Press kit

Women and Babies at Risk in Venezuela: The Maternidad Concepción Palacios Crisis in Figures and Stories

Figures:

It is important to point out that there are no official figures from the Venezuelan government. This lack of access to figures and information is in itself a violation of rights, since access to information is a fundamental right of citizens. The figures below are estimates gathered by the organizations during the investigation carried out in preparation for our request for precautionary measures.

- Between January and October 2018, 265 newborn babies died at Maternidad Concepción Palacios due to lack of access to healthcare services.
- In 2018, 15 women died at Maternidad Concepción Palacios from complications during childbirth.
- In late 2017, healthcare personnel reported that 32 women contracted infections at the hospital in one month.
- Maternidad Concepción Palacios used to tend to 1200 women per month, but it is currently operating at half capacity due to lack of permanent medical staff, particularly anesthesiologists. Many more women are at risk as well, as other healthcare facilities throughout the country are facing similar situations.
- Maternal deaths in Venezuela increased by 65% between 2015 and 2016, according to the most recent figures released by the government.

Increase in Maternal Deaths

In 2018, 15 women died due to the current inadequate state of the hospital. These deaths were preventable, but medical staff lacks the resources necessary to assist women and save their lives. Patients at the hospital are suffering complications before giving birth, including infections, high blood pressure, and hemorrhaging, the top three causes of maternal death. There are no antibiotics at the hospital, and patients cannot afford to purchase their own. Similarly, there are no blood pressure medications. And women suffering from malnutrition and anemia can die in seconds from hemorrhaging.

Emergency Room and Delivery Rooms in Poor Condition

In late 2017, medical staff at Maternidad Concepción Palacios publicly reported that 32 women contracted infections at the hospital in one month. Due to the lack of water, biological material
gathers and soon becomes infested with flies and worms. This dangerous situation has been observed on stretchers in the emergency room and delivery rooms.

No Care for Complications During Childbirth

While labor may take place without complications, there is always some risk. Maternidad Concepción Palacios only admits women who are already in labor. If a patient’s placenta is not expelled, or if she suffers from heavy bleeding, the hospital is not equipped to perform the appropriate operations. It also has a shortage of anesthesiologists and a lack of feminine hygiene products and sterilization equipment, so it must depend on support from other hospitals. Ambulance services are essentially nonexistent. The hospital’s sole ambulance is broken down and has been stripped for parts, placing women and children who must be transferred to other facilities at risk.

Medical Personnel with their Hands Tied
A woman suffering from placenta previa, a condition in which the placenta attaches near the cervical opening, was bleeding and needed an emergency caesarean section. Due to the lack of anesthesiologists at Maternidad Concepción Palacios, doctors were forced to refer her to another healthcare facility, where she eventually died. This incident illustrates how the lack of resources is affecting the work of medical staff and placing women at risk of dying from preventable causes. Medical professionals did everything they could to save her life, but as they did not even have basic supplies such as gauze, their efforts were inadequate.

A Hospital without Blood

The hospital’s blood bank has serious deficiencies. Crammed into a small room in one of the hospital’s oldest and most dilapidated buildings, it is severely understaffed. The service is unavailable most of the time. When donations are needed, the hospital must ask the Capital District’s municipal blood bank. The difficulty in getting blood to patients who need it has led to deaths. For example, in August 2018, a patient who needed a hysterectomy after her caesarean section died because the blood she needed to survive was not available.
About the organizations that requested precautionary measures for the Maternidad Concepción Palacios hospital in Venezuela before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

**Women’s Link Worldwide** is an international human rights organization that uses the power of the law to promote social change that advances the rights of women and girls, particularly those who face multiple forms of discrimination.
Twitter: @womenslink

**Equivalencias en Acción** is a coalition of four Venezuelan human rights organizations: CEPAZ, FREYA, Avesa, and Mujeres en Línea.
Twitter: @EnEquivalencia

**CEPAZ** is a non-profit organization that promotes and advocates for democratic values, human rights, and a culture of peace in Venezuela.
Twitter: @_CEPAZ

**Mujeres en Línea** is an NGO dedicated to research and activism on issues related to equality, women, and communication.
Twitter: @EllasEnLinea

**Avesa** is an NGO with 34 years of experience advocating for sexual and reproductive rights and women’s rights.
Twitter: @AVESA_ONG_VZLA

**Freya** is an advocacy organization specializing in the comprehensive development of projects and programs to promote equality by empowering women and supporting public and private initiatives to promote equality and equity in order to create more just and egalitarian societies.
Twitter: @FreyaCH