

Countries around the world announce more virus restrictions

March 15 2020, by Joseph Wilson and Geir Moulson



A couple wash their hands before voting Sunday March 15, 2020 in Menton, southern France. France is holding nationwide elections Sunday to choose all of its mayors and other local leaders despite a crackdown on public gatherings because of the new virus. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness. (AP Photo/Daniel Cole)

Authorities around the world turned to increasingly drastic measures Sunday to try to slow the spread of the new coronavirus, with lockdowns, curfews and travel restrictions spreading.

Soldiers and police sealed the densely populated Philippine capital from most domestic travelers in one of Southeast Asia's most drastic containment measures. The move mirrored a lockdown Spain announced just hours earlier for its 46 million citizens.

France ordered the closing of just about everything the rest of the world loves about it—the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, the cafes and restaurants—as governments took increasingly desperate measures to put more space between people and contain the virus.

At U.S. airports, travelers returning from Europe were greeted with hourslong waits for required medical screenings. While American citizens, green card holders and some others are allowed to return to the U.S. amid new European [travel restrictions](#), they're being funneled to 13 U.S. airports where they're subject to health screenings and quarantine orders.

Videos and photos posted on social media showed packed, winding lines of returning travelers. On Twitter, airports like Dallas/Fort Worth and Chicago O'Hare acknowledged the delays and asked for patience.



An employee in protective gears sprays disinfectant in the wake of coronavirus outbreak inside a train at the Senen train station in Jakarta Indonesia, Sunday, March 15, 2020. Indonesia's capital city announced a lockdown of all tourist destinations and entertainment spots as well as the closing all of its public schools for the next 14 days amid the global outbreak. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness. (AP Photo/Tatan Syuflana)

President Donald Trump announced that the U.S., which days ago barred travelers from most of Europe, will extend the ban to Britain and Ireland. And more cities in the U.S. put in place curbs on gatherings of more than a few hundred people, with one New Jersey city even announcing an overnight curfew.

In China, where the virus was first detected in December, those arriving on overseas flights were routed to a converted exhibition center for initial checks before being shuttled off to their homes or other quarantine locations.

It was clear, however, that the center of gravity in the crisis had shifted westward toward Europe and North America. The virus has infected more than 150,000 people worldwide and killed over 5,600.

In a nationally televised address Saturday, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez detailed the battery of exceptional measures put in place as part of a two-week state of emergency to fight the sharp rise in infections.



In this photo provided by Austin Boschen, people wait in line to go through the customs at Dallas Fort Worth International Airport in Grapevine, Texas, Saturday, March 14, 2020. International travelers reported long lines at the customs at the airport Saturday as staff took extra precautions to guard against the new coronavirus, The Dallas Morning News reports. Boschen said it took him at least 4 hours to go through the customs. (Austin Boschen via AP)

Later Saturday, Spain's government said Sánchez's wife had tested positive for the [coronavirus](#). Begoña Gómez and the prime minister are in good health, the government said.

In a lockdown similar to the one already imposed in Italy, people will be allowed to leave their homes only to buy food and medicine, commute to work, go to hospitals and banks, or take trips related to the care of the young and the elderly. All schools and universities were closed, along with restaurants, bars, hotels and other nonessential retail businesses.

"From now we enter into a new phase," Sánchez said after a Cabinet meeting that lasted over seven hours. "We won't hesitate in doing what we must to beat the virus. We are putting health first."

Spanish authorities said the number of infections climbed past 5,700, half of them in the capital, Madrid. That represents a national increase of over 1,500 in 24 hours. The country had 136 deaths, up from 120. Spain has the fifth-highest number of cases, behind China, Italy, Iran and South Korea.



In this photo taken on Friday, March 13, 2020, Francesco and Greta Innominati wave after placing a banner reading "Everything is gone be all right" out of a window of their apartment in Rome. The nationwide lockdown to slow coronavirus is still early days for much of Italy, but Italians are already are showing signs of solidarity. This week, children's drawings of rainbows are appearing all over social media as well as on balconies and windows in major cities ready, "Andra' tutto bene," Italian for "Everything will be alright." For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some, it can cause more severe illness, especially in older adults and people with existing health problems. (AP Photo/Alessandra Tarantino)

For most people, the coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe

illness, including pneumonia. The vast majority of people recover in a matter of weeks.

Despite pleas for calm from authorities, shoppers packed supermarkets in Spain in the morning. But overall, the normally bustling streets of the country's two biggest cities were noticeably quieter as the message sank in that social distancing is the only way to stop the pandemic.

"We had to close and remain shut for 15 days," restaurant owner Rachel Paparardo said in Barcelona, which was already under regional restrictions. "But this is nothing. It is just so more people don't get infected and we can recover from this."



An employee in protective gears sprays disinfectant in the wake of coronavirus outbreak inside a train at the Senen train station in Jakarta Indonesia, Sunday,

March 15, 2020. Indonesia's capital city announced a lockdown of all tourist destinations and entertainment spots as well as the closing all of its public schools for the next 14 days amid the global outbreak. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness. (AP Photo/Tatan Syuflana)

In the Philippines, new restrictions for metropolitan Manila—home to more than 12 million people—that went into effect Sunday mean the suspension of domestic travel by land, air and sea to and from the capital region, as well as an overnight curfew.

Large gatherings are prohibited and most government work in executive department offices will be suspended in the metropolis for a month. School closures at all levels were extended in the Philippines, which has confirmed 140 cases of the virus, including 11 deaths.

In the Middle East, Muslim authorities announced that Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque, Islam's third-holiest site, would be closed indefinitely due to concerns about the outbreak, with prayers continuing to be held on the sprawling esplanade outside.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's trial on serious corruption charges, which was supposed to begin this week, was postponed for two months due to restrictions on public gatherings.



South Korean army soldiers wearing protective suits move to spray disinfectant in Daegu, South Korea, Sunday, March 15, 2020. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. (Kim Hyun-tae/Yonhap via AP)

Paris followed other cities in shuttering major tourist attractions, and France announced the closing of all restaurants, cafes, theaters and nonessential shops starting Sunday. France has recorded at least 3,600 infections. It has banned all gatherings of more than 100 people, ordered all schools closed and asked companies to allow workers to stay home.

France pressed ahead with nationwide municipal elections on Sunday but ordered special measures to keep people at a safe distance and to sanitize

surfaces.

In Italy, the worst-hit European country, the number of deaths climbed past 1,400 and infections surged roughly 20% overnight to more than 21,000 because of what authorities characterized as irresponsible behavior by people still socializing despite the nationwide lockdown. Many Italian cities, including Rome and Milan, decided to close playgrounds and parks, too.



A South Korean army soldier wearing a protective suit sprays disinfectant as a precaution against the new coronavirus at a private academy in Daegu, South Korea, Sunday, March 15, 2020. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. (Kim Hyun-tae/Yonhap via AP)

In Britain, the death toll nearly doubled from the day before to 21, and the number of people infected rose to over 1,100. Ireland had 90 confirmed cases and one death as of Friday. Greece's infection total approached 230 with three deaths, and police there arrested 45 shopkeepers Saturday for violating a ban on operations.

The U.S. has seen 60 deaths and more than 2,100 cases. In hard-hit Washington state, where 40 have died and more than 550 have been infected, officials said the disease is straining the supply of protective gear available to medical providers despite shipments from the federal government.

Trump tested negative for the new coronavirus, the president's personal physician said Saturday.

European countries took steps to isolate themselves from their neighbors.

Denmark closed its borders and halted passenger traffic to and from the country. Poland planned to close its borders at midnight and deny all foreigners entry unless they lived in Poland or had personal ties there. The Czech Republic and Slovakia took similar action.



Catholic priest Rymond Ratilla performs rites during a mass that is live video streamed on their Facebook page at an empty Chapel of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Cubao, Quezon city, Philippines, Sunday, March 15, 2020. Mass was suspended at all churches in the capital to avoid large gatherings as part of precautionary measures against the spread of the new coronavirus in this largely Roman Catholic country. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some, it can cause more severe illness, especially in older adults and people with existing health problems. (AP Photo/Aaron Favila)



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A sign near the Breckenridge Ski Resort gondola in Breckenridge, Colo., Saturday, March 14, 2020, outlines public health guidelines about social distancing to limit the spread of the new coronavirus. Signs with public health guidelines about social distancing to limit the spread of the new coronavirus were posted around the resort, and later in the day, Vail Resorts announced it would close all of its ski areas in North America through March 22, including Breckenridge and Keystone Resort in Summit County. (Liz Copan/Summit Daily News via AP)



A couple wearing face masks wipe their hands after voting Sunday March 15, 2020 in Menton, southern France. France is holding nationwide elections Sunday to choose all of its mayors and other local leaders despite a crackdown on public gatherings because of the new virus. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness. (AP Photo/Daniel Cole)



Pope Francis celebrates Mass at his Santa Marta residence, at the Vatican, Sunday, March 15, 2020. Masses for the faithful have been suspended following Italy's Coronavirus emergency. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some, it can cause more severe illness, especially in older adults and people with existing health problems. (Vatican News via AP)



Empty seats at the San Simpliciano church, in Milan, Italy, Sunday, March 15, 2020 as Masses for the faithful have been suspended following Italy's coronavirus emergency. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some, it can cause more severe illness, especially in older adults and people with existing health problems. (AP Photo/Luca Bruno)



A shopper takes a picture at an empty shopping mall in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Sunday, March 15, 2020. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness. (AP Photo/Vincent Thian)

Russia said its borders with Norway and Poland will be closed to most foreigners beginning Sunday.

In the Pacific, Australia and New Zealand announced that incoming travelers will be required to isolate themselves for 14 days, with few exceptions.

In New Zealand, passengers aboard a cruise ship in the South Island tourist town of Akaroa were not being allowed off the vessel Sunday

while three passengers are tested for the new coronavirus.

Director-General of Health Ashley Bloomfield said that one of the passengers on the Golden Princess is being treated as a suspected case because that person has developed symptoms of the disease and is a close contact of another person who has been confirmed as having contracted COVID-19.

Bloomfield said they should get the test results on Monday, and that officials are considering their response should the case be confirmed.

He says one lesson from observing problems with the virus spreading on other cruise ships is to avoid leaving everybody on board. Bloomfield didn't elaborate on what form any response might take.

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Citation: Countries around the world announce more virus restrictions (2020, March 15)
retrieved 8 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-03-countries-world-virus-restrictions.html>

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