

More than 500 Venezuelan healthcare workers have died during pandemic: NGO

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More than 500 health workers have died in Venezuela since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, a nongovernmental organization said Monday.

"The number of deaths in the [health sector](#) with criteria for COVID-19 is accelerating. Information is received of 14 new deaths to reach 513," Medicos Unidos de Venezuela said on Twitter.

Since the first cases were reported in March 2020, health care unions and NGOs have decried precarious conditions in [public hospitals](#) and limited access to [personal protective equipment](#) for treating infected patients.

Even before the pandemic, the Venezuelan healthcare system and facilities were short of supplies and equipment due to a prolonged [economic crisis](#) in the former oil power, which is now in its eighth year of recession.

Medico Unidos de Venezuela said in their tweet, which was accompanied by a photo of a health worker's funeral, that they are often told they have to buy supplies that have run out and sometimes have to resort to asking for medicines on social media.

President Nicolas Maduro's administration has reported 192,498 cases of the coronavirus with 2,065 deaths thus far. But NGOs and health organizations say the official figures hide a much worse reality in the country of about 30 million inhabitants.

In early March, Maduro warned about the spread of the more infectious Brazilian variant of the virus, which he blames for a second wave of COVID-19 that has strained public and private healthcare facilities beyond capacity.

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