

Madrid turns conference centre into big field hospital

March 22 2020

Dozens of coronavirus patients were moved Sunday to a makeshift field hospital set up at a Madrid conference centre to be fitted with 5,500 hospital beds, which would make it the biggest such facility in Europe.

Soldiers helped move 200 patients just before midnight from area hospitals to the sprawling IFEMA conference centre where 1,300 hospital beds have so far been set up, the regional government of Madrid said in a statement.

The field hospital will receive a total of over 300 coronavirus patients this weekend, the director of the facility, Antonio Zapatero, said in an interview with daily newspaper El Mundo.

"They are arriving in waves," he said.

The field [hospital](#) will have 5,500 beds once it is fully sent up, including 500 in an [intensive care unit](#).

Images released by the regional government showed a medical workers wearing a protective gown and [face mask](#) pushing a patients in a wheelchair inside the facility.

Another photo taken before the first patients arrived showed rows of empty beds covered in white sheets laid out on the concrete floor of the conference centre.

The authorities have also transformed hotels in Madrid, the worst-hit region, to treat mild cases of [coronavirus](#) to relieve pressure on hospitals.

Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez has warned that Spain's outbreak, already among the harshest in the world, would continue to expand.

"We must prepare ourselves emotionally and psychologically for very hard days ahead," he told the nation in a televised address late on Saturday. On Sunday Spain reported 394 more deaths in 24 hours, raising the total to 1,720, the second-highest in Europe after Italy.

"We have yet to receive the impact of the strongest, most damaging wave, which will test our material and moral capacities to the limit, as well as our spirit as a society," he added.

Spain has issued lockdown orders for its roughly 46 million residents, who are only permitted to leave their homes for essential work, food shopping, medical reasons or to walk the dog.

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