

## Virus spread 'still accelerating' in Brazil, Peru, Chile: WHO regional office

May 26 2020

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Coronavirus. Credit: European Centers for Disease Control

International health authorities expressed concern Tuesday over signs the spread of the new coronavirus is "still accelerating" in Brazil, Peru and Chile.

"In South America, we are particularly concerned that the number of

new cases reported last week in Brazil was the highest for a seven-day period, since the outbreak began," said Carissa Etienne, director of the Washington-based Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

"Both Peru and Chile are also reporting a high incidence, a sign that transmission is still accelerating in these countries," she said at a weekly briefing.

The Pan American Health Organization, which serves as the regional office for the World Health Organization, has been monitoring the pandemic in Latin America and the Caribbean.

With a total 2.4 million cases—out of 5 million globally—and more than 143,000 deaths from COVID-19 reported as of May 25, Latin America has outpaced Europe and the United States in the number of daily infections.

The region is now "no doubt" the epicenter of the pandemic, Etienne said during the PAHO weekly briefing.

She called for countries to keep up their fight to curb the spread of infections, which experts estimate far exceed the official count.

"For most countries in the Americas, now is not the time to relax restrictions or scale back preventive strategies," she said.

The PAHO recommended a combination of social distancing measures, testing and health system preparations to combat the coronavirus, which was declared a pandemic on March 11 after it appeared in China late last year.

Etienne said Brazil's daily COVID-19 death toll is expected to peak at around 1,020 a day by June 22, citing the IHME model from the

University of Washington in the United States.

The model predicted two weeks ago that Brazil would see 88,305 coronavirus deaths by August 4, with a range between 30,302 deaths and 193,786 deaths possible.

With nearly 375,000 cases, Brazil now has the world's biggest coronavirus caseload after the United States. It has had 23,473 deaths, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University.

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Citation: Virus spread 'still accelerating' in Brazil, Peru, Chile: WHO regional office (2020, May 26) retrieved 27 March 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-05-virus-brazil-peru-chile-regional.html>

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