

Venezuela watchdog urges access to medicine in crisis

April 6 2016

Venezuela's state ombudsman urged the government Tuesday to speed production of basic medicines in an economic crisis that has caused severe shortages.

"The allocation and delivery of currency for acquiring the [raw materials](#) and supplies for manufacturing medicines should be speeded up," the ombudsman, Tarek William Saab, told the legislature.

Venezuelans are suffering shortages of basic foods and supplies. The fall in [oil prices](#) has slashed the government's main source of revenue.

Saab said the government should "import only that which it is not possible to produce in Venezuela."

Opposition lawmakers who control the legislature were preparing on Tuesday night to pass what they called a law "to tackle the humanitarian health crisis."

Allies of socialist President Nicolas Maduro have vowed to resist however, branding it a ploy to discredit the government.

The opposition vowed to find legal means to drive Maduro from office after it took control of the legislature in January.

Maduro has so far used the courts to resist them and has passed emergency economic measures of his own.

On Monday, he signed an agreement to import medicines from his ally Cuba.

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Citation: Venezuela watchdog urges access to medicine in crisis (2016, April 6) retrieved 25 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-04-venezuela-watchdog-urges-access-medicine.html>

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