

# *COVID-19 outbreak reported in Bolivia's largest prison*

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Brasilia, May 18 (RHC)-- Authorities from the Santa Cruz department in eastern Bolivia confirmed an outbreak of coronavirus in the Palmasola prison over the weekend, reporting that 25 inmates tested positive for the disease.

"A total of 25 people deprived of liberty have tested positive for COVID-19. Having an epidemiological outbreak inside the Palmasola prison, we are going to establish two isolation centers: one for suspects and the other for people who have tested positive" Vladimir Peña, secretary of the Santa Cruz Governorate, told the press.

Peña indicated that the medical brigades treated 172 prisoners at the prison and 16 were hospitalized this Saturday. The second inmate was also reported killed in prison from COVID-19, after the first detainee died last week from the virus.

The official added that the regional government asked the Judiciary to speed up the pardon and amnesty procedures "to be able to remove from the prison those who are in groups at risk" of contracting coronavirus.

"Prisons are a time bomb," said Deputy Minister of Citizen Security, Wilson Santamaría, after noting that efforts are being accelerated to decongest prisons.

Earlier this week, hundreds of prisoners in Palmasola protested to demand action against the coronavirus after learning that three of them had died in recent days, probably from the virus. With a capacity for 1,700 detainees, the Palmasola prison houses some 7,000, mostly without sentence.

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