

Peru extends COVID state of emergency until end of August



A patient sits on the bed at the COVID-19 ward at the Honorio Delgado Hospital in Arequipa, Peru, on June 18, 2021 [Diego Ramos/AFP]

Lima, July 12 (RHC)-- Peru has extended until the end of August a coronavirus-related state of emergency that allows the government to impose restrictions in an effort to stem infections.

Interim President Francisco Sagasti and his government's resolution on Sunday extended the order, which was expected to be lifted on July 31, until the end of next month. That means that restrictions including a nighttime curfew in place since March last year would continue.

Peru has struggled to contain surging coronavirus cases and deaths in recent months, with the country recording more than 2.07 million infections and more than 193,000 deaths since the pandemic began, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

"Almost all Peruvians know someone who has died from COVID," Cesar Carcamo, an epidemiologist at Cayetano Heredia University, Peru's leading medical school, told Al Jazeera in May. At the end of that month, the country adjusted its coronavirus death toll, giving it the highest fatality rate per capita in the world.

The government organised a 36-hour coronavirus vaccine drive during the weekend in an effort to get Peruvians fully inoculated, and hundreds of people queued in the capital, Lima, to get jabs. "The vaccine protects us but also the vaccine will allow us to progressively continue to resume activities that we haven't been able to do for more than a year since we've been taking care of ourselves during the pandemic," said Violeta Bermudez, president of the council of ministers.

Local resident Raul Figueroa said he felt better with two doses of the vaccine. "You can work peacefully and [our personal] economy [can get] a little better" once fully vaccinated, Figueroa said. "Because economically the poorest people are suffering, not the rich people, the poorest people [are suffering]."

Peru remains gripped by political uncertainty as the country's electoral body has yet to officially confirm the results of hotly contested presidential elections last month. Leftist teachers' union leader Pedro Castillo won 50.12 percent of the vote – some 44,000 more than his rival, right-wing Keiko Fujimori.

But Fujimori, the daughter of former President Alberto Fujimori, has insisted without evidence that the polls were marred by fraud. She challenged thousands of ballots, which are currently being reviewed by an electoral jury. The outcome of that review is expected in the coming days.

International observers have said no serious irregularities took place during the election.

In a Trump-like response, Fujimori told her supporters on Saturday that "we will not accept" what she described as "fraud." "Throughout these weeks we have seen so many allegations of irregularities and they want to hastily release a result," she told a meeting in Lima.

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