

The dreadful cost of negligence



There is a famous painting entitled "The Triumph of Death" from 1563 by the Flemish master Pieter Bruegel, nicknamed The Elder, where he portrayed the end of humanity at the hands of an army of skeletons that kill regardless of age, social class or belief.

In the upper left of the canvas, flames and clouds of black smoke point to the limitless destruction. In the center of the painting are corpses, some in open coffins and others lying on the ground. Another crowd is being forced pushed into a huge coffin, graphically underscoring their inevitable fate.

True to the drama of this medieval painting are the images people are seeing around the world, especially in the Ecuadorian city of Guayaquil, where the dead are being piled up on sidewalks and streets or left hidden in houses in the face of the despair of family and neighbors.

In spite of Lenin Moreno's government refusing to include these corpses in the formal statistics of the victims of Covid-19, claiming that their cause of death is unknown, the facts show that there are no other plausible explanations.

In a direct or indirect way, the Guayaquil catastrophe is related to the pandemic that is sweeping the world. The inaccurate forecasts of the Ecuadorian authorities quickly caused the saturation of hospitals and the funeral system. The latter, belonging to the private sector, is not affordable for poor communities.

Ecuador registered the first case of Covid-19 on February 3, over two months ago, but the administration seemed to have no idea of the magnitude of this unstoppable disease.

Today, in the city of Guayaquil there are more than two thousand verified cases, but the reality may be much worse. There is not enough medical material for widespread testing. In private laboratories, it costs between 250 and 300 dollars across the country.

If we were to speak of Haiti, we could perhaps see similar conditions due to the poverty endemic to that Caribbean country. But in Ecuador, the main cause is linked to the part being played by the Moreno administration.

As soon as he was sworn in, Moreno started shattering everything that the Revolución Ciudadana movement had accomplished. Lenin Moreno's government put an end to the implemented health and social security system, increasing poverty and hunger, raised the prices of essential public services and expelled Cuban doctors from the country.

At the bottom right of Brueghel's painting "The Triumph of Death," we can see two young lovers singing and playing music, oblivious to the horror around them. This sends a message of hope that our overwhelmed world needs so much today, where there are little signs of solidarity, where money and power are held to be of greater importance than life itself.

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