

U.S. reaches 'unfathomable' 200,000 COVID-19 death toll



U.S. has now reached 200 thousand dead from COVID-19. (Photo: Al Jazeera)

Washington, September 22 (RHC)-- The U.S. death toll from the coronavirus topped 200,000 on Tuesday, a figure unimaginable eight months ago when the scourge first reached the world's richest nation with its sparkling laboratories, top-flight scientists and stockpiles of medicines and emergency supplies.

"It is completely unfathomable that we've reached this point," said Jennifer Nuzzo, a Johns Hopkins University public health researcher. The bleak milestone -- by far the highest confirmed death toll from the virus in the world -- was reported by Johns Hopkins, based on figures supplied by state health authorities.

But the real toll is thought to be much higher, in part because many COVID-19 deaths were probably ascribed to other causes, especially early on, before widespread testing. The number of COVID-19 deaths in the U.S. is equivalent to a 9/11 attack every day for 67 days. It is roughly equal to the population of Salt Lake City or Huntsville, Alabama.

And it is still climbing. Deaths are running at close to 770 a day on average, and a widely cited model from the University of Washington predicts the U.S. toll will double to 400,000 by the end of the year as schools and colleges reopen and cold weather sets in. A vaccine is unlikely to become widely available until 2021.

"The idea of 200,000 deaths is really very sobering, in some respects stunning," Dr Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious-disease expert, said on CNN.

The U.S. hit the threshold six weeks before a presidential election that is certain to be in part a referendum on President Donald Trump's handling of the crisis. In an interview on Tuesday with a Detroit TV station, Trump boasted of doing an "amazing" and "incredible" job, adding: "The only thing we've done a bad job in is public relations because we haven't been able to convince people -- which is basically the fake news -- what a great job we've done."

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