

Indonesia virus plans 'in tatters' as infections surge

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Indonesia's coronavirus crisis is far worse than being officially reported and the government's response is "in tatters", the country's doctors association warned Friday as the death toll climbed to 87.

The world's fourth-most populous country only reported its first confirmed infection this month but by Thursday, that had ballooned to over 1,000.

Indonesia's 87 confirmed coronavirus deaths are the highest toll in Southeast Asia, with public health and diplomatic officials warning that its weak health system is being rapidly overwhelmed.

"The government's plans are in tatters and they appear to be avoiding a lockdown," said Indonesian Doctors' Association spokesman Halik Malik.

"Our health system is not as strong as other countries."

A London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine study warned this week that cases in Indonesia—with a population of more than 260 million people—could be vastly underreported.

The government's virus task force has estimated as many as 700,000 people were at risk of infection nationwide.

But the rate of testing has been low compared with many other

countries—only 2,300 tests were conducted before the government stopped announcing nationwide figures.

Authorities have come under heavy criticism for not imposing lockdowns in major cities, including the capital Jakarta, a vast city home to about 30 million where most of the deaths have been reported.

"The COVID-19 situation in Indonesia is very serious and getting worse quickly," the Canadian embassy in Jakarta said Thursday, saying it was urgently advising citizens to leave.

"The health care system in Indonesia will soon be overwhelmed. The ultimate number of fatalities will be very high."

Indonesia had fewer than four doctors for every 10,000 people, according to World Health Organization data from 2017.

In comparison, neighbouring Malaysia had about 15 doctors and Australia had 35 per 10,000 people.

Images shared on [social media](#) have shown Indonesian doctors threatening to go on strike if resources aren't beefed up, with concerns about a lack of ventilators, [protective gear](#) and other equipment needed to handle [coronavirus](#) cases.

At least seven doctors have died of the virus, according to the official figures.

In a tweet that went viral, the brother-in-law of one of those doctors slammed the Indonesian government's handling of the crisis.

"You were infected as you actively served people. Many health workers have been infected and left. The limited amount of protective equipment

is hard to forgive," wrote Pandu Riono, a University of Indonesia [public health](#) expert.

The government has pledged to boost testing to upwards of one million checks as extra equipment and test kits are flown in from China.

It has also turned an athletes village built for the 2018 Asian Games into an emergency treatment centre to help ease the pressure on hospitals.

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