

Italy sees second successive drop in virus deaths

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Italy reported a second successive drop in daily deaths and infections from a coronavirus that has nevertheless claimed more than 6,000 lives in a month.

The Mediterranean country has now seen its daily fatalities come down from a [world record](#) 793 on Saturday to 651 on Sunday and 601 on Monday.

The number of new declared infections fell from 6,557 on Saturday to 4,789 on Monday.

The top medical officer for Milan's devastated Lombardy region appeared on television smiling for the first time in many weeks.

"We cannot declare victory just yet," Giulio Gallera said.

"But there is light at the end of the tunnel."

Italy's National Health Institute (ISS) chief Silvio Brusaferrero was more guarded.

"These are positive numbers but I do not have the courage to firmly state that there is a [downward trend](#)," the medical expert told reporters.

Germany announced on Monday that it had accepted the Italian government's request to care for some of the sick, with six patients to be transferred to hospitals in Dresden and Leipzig, in the eastern state of Saxony.

Italians will desperately hope that weeks of living under a lockdown in which even a jog in the park was eventually banned was the price worth paying for beating back the new disease.

Saturday's record toll was followed by a late-night address to the nation in which Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte announced the additional closure of "non-essential" factories.

His government also banned travel to help a country that turned into the new epicentre of the pandemic last week get through a critical stretch in which restrictions are supposed to finally show results.

"Now more than ever, everyone's commitment is needed," Health Minister Roberto Speranza said after Monday's figures came out.

Italy's toll now stands at 6,077—more than that of China and third-placed Spain combined.

Nerves starting to fray

Italy has sacrificed its economy and liberties by closing and banning almost everything to halt the spread of a virus the government views as an existential threat.

The nation has rallied around its exhausted doctors and tried to deal with life under a state of emergency with humour and grace.

Entire city blocks have organised balcony parties with nightly DJs. There have been singalongs and synchronised rounds of applause.

But Italians' nerves were clearly starting to fray and the pushback on [social media](#) against the ever-changing rules and tightening regulations was getting strong.

Twitter posts went viral ridiculing mayors and regional chiefs who threatened to jail joggers and fine people for walking their dogs too far from their homes.

The government's new partial ban of seemingly random industries added to an air of confusion in the face of a disease Conte has called Italy's biggest disaster since World War II.

Auto part makers were allowed to stay open but steel mills were shut. News stands could still operate but book stores could not.

Decision time

The reality is that Conte's team is running out of things to close or ban.

Other nations are also watching the Italian numbers to see if Conte's ban-everything tactics work.

Italy is on the frontline of a war against a disease being fought by means that currently restrict freedoms and devastate economies.

Some are starting to openly ask if this price is too high—even as the global death toll soars.

Officials pleaded with the nation of 60 million—people accustomed to celebrating life outdoors deep into the night—to sacrifice individual liberties for the common good for two weeks.

Serie A side Napoli on Monday delayed the resumption of training, while international wine fair Vinitaly—held annually in Verona—was further postponed until next year.

The initial restrictions placed on the northern epicentre of the pandemic around Milan expired on Sunday and the national measures are set to end on Wednesday.

Conte indicated last week that he might need to extend the restrictions indefinitely.

His decision is expected within days.

"If everyone—and I stress everyone—respects our bans, we will emerge from this very difficult test first," Conte said on Monday.

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