

Ecuadoreans wait for patients to die to get their beds



Quito, April 10 (RHC)-- In Guayaquil, Ecuador, shortages of beds, drugs, ventilators and protective gear have seen medical staff fighting a losing battle against COVID-19, a local doctor told RT, calling on the international community to intervene.

Located some 260 miles south of the capital, Quito, the city has borne the brunt of the coronavirus outbreak in the Andean country, which has reported 4,450 cases and 242 deaths. Nearly 70 percent of the confirmed cases come from Guayas province, home to Guayaquil -- the nation's largest city and main port.

Chilling images of bodies piling up on the streets, with the city's mortuaries overcrowded and cemeteries quickly running out of burial space, have made international headlines. However, those on the frontline are discouraged from speaking up.

RT spoke to a doctor, who requested anonymity fearing he could be fired for breaking the silence on what has turned into a national catastrophe. "We observe a shortage in all drug stores, both private and controlled by the state... We have hospitals where there are not enough beds, where there are no ventilators which are critical for saving lives."

The lack of supplies, hospital capacity as well as essential protective equipment means that doctors have to make an impossible choice, effectively waiting for severely ill patients to die, he said. It's with deep sorrow I must say that in many cases we have to wait until one patient dies, so another person could have his bed and a ventilator.

The fight against COVID-19 takes a heavy toll on medical professionals, who have to treat patients despite risking their own lives without adequate protection. According to the most recent report by Guayas College of Nurses, seven nurses have succumbed to the disease, while 147 others tested positive.

These numbers, the doctor said, are a huge understatement. "More than 40 medical workers have died during the pandemic: doctors and nurses. The data has been kept hidden from the public eye." Here, he said, it's very important to understand that medical staff cannot work in these conditions.

The lack of protective equipment is so overwhelming that it forced a closure of one of the hospitals in the city, according to the doctor. With the way the situation is developing right now, there is no light at the end of the tunnel, and it is about to get even worse when scores of bodies start to decay right on the streets, he warned.

It will cause the viral pandemic to take a turn [for] the worse due to [the emergence of] other diseases caused by the decomposition of bodies. As the government of President Lenin Moreno fails to reverse the tide -- its latest measures being to build an emergency cemetery and begin to pick up some of corpses that have been stored in giant refrigerated trucks -- the doctor said the Pan American Health Organization and the World Health Organization (WHO) need to step up to the plate.

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