

City of Porto rejects lockdown plan as 'useless'

March 30 2020

Porto has been hard hit by the coronavirus pandemic but the biggest city in northern Portugal on Monday refused to heed official calls for the 200,000-plus population to be put under isolation and mocked a senior health chief.

With 941 COVID-19 cases, Porto has the largest number of infections in the country, ahead of the capital Lisbon with 633.

Health director general Graca Freitas told reporters in Lisbon that a "decision will probably be taken" to impose a "cordon sanitaire" around Porto, the world centre of port wine on the Douro river.

The Porto authorities were having none of it and hit back with a strongly worded statement.

"If this useless and misplaced measure was taken it would be impossible to operate basic services," [city](#) hall said, citing refuse collection by workers from outside areas and supplying the region's two hospitals.

Cutting off Porto would be "absurd when the COVID-19 epidemic has spread widely through communities across the region and the country.

"As a result Porto city hall no longer recognises the authority of the general [health](#) director and considers her pronouncements today a slip of the tongue due to fatigue," the statement said.

Portugal has recorded 140 deaths out of a total of some 6,400 COVID-19 cases and put in place a series of measures notably confining people to try to stop the spread of the epidemic.

However only the northern tourist town of Ovar, which has also seen a spike in cases, has been totally locked down.

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