

Bolsonaro suggests Brazilians are naturally immune to COVID-19



Brasilia, March 28 (RHC)-- Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has suggested -- without a single shred of evidence -- that Brazilians may have a natural immunity to COVID-19, while promoting an advertising campaign against social distancing measures to fight the new coronavirus.

Bolsonaro, speaking with reporters at a news conference, said he didn't think the outbreak would get as bad in the country as it has in the United States, citing anecdotal evidence on the health of Brazilians.

"I don't think it will reach that point. Especially because Brazilians have to be studied," Bolsonaro said, according to the TV Globo. "They don't get anything. You see the guy jumping into the sewer there, going out, diving, right? And nothing happens to him."

"I think a lot of people have already been infected in Brazil, a few weeks or months ago, and already have the antibodies that help them not to proliferate it (the virus)," he said.

On Friday, confirmed COVID-19 cases in Brazil jumped to 3,417 from 1,891 on Monday, as related deaths climbed to 92, according to the Health Ministry. Meanwhile, Bolsonaro has suggested the economic costs of lockdowns are more deadly.

He also launched a television ad called "#BrazilCannotStop," featuring a slogan similar to a campaign in Milan before deaths in Italy soared - shows scenes of crowded classrooms and street markets. "For the neighborhood salesmen, for the shop owners in city centers, for domestic employees, for millions of Brazilians, Brazil cannot stop," the ad says.

Defying public health experts, Bolsonaro has argued for reopening schools and putting Brazilians back to work, scoffing at "hysteria" surrounding the virus he calls "a little flu."

Bolsonaro has also been criticized by many within Brazil for downplaying the crisis of the pandemic. In another speech earlier this week, he urged his country's mayors and governors to relax coronavirus restrictions, so that the economy could "get back to normal."

He also ignored medical advice and broke self-isolation last week to greet thousands of supporters during a rally that was also criticized by many Brazilians.

Meanwhile, Bolsonaro's popularity has slipped as opinion polls show most Brazilians siding with governors. Many people across the country bang pots and pans in their windows nightly in protest.

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