

Venezuela: Escalation of attacks against organisations doing humanitarian work

On 15 February 2019 the headquarters of **Fundación Mavid** was the target of an illegal raid by State authorities, and three of its members were subsequently brought for questioning at the Corps of Scientific, Penal and Criminal Investigations (CICPC). Fundación Mavid reported that the authorities confiscated antiretroviral drugs and milk formulas for pregnant mothers and children living with HIV/AIDS, as well as other equipment and internal documents.

Fundación Manos Amigas por la Vida - [Fundación Mavid](#) (Mavid Foundation) is a non-profit organization founded in 2003 in Carabobo state, dedicated to defending the rights of People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). Composed mostly of PLWHA, their family members, and health personnel, Fundación Mavid seeks to improve the lives of PLWHA through workshops and self-support groups, as well as prevention and other support activities – including provision of medicines.

On 15 February 2019, 11 officials of the Corps of Scientific, Penal and Criminal Investigations (CICPC) broke into the headquarters of Fundación Mavid in Valencia, Carabobo. The officials entered the office, which had been locked, and took the donations of antiretroviral drugs and milk formulas, as well as computers and documents of the organization.

Upon hearing of the raid, human rights defenders Jonathan Mendoza and Manuel Armas, treasurer and secretary of Fundación Mavid, went to the premises. The officials then demanded that they accompany them to the CICPC headquarters for questioning. Human rights defender Wilmer Álvarez, founding vice president of Fundación Mavid, subsequently went to the CICPC voluntarily. The three human rights defenders were held for 7 hours. No search order was presented by the officials, nor any document that legally permitted the confiscation of products and equipment.

Front Line Defenders condemns the attack against Fundación Mavid and remains concerned at the possibility of further retaliation against its members. The illegal office raid and the subsequent questioning carried out against its members set a dangerous precedent in the context of Venezuela's complex humanitarian emergency. Following the attacks against Fundación Mavid, Front Line Defenders received information of harassment against the presidents of two other organisations providing support to PLWHA.

Front Line Defenders expresses further concern that these acts are intended to have an intimidating effect on the community of human rights defenders in Venezuela, particularly those who continue to denounce the humanitarian emergency and who promote humanitarian aid.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Venezuela to:

1. Stop all acts of harassment against human rights defenders and organisations providing humanitarian support, in particular those working with PLWHA;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of

all members of Fundación Mavid, in coordination with them;

3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Venezuela are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.