

Bolsonaro again refuses lockdown as Brazil COVID crisis drags on

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Brasilia, April 8 (RHC)-- Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has reiterated that he has no plans to order a national lockdown, one day after the nation saw its highest number of coronavirus deaths in 24 hours.

Brazil's Health Ministry registered 3,829 deaths on Wednesday, slightly lower than 4,195 fatalities from the previous day -- a grim national record.

"We're not going to accept this politics of stay home and shut everything down," said Bolsonaro during a speech in the city of Chapeco, resisting mounting pressure on his government to account for its handling

of the surging pandemic. “There will be no national lockdown,” he said.

Bolsonaro, a COVID-19 sceptic who has downplayed the threat of the virus, has remained defiant in the face of public health experts who have increasingly voiced the need to implement strict coronavirus curbs to address the crisis.

More than 336,000 people have died from COVID-19 in Brazil so far, according to a Johns Hopkins University tally, and projections show that fatalities will continue to climb if nothing is done to stem the spread of the virus.

In response to the growing number of deaths from the virus, Sao Paulo, Brazil's largest city, announced it would begin opening about 600 new graves a day amid the surge in coronavirus fatalities, well beyond the record of 426 daily burials on March 30th.

The city is also preparing plans for a “vertical cemetery” -- a crypt with 26,000 drawer-like graves that can be built in 90 days once approved.

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