

# Peruvian government uses “slight increase” in COVID numbers to extend state of emergency

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A recent article in the WSWs examined the threat of a new wave of COVID-19 in South America, focusing on rising numbers in Chile, Argentina and Brazil, which have shot up to several tens of thousands per week.

While conceding the possibility of a COVID-19 fourth wave arriving by the last quarter of 2022, the Peruvian Ministry of Health (Minsa) reported on May 25 what it termed 'small' increases: eight deaths and 369 new COVID cases in the previous 24 hours, and six deaths and 522 new infections the day before that. Further minimizing the uptick, Minsa attributed the increase in new variants to Easter and Mother's Day celebrations.

Extrapolating, the number of positive cases to a per week basis would be around 3,200 people, and 49 deaths. But to be sure, the actual numbers are well above those reported, due to the decline in testing during the short period of declining infection since the end of last year.

The myopia of the experts in Lima leads them to ignore the rising numbers in nearby countries, even though different strains of COVID previously arrived in Peru through commerce with these same countries, along with travel to and from them.

For example, the deadly Brazilian strain, Gamma, originated in the Amazon, exploded in the city of Manaus, and then went up the Amazon River to Peruvian territory. Then it spread to the Andes, crossing them until it reached Lima, Peru's capital city, where it claimed the greatest number of deaths.

In the past, the pandemic in Peru has been as contagious and deadly, if not more so, than in other Latin American countries. Peru had the highest per capita mortality rate worldwide since the beginning of the pandemic, until it was recently surpassed by

Bolivia. Total reported cases last week reached 3.57 million and deaths 213,134.

Peru is also the origin of the Lambda (Peruvian or Andean) variant of COVID, which studies show is highly contagious and potentially resistant to vaccines.

Instead of facing the growing and apparent risks head-on with a panoply of non-pharmaceutical measures, such as increased masking, testing, and contact tracing, Minsa is at present only calling for a third and possibly fourth dose for older adults.

Minsa says it will not pursue additional measures until there is an increase of additional positive cases for at least a five-week period. Thus, for example, capacity in classrooms and school buses will remain at the current 100 percent.

The government's current “vaccine only” policy is a recipe for failure. It is motivated by the interests of keeping workers on the job, in order to generate profits for the capitalists.

While diminishing the current COVID risk, the Peruvian government, talking out of both sides of its mouth, is nevertheless using the “slight” increase in COVID cases to order the extension of the national state of emergency decreed as a result of the pandemic, for the first time in March 2020.

The rule expressly indicates that the measure to continue with the national state of emergency responds to a recommendation from the National Center for Epidemiology, Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) of Minsa.

According to a decree published May 26 in the official gazette *El Peruano*, the extension will be extended for a period of 30 calendar days, starting on Wednesday, June 1.

The decree specifies that, during the continued state of emergency, various constitutional rights related to

freedom and security, the inviolability of the home and freedom of assembly and transit will be restricted.

This pretext gives carte blanche to pseudo-left President Pedro Castillo's reactionary bourgeois government to continue to call in the army and police to violently repress the population, which has protested en masse against rising fuel and food prices and hunger since the end of March.



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