

The posada must go on: Mexico celebrates Christmas against backdrop of Covid



A woman sells Pinatas and poinsettia plants (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) - commonly known as Christmas Eve flower - at a street store in Xochimilco, Mexico City. —AFP photos



View of poinsettia plants (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*).



View of typical Pinatas for sale in a market at Xochimilco.



View of typical Pinatas at a workshop in Xochimilco, Mexico City.



A florist sells poinsettia plants.



View of typical Pinatas for sale in a market at Xochimilco.

In Yuridia Torres' workshop, the sale of pinatas is non-stop. Despite the Mexican government's warning against traditional posadas-celebrations which began Wednesday and play a huge role in the country's Christmas season-people in the capital's Xochimilco neighborhood continued to buy the festive party item. Posadas traditionally bring people into the streets and into the homes of neighbors across Mexico and in other parts of Latin America over the course of nine nights. The holiday custom involves going door-to-door singing Christmas carols, sometimes dressed as characters from the biblical Christmas story.

Even with a spike in coronavirus infections and hospital occupancy at 82 percent in Mexico City, orders for pinatas are still coming in. "The posadas have been postponed, but there are people who will celebrate the holidays with their family," 47-year-old Torres, a neighborhood factory administrator, told AFP. President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador reiterated Wednesday his call to "only go outdoors for essentials" during the end of the year. Mexico City Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum's warning was more explicit: "No parties, meetings or posadas." The tradition, which mixes Christian beliefs with indigenous customs, can lead to giant fiestas, bringing together thousands of people.

Although posadas are not expressly prohibited, authorities in the capital are considering fining those who throw parties of more than 10 people. Brightly decorated pinatas are a central element of the holiday. The hollow cardboard creations are generally shaped as stars, animals, or characters and stuffed with candy or fruit. Participants then beat them with a stick until their contents fall to the ground. In Xochimilco, a community closely linked to tradition, some like Hilda Varela are trying to find a middle ground. The 66-year-old doctor will hold a celebration on Facebook after preparing for 10 months. "By tradition, you cannot close the door to God. Even if online, we will