

Two million people worldwide have died of COVID-19

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The grim milestone comes as countries around the globe battle rising infections.

Geneva, January 15 (RHC)-- The global death toll from COVID-19 has now crossed two million. The landmark was reached on Friday amid a vaccine roll-out so immense but so uneven that in some countries there is real hope of vanquishing the outbreak, while in other parts of the world, it seems a far-off dream.

The numbing figure was crossed just more than a year after the coronavirus was first detected in the Chinese city of Wuhan. The number of dead, compiled by Johns Hopkins University, is about equal to the population of Brussels, Mecca, Minsk or Vienna.

More than 93,418,283 cases of the virus have been confirmed worldwide since the start of the pandemic, according to Johns Hopkins University. Europe is the continent where the health crisis has proved most deadly, with 650,560 deaths to date.

Latin America and the Caribbean have recorded 542,410 deaths, while the United States and Canada have counted 407,090.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for global solidarity in tackling the pandemic as he marked the “heart-wrenching” milestone. “Sadly, the deadly impact of the pandemic has been made worse by the absence of a global coordinated effort,” he said in a video.

In wealthy countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, Israel, Canada and Germany, millions of citizens have already been given some measure of protection with at least one dose of a vaccine developed with revolutionary speed and quickly authorized for use.

But elsewhere, immunisation drives have barely gotten off the ground. Many experts are predicting another year of loss and hardship in places like Iran, India, Mexico and Brazil, which together account for about a quarter of the world’s deaths.

“As a country, as a society, as citizens, we haven’t understood,” lamented Israel Gomez, a Mexico City paramedic who spent months shuttling COVID-19 patients around by ambulance, desperately looking for vacant hospital beds. “We have not understood that this is not a game, that this really exists.”

Mexico, a country of 130 million people that has suffered mightily from the virus, has received just 500,000 doses of a vaccine and has put barely half of those into the arms of healthcare workers.

In the U.S., despite early delays, hundreds of thousands of people are rolling up their sleeves every day, where the virus has killed about 390,000, the highest toll of any country. COVAX, an UN-backed project to supply shots to developing parts of the world, has found itself short of vaccine, money and logistical help.

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