

U.S. surpasses 500,000 COVID deaths



A makeshift morgue in the United States.

New York, February 22 (RHC)-- More than 500,000 people in the United States with coronavirus have died, according to Johns Hopkins University data, the highest death toll by far of any country in the world.

The country reached the harrowing tally on Monday, nearly one year after the first known death was reported in the state of California.

U.S. President Joe Biden held a moment of silence at the White House on Monday evening. He noted that "more Americans who have died in a single year of this pandemic than in World War I, World War II, and the Vietnam War combined."

In recent weeks, COVID-19 infection rates have started to drop as the Biden administration ramps up vaccinations and puts more public health restrictions in place to try to stem the spread of the virus.

But on Sunday, Dr Anthony Fauci, the country's top infectious disease expert, said while case numbers are decreasing rapidly from a recent peak, Americans need to remain cautious as the U.S. has not vaccinated enough people to get to herd immunity yet.

Dr Anthony Fauci said on Sunday that the U.S. hitting the 500,000 deaths mark is "almost unbelievable." He noted: "We haven't seen anything even close to this for well over 100 years, since the 1918 pandemic of influenza. It's something that is stunning when you look at the numbers."

In an interview with NBC's Meet the Press program, Fauci said: "The slope that's coming down is really terrific – it's very steep and it's coming down very, very quickly. But we are still at a level that's very high," he said. "The baseline of daily infections is still very, very high ... We want to get that baseline really, really, really low before we start thinking that we're out of the woods."

U.S. legislators from both the Republican and Democratic parties will hold a moment of silence in Congress on Tuesday to mark the sombre tally of 500,000 coronavirus-related deaths. Biden has pledged to take a more aggressive approach to get the pandemic under control than his predecessor, Donald Trump, who downplayed the threat of the virus and the need to enact strict public health guidelines.

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