

# *Guayaquil begins burials of 1,000 bodies*

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Quito, April 9 (RHC)-- In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ecuador's Joint Task Force in Guayaquil -- the country's second-largest city -- is working on the burial process for nearly 1,000 bodies that remain in morgues and the strengthening of medical infrastructure with two new hospitals.

Ecuadorian authorities announced that the objective of the Task Force is to bury about 100 bodies a day, which are being held in the small morgues of hospitals and in seven refrigerated containers installed in the city in recent days.

Last week in Guayaquil, the capital of the Ecuadorian province most affected by COVID-19, more than 1,300 bodies were collected from homes and hospitals, and some were collected by private funeral homes. This province alone has recorded 2,706 cases, 67.7 percent of the total cases in the country (3,995, according to the latest report), and deaths amounted to 138, 62.7 percent of the entire country (220). Although there are another 182 deaths for which the causes are unconfirmed, they appeared to be caused by the virus.

Ecuadorian Health Minister Juan Carlos Zevallos predicted that in the next few days the curve of coronavirus cases in Guayaquil would "flatten," although he warned that "hard days" still lie ahead.

According to different health spokespersons, "417" to "more than 1,600" hospital staff have suffered or are affected with symptoms of the coronavirus in Ecuador, some confirmed and others not.

In the face of a seemingly out of control death toll (the authorities have come to speak of between 2,500 and 3,500), the Guayaquil Mayor's Office has announced that two new cemeteries will be built.

"There will be 12 hectares in total and there will be around 12,000 graves between the two. Both will be free of charge and will become graveyards in honor of those who passed away during this tragedy so that all their loved ones can honor them," said the mayor.

The first graves will be available from next week in Suburbio cemetery, according to Maria Lorena Apolo, municipal adviser. "This cemetery already had the structural plans and have been adapted to proceed with the construction system," said the official.

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