

Chilean president asks homeless people to simply stay home



Santiago de Chile, March 29 (RHC)-- Chile's government requested the homeless population to "stay at home" and maintain hygiene to prevent COVID-19. The comments have provoked mockeries and polemic reactions.

Chile's Social Development and Family Minister, Sebastian Sichel, affirmed that his administration is asking the ones who live on the streets to go back to their homes. That statement shows the unfamiliarity of the functionary with the poorest Chileans' livelihood.

Health and sanitary experts qualify mandatory Sebastian Piñera's administration as negligent and claim it rules with poor resources and social management. Chilean homeless do not have the supplies or housing conditions to isolate themselves and prevent COVID-19 infection. According to national statistics, more than 14,000 people live in Chile's streets with no access to basic services as electricity, water or food.

"Not only the elderly or the chronically ill may be a population at risk from Covid-19, there are also other human groups with high vulnerability: the homeless."

"This is a population that has a poor nutritional status, and also has diseases that have not been treated, so they are more likely to contract the virus," explains Francisco Roman, executive director of the "People

in the Street” Foundation.

The precarious homeless’ living situation increases risk contagion for the rest of the Chilean population. Figures reveal an increase in the wandering population in the last three years. Among them are psychiatric patients, seniors but also families with little kids. Some state strategies to palliate this situation are foster care facilities, open dinners, and basic health services, but experts say is not enough to cover all the ones in need.

So far, Chile registers 1,306 COVID-19 positive cases, and four deceased due to the virus.

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