

COVID-19 patients in the Brazilian Amazon are dying of asphyxiation!

Call for international solidarity

The state of Amazonas, in Brazil, has 4.2 million inhabitants, of which 2.2 million live in its capital, Manaus. In January 2021, it is registered on a daily basis about 5,000 cases and 50 deaths by COVID-19, reaching a mortality rate of 160 deaths/100,000 inhabitants. Amazonas is the land of 120,000 indigenous people, of whom 15,000 were affected and 221 died of COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic.

In the last weeks, the populations of Manaus and other cities in the Amazon have been suffering from the lack of medicinal oxygen in hospitals. Seriously unwell COVID-19 patients are preferring to stay at home rather than go to health services where they will not have proper medical assistance¹.

This dire situation, unfortunately, is not due to any unpredictable event, but to the ineptitude, disdain and neglect of the federal, state and municipal governments. Even though aware of the scarcity of oxygen in hospitals, they have done nothing to prevent the collapse².

Now, the governments of neighbouring states³ and Venezuela⁴ are trying to help the people of the Amazon, by offering oxygen supply and hospital spaces for patients who can be transferred.

Recently, the United Nations⁵ sent technical experts and medical supplies to Manaus, which represents an important support.

However, as the humanitarian crisis persists, the World Federation of Public Health Associations:

1. Draws the attention of the international community, governments and non-governmental organizations to this crisis
2. Calls for support for the population and health professionals of the Amazon region in facing the pandemic
3. Urgently calls for independent international observers from of World Health Organization, the Pan American Health Organization and the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in the state capital of the Amazon.

¹ <https://noticias.uol.com.br/ultimas-noticias/afp/2021/01/18/a-busca-desesperada-por-oxigenio-em-manaus-para-salvar-pacientes-em-casa.htm>

² <https://g1.globo.com/am/amazonas/noticia/2021/01/19/forca-nacional-do-sus-detectou-falta-de-oxigenio-em-manaus-antes-do-colapso.ghtml>

³ <https://g1.globo.com/df/distrito-federal/noticia/2021/01/14/hospital-de-brasilia-recebe-pacientes-com-covid-19-vindos-de-manaus.ghtml>

⁴ <https://www.moneytimes.com.br/oxigenio-da-venezuela-chega-a-manaus-para-ajudar-a-conter-crise-da-covid-19/>

⁵ <https://news.un.org/pt/story/2021/01/1739052>