

Latin America, Caribbean may see virus deaths quadruple: experts

30 June 2020



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The Pan American Health Organization warned Tuesday the coronavirus death toll in Latin America and the Caribbean could top 400,000 by October without stricter public health measures.

That would represent a quadrupling of the fatal cases of COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus, in a region that has emerged as a major pandemic trouble spot.

An AFP tally puts the number of people who have died so far in the region at nearly 114,000 out of more than 2.5 million cases.

"Latin America and the Caribbean is expected to have more than 438,000 COVID-19 deaths" by October 1 at the current pace, said Carissa Etienne, the director of the Washington-based PAHO, which serves as the regional arm of the World Health Organization.

"It is important to reemphasize that these projections will come to pass only if the current conditions remain," she said at a news conference.

"So this means that countries can change these predictions if they take the right decisions and implement strict proven public health measures," she said.

Many Latin American countries have struggled to contain the outbreak, most notably Brazil, which now has the world's second largest caseload after the United States.

More than 1.3 million Brazilians have contracted the virus, and over 58,000 have died.

Chile and Colombia are expected to reach their peaks within the next 15 days, while in Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia and Peru the high point is expected to come sometime in August.

Mexico and most of Central America are likely to top out in mid-August.

The Caribbean in contrast is in better shape, with many islands succeeding in curbing transmission completely.

These include Saint Barthelemy, Anguilla, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Aruba, Sint Maarten, British Virgin Islands, Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba, Grenada and Saint Lucia

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APA citation: Latin America, Caribbean may see virus deaths quadruple: experts (2020, June 30)
retrieved 23 April 2021 from
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-06-latin-america-caribbean-virus-deaths.html>

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