

# Manaus are us: the terrible health crisis in the heart of Amazonia

The public health crisis in the city of Manaus, in the heart of the Brazilian Amazon, is the most serious in the country since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic and one of the most desperate situations on the planet. The lack of hospital oxygen has led patients to death through asphyxiation, and at the moment this text is written there are not enough stocks of oxygen guaranteed even for newborn babies, moving and mobilizing support from other states.

Reports coming from the city are terrible, with health professionals ventilating patients manually and having to choose the destination of oxygen among critically ill patients. At the Getúlio Vargas University Hospital, a doctor made a shocking report about the situation: "Colleagues lost patients in the ICU because of lack of oxygen. They still tried to ventilate manually, but it was even to try until the last resort, because it is unfeasible to maintain this for a long time. It tires a lot, you have to take turns with the professionals. They called residents to help, to take turns in manual ventilation. The will is to cry all the time. You see the patient dying in front of you and you can't do anything. It is like you see yourself in a war and have no weapons to fight "<sup>1</sup>.

The drama lived in Manaus is unfortunately not a surprise to anyone. The capital of the immense state of Amazonas had already been one of the most impacted cities at the beginning of the pandemic, experiencing the collapse of the health system in an acute manner. Situated in the middle of the Amazon rainforest, Manaus faces logistical difficulties that require great preparation and forecasting of stocks in

situations like this. There are already reports of irregular trade of oxygen sold above price to individuals, worsening a situation where literally the immediate profit is worth more than the lives of the sick people.

The Bolsonaro government has direct responsibility for this situation. Not only because of the lack of foresight and technical preparation to deal with this situation, but because it represents the main promoter of negationist ideas in the country. At the beginning of the pandemic, the new coronavirus was called a "little flu" by the president, who continued in the opposite direction, criticizing the measures of social isolation and putting in doubt the effectiveness of the vaccines (mainly from Coronavac, which the health agencies have just authorized) The proximity with the posture of former U.S. President Donald Trump is evident is another example of a copy made by Bolsonaro of the absurd policies of his international mentor.

His position on the importance of generating profit above the need for prevention measures has placed Bolsonaro as one of the main defenders of relaxation of isolation measures, ending with emergency aid of little more than US\$ 100 and forcing hundreds of thousands of workers to return to the streets.

The case of Manaus is also emblematic because weeks ago there were demonstrations stimulated by the owners of local businesses pressuring the state government to diminish the rules of social distancing before the end-of-year parties. These actions, supported by the Bolsonaro government, were directly responsible for the crisis in the city today in which two-thirds of the population voted for the president in the last elections.

While several countries are celebrating the beginning of vaccination against Covid 19, Brazil mourns its deaths and occupies the shameful second position in the total number of deaths on the planet. And even though the country has the

largest vaccination system in the world – the fruit of a public health system, the SUS – the extreme-right president and his government are the main responsible for this planned tragedy. Only by overthrowing Bolsonaro will we change this situation.

[1https://www.em.com.br/app/noticia/nacional/2021/01/14/interna\\_nacional,1229127/manaus-oxigenio-acaba-e-pacientes-morrem-asfixiados.shtml](https://www.em.com.br/app/noticia/nacional/2021/01/14/interna_nacional,1229127/manaus-oxigenio-acaba-e-pacientes-morrem-asfixiados.shtml)