



CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES
FEDERATIVE REPUBLIC OF BRAZIL

Brasília, April 16, 2020

Letter number 160/2020

Re: Brazil's president fires Minister of Health for following WHO's guidelines and deepens his attacks against the prevention and control of the novel coronavirus

Ref: Letter 83/2020 about Mr. Jair Bolsonaro's actions against the prevention and control of the novel coronavirus

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

World Health Organization Director-General
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Mr. Dainius Puras

Special Rapporteur on the right to health
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Dear Dr. Ghebreyesus and Mr. Puras,

We wrote to you a month ago for the first time, reporting some of Jair Bolsonaro's grave actions against the prevention and control of the novel coronavirus (Letter 83/2020). Unfortunately, since then, Brazil's president has only deepened his disagreement with international and national health authorities regarding this pandemic. Today, on a reckless attempt to end needed social-distancing and quarantine measures in the country, Mr. Bolsonaro decided to fire his own Minister of Health, Dr. Luiz Henrique Mandetta.

The dismissal comes after several clashes between the president and his minister, since Mr. Bolsonaro systematically advocates for the end of self-isolation and quarantine measures and has been arguing that business in the country should go back to normal. According to Mr. Bolsonaro, the use of chloroquine would be enough to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic, and only older people should worry about it. Dr. Mandetta, in the other hand, has been following the WHO's guidelines.

Dr. Mandetta's dismissal comes in dangerous moment. According to official data from today, there are 1,924 deaths by Covid-19 and 30,425 confirmed cases in Brazil. However, as Dr. Mandetta himself has admitted, due to underreporting this numbers are far from the reality: independent studies by prestigious universities and research centers point to 12 to 15 times more cases in the country. Still, according to Dr. Mandetta, Brazil is still to face its Covid-19 peak, which should happen between May and June.

As we have reported before, Mr. Bolsonaro has been challenging self-isolation and quarantine measures himself, and he has been publicly attacking governors and mayors who are implementing such measures (Ref. Letter 150/2020). Now, his decision to fire Dr. Mandetta threatens the continuity of the ongoing public policies. It also sends a clear message to the international community on his decision to not follow the WHO's guidelines and neither to learn from other international experiences. Mr. Bolsonaro treats not only millions of Brazilian lives, but the whole international effort to control this pandemic.

As we have stressed before, Mr. Bolsonaro's actions disrespect Brazil's obligations under the WHO's Constitution, the International Health Regulations (IHR) and the general spirit of global cooperation against pandemic diseases. Once more, we urge you to request from the Brazilian Permanent Mission to the UN in Geneva and from Brazil's new Ministry of Health explanations on Mr. Bolsonaro's actions towards this pandemic. Again, we ask that you publicly disapprove Mr. Bolsonaro's actions and statements, calling on him to act responsibly and in accordance to the guidance of the WHO and fulfilling Brazil's international obligations.

Yours sincerely,



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