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**Covid-19: South America in the Maelstrom of Tragedy**

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What would Martí have written knowing that Our America, so deeply loved by him, is now at the epicenter of a terrible world pandemic?

No one will ever know, but all of us who, like him, have trembled with each success and anguish that have occurred from Bravo to Patagonia, have deeply felt the report provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) that Latin America, and especially South America is today the target of this demonic virus.

Although forewarned news it still causes pain. It was only logical that the disease would travel from Europe to the so-called new continent and also, which, as confirmed by WHO through its executive director of the Health Emergencies Program, Michael Ryan, is appreciating a "considerable increase" in the region.

Although the figures are still far from those reported in other areas of the planet – on May 23rd in the region there were more than 34 thousand dead by Covid-19 and more than 617 thousand infected, while in the entire world the death toll exceeded 338 thousand and more than 5.2 million were infected.

But the spreading of the disease is so accelerated that early this week, the number of infected was already a third of all the people infected worldwide.

And the numbers will continue, painfully, increasing. Above all, South America and particularly Brazil, has the most horrifying statistics today.

Last Saturday the South American giant already accumulated more than 347 000 infections and 22 000 deaths, breaking this week, for the first time, the barrier of a thousand deaths in a day, most of them concentrated in the state of Sao Paulo. That day alone, Brazil registered 16,508 new cases and 965 deaths.

In such a dark panorama, Peru and Chile follow closely, the other two South American countries most affected.

The shakiness of the health systems in these nations suggests a harrowing panorama, to the point that it's already predicted that Latin America could become the greatest victim of Covid-19 in the entire world.

The region is among those that least invest in public health. Neoliberalism with its inequalities and privatizations, the lack of resources and political will in most cases, go hand in hand in the region, conditioning the worst case scenario, already marked by the presence of dengue fever, zika , and also infectious diseases such as diarrheal diseases, tuberculosis, HIV / AIDS, and others, causing morbidity and mortality that would not reach equal proportions in other parts of the world.

On top of that we must put the ineptitude of presidents like Jair Bolsonaro ... let's just recall at this point, that, after he classified Covid-19 as "a common flu", disregarding its ruthlessness, insists that patients keep having the chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine, even when the WHO executive director for Health Emergencies Program insisted that this international entity does not support the decision of the Brazilian government to use these drugs due to the absence of scientific evidence that support its safety and effectiveness to this purpose. Bolsonaro, in addition, firmly criticizes other governments in the region that have taken measures for the necessary social distancing.

If South America is now at the center of the nightmare, the communities in the Amazon River bear the brunt, especially the indigenous communities.

There should at least more less than 20 000 infected by the new coronavirus in the Amazon River coasts, as estimated by Carissa Etienne, director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

"The frequency there tends to double, compared to other states in the same countries. Without immediate action, these communities will face a disproportionate impact," she added.

That immediate action seems to involve much more than statements by artists and intellectuals, as it has happened these days.

In fact, in addition to the inhabitants of the Amazon, all of Latin America requires this urgent action.

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez called to urgent actions at the recent virtual Summit "United against COVID-19", hosted by Azerbaijan in its capacity as pro tempore president of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Cuban president then recalled how this pandemic has proven the fragility of a broken and excluding world and he sentenced: "Let's speak frankly: if we had globalized solidarity as the market was globalized, the story would be different".

**Translated by Amilkal Labañino / CubaSí Translation Staff**

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