

Troops gather 150 bodies of virus victims in Ecuador port city

April 2 2020

Troops and police in Ecuador have collected at least 150 bodies from streets and homes in the port city of Guayaquil, the government said, warning that as many as 3,500 people could die of the coronavirus in the city and surrounding province in the coming months.

A joint military and police task force had collected 150 bodies over the last three days, government spokesman Jorge Wated said late Wednesday.

Residents in Guayaquil, Ecuador's second city, had earlier published videos on social media of abandoned bodies in the streets.

Some left desperate messages for authorities to take away the corpses of people who had died in their homes.

The government spokesman apologized in a message broadcast on state television.

He said mortuary workers had been unable to keep up with the removal of dead people because of a curfew imposed under the pandemic.

"We acknowledge any errors and apologize to those who had to wait days for their loved ones to be taken away," Wated said.

Authorities have not confirmed how many of the dead were victims of the [coronavirus](#).

Ecuador is the Latin American country worst hit by the virus after Brazil, with more than 2,700 infections and 98 deaths.

Guayaquil's surrounding province of Guayas has 70 percent of the country's COVID-19 infections.

Wated said the government is preparing for difficult days ahead.

"The [medical experts](#) unfortunately estimate that deaths from COVID in these months will reach between 2,500 and 3,500—in the province of Guayas alone, and we are preparing for that," he said.

Mortuary workers in masks and [protective clothing](#) were seen carrying the plastic-wrapped coffins in the [city](#) on Wednesday as authorities tried to cope with the backlog of dead.

"We are working so that each person can be buried with dignity in one-person spaces," Wated said, referring to a [government](#)-run cemetery being made available with capacity for around 2,000 bodies.

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