deserve decent salaries that keep them out of poverty, at least 1.25 USD per day, as established in the international agreements that Venezuela has signed,"* said Marcos Gómez, Director of Amnesty International Venezuela.

The possibility of becoming infected with COVID-19 is very high due to the lack of proper biosafety equipment for individual protection, extremely long working hours, overload due to staff shortages and the daily risk of infecting their families. These are just some of the difficulties faced by professional nurses in Venezuela.

Working conditions in Venezuelan hospitals are inhumane. In most of them, there are water supply shortages, nonfunctioning ventilation systems and not enough cleaning products such as soap and chlorine to sanitize the common areas. As of October, 237 health professionals had died from COVID-19 in the country, according to estimates by civil society organizations.

Union representatives claim that many nurses are experiencing symptoms of bronchitis, bronchopneumonia, pneumonia, and even infected with COVID-19, and cannot afford prescription drugs. They are not granted medication or testing in the hospitals where

they work. Furthermore, they complain that they are often forced to return to their duties if they are asymptomatic and they are not allowed to observe the 14-day isolation period that any positive person for COVID-19 must do.

Amnesty International has received accounts that several nurses have suffered retaliation for defending their rights and demanding improvements in working conditions and pay. Some have also reported acts of violence against them and stigmatization, especially within their community or place of residence as a result of the conditions in which they work.

*"Seven months into the pandemic, it is important that Venezuelan authorities begin to take the lives of these health workers seriously and provide them with a decent salary, law-abiding working conditions, prevention and quality care in the event of infection,"* Gómez said.

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