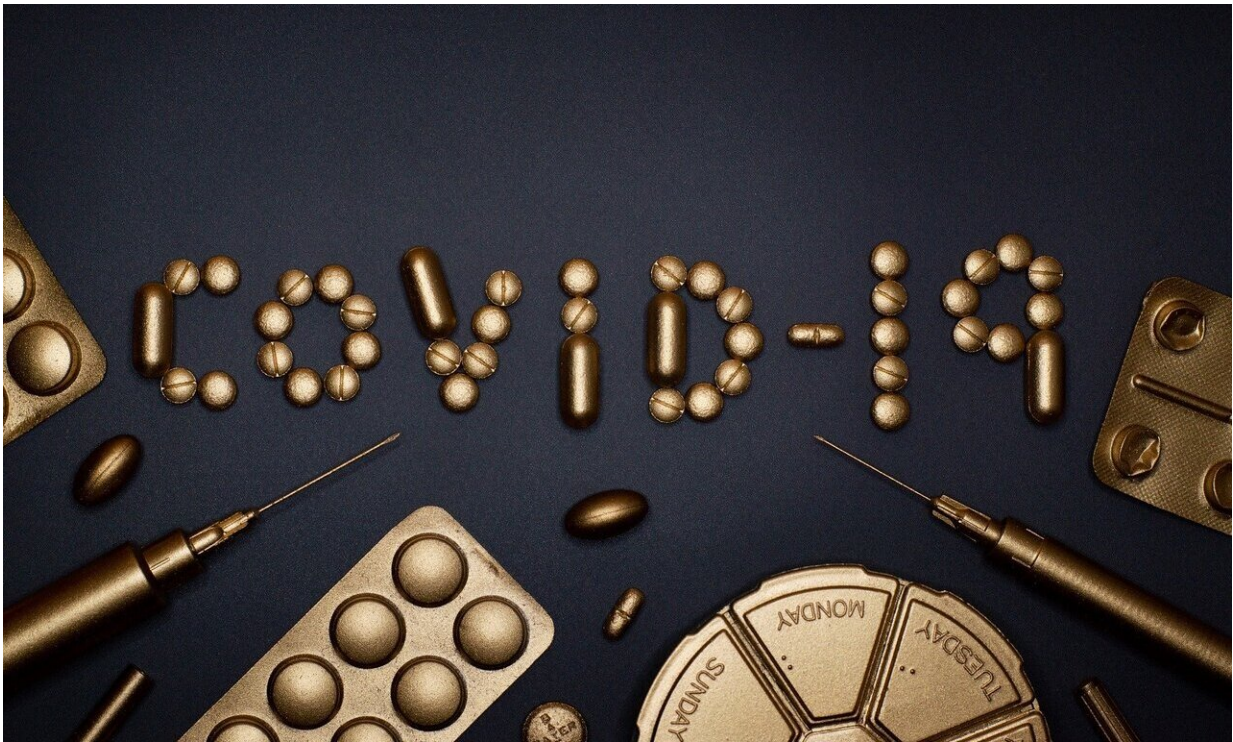


# South America COVID situation turning in 'wrong direction': WHO

June 2 2021

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The WHO voiced deep concern on Tuesday at the COVID-19 situation in South America, warning that outbreaks in the already hard-hit region were once again worsening.

The World Health Organization's emergencies chief Michael Ryan said

eight of the 10 countries reporting the coronavirus highest mortality rates in the last week were in the Americas.

"The situation in South America right now remains of very high concern," he told reporters.

"South America was really in a difficult situation only a couple of months ago, and that situation again is starting to turn in the wrong direction."

"The [disease transmission](#) is intense, community transmission is widespread and healthcare systems remain under pressure," he said stressing that those factors were being "reflected in [mortality rates](#)."

Ryan's comments came after Peru on Monday more than doubled its official coronavirus death toll, becoming the country with the highest COVID-19 mortality per capita anywhere in the world.

Lima said it had raised the count from 69,342 to 180,764 on the advice of a panel of health experts, which found there had been an undercount.

But countries across the continent have been hard-hit by the pandemic, with Brazil long one of the world's worst affected countries.

Ryan pointed out that test positivity rates in many South American countries remained "remarkably high", standing at 37 percent in Paraguay, 33 percent in Argentina and 30 percent in Colombia.

At the same time, he lamented, "case fatality rates in South America (are generally) higher than in many parts of the rest of the world."

This, he said, was largely due to the strain that healthcare systems on the continent have been under "for a very long time."

Ryan stressed the need to break the cycle, urging countries everywhere to scale up efforts to rein in the virus, stressing the dire need for more equitable access to vaccines.

He warned that the world's focus appeared to be bouncing around the planet from the latest explosive outbreak to the next, like children chasing "around the field after the football".

"We have to take a step back and realise we have to break that cycle," he said.

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