

Virus disrupts Italy as infections top 10K, deaths at 631

March 10 2020, by Nicole Winfield and John Leicester



A worker sprays disinfectant as sanitization operations against Coronavirus are carried out in the museum hosted by the Maschio Angioino medieval castle, in Naples, Italy, Tuesday, March 10, 2020. (Alessandro Pone/LaPresse via AP)

The boisterous hum of Rome dwindled to a whisper and police patrols

kept people apart in cafes as Italy enforced an extraordinary, sweeping lockdown Tuesday in hopes of not becoming the next epicenter of the spreading coronavirus epidemic now that life in China is edging back to normal.

Infections in Italy topped the 10,000 mark with 10,149 cases—more than anywhere else but China—and the number of deaths from the virus rose to 631, from 463 a day earlier, Italian Civil Protection authorities said.

Travel and social restrictions that were extended across Italy illustrated how the virus and the broad disruptions it is causing are sweeping westward from China, where the outbreak began.

Police around the country patrolled cafes to make sure owners kept customers 1 meter (3 feet) apart during daylight hours and then enforced a strict 6 p.m. closure order.

"It's bad. People are terrorized," said Massimo Leonardo, who runs a market stall. "I've never seen anything like it."

For most, the [coronavirus](#) causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. But for a few, especially older adults and people with existing [health problems](#), it can cause more severe illnesses, including pneumonia. More than 116,000 people have been infected worldwide and over 4,000 have died.

By encouraging many of Italy's 62 million people to stay home and further drying up what was left of the country's already battered [tourism industry](#), the lockdown could increase the likelihood of a recession, dealing another blow to reeling global markets.



Medical personnel leaves one of the emergency structures that were set up to ease procedures outside the hospital of Brescia, Northern Italy, Tuesday, March 10, 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. (Claudio Furlan/LaPresse via AP)

Italy's economy, the third-largest of the 19 countries that use the euro currency, relies heavily on industries requiring the physical presence and proximity of workers: tourism, manufacturing, and retail.

Italians shouldn't leave home unless for work, health care or "necessities" such as grocery shopping, the premier's office said.

Shops cafes and restaurants were ordered to close at 6 p.m., a seismic restriction in a country that prizes its gastronomy, luxuries and cafe culture. Giorgio Armani announced the closure of his hotel, restaurant and boutiques in Milan, citing "preventative measures adopted so far to safeguard the health of the employees and customers."

"I'll do whatever they tell me to do," said Rome florist Stefano Fulvi. "If I have to close, I'll close."

Italy also found itself increasingly sealed off as other countries sought to keep infections contained.



A Civil Defense worker wearing a protective suit sprays disinfectant as a precaution against the coronavirus in the main market, Baghdad, Iraq, Tuesday, March 10, 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. (AP Photo/Hadi Mizban)

Malta and Spain announced a ban on air traffic from Italy. British Airways and Air Canada suspended all Italy flights. Austria barred travelers from crossing the border without a medical certificate, Slovenia closed its border with Italy and Albania banned Italy air and ferry traffic. Britain, Ireland, Hong Kong and Germany strengthened travel advisories urged their citizens to leave. Even the Vatican erected a new barricade at the edge of St. Peter's Square.

"Get out of northern Italy if you're there," said Erik Broegger Rasmussen, head of consular services for Denmark's foreign ministry.

But in China, the diminishing threat prompted President Xi Jinping to visit the central city of Wuhan, the epicenter of its outbreak, Tuesday and declare: "We will certainly defeat this epidemic."

It was the latest sign that China is edging back toward normal after weeks of extreme quarantine measures. China reported just 19 new infections Tuesday, down from thousands each day last month.



Customers, some with protective masks, queue at the check out of a supermarket as people begin to stock up on provisions in Madrid, Spain, Tuesday, March 10, 2020. Spain's health minister on Monday announced a sharp spike in coronavirus cases in and around the national capital, Madrid, and said all schools in the region, including kindergartens and universities, will close for two weeks from Wednesday. (AP Photo/Paul White)

"Things are slowly returning to normal," said Yang Tianxiao, a finance worker in Beijing, where the city government is gradually easing restrictions.

But in growing swaths of the globe outside China, virus-related disruptions were increasingly becoming the new normal. More than 100 countries—over half of the United Nations' membership—have now

confirmed cases. Panama and Mongolia, which borders China, were among the latest. Congo and Burkina Faso also confirmed their first cases, increasing the number of infections in Africa to 105 in 11 countries.

France's government advised voters to bring their own pens to local elections Sunday so they won't have to share. Morocco reported its first death of a virus-infected person—only the second confirmed fatality in Africa. The United Nations announced the closure of its New York headquarters complex to the general public and temporarily suspended all guided tours.



Personnel of a special ambulance for the transportation of the new Coronavirus patients, finish dressing up before intervening in Rome Tuesday, March 10, 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. (AP Photo/Paolo Santalucia)

In Spain and France, soccer's biggest stars prepared to play in empty stadiums. Bans on public gatherings silenced entertainers. Sony Pictures delayed the launch of "Peter Rabbit 2" to August. Albania told its citizens to stay home—banning public gatherings and shuttering schools, entertainment centers, gymnasiums and public pools.

The virus reached into the corridors of power. In the United States, several senior politicians were self-quarantined and in Spain, the leader of a new far-right party tested positive for the virus. At least two top European military commanders also tested positive after a conference on an American military base in Germany, and the commander of U.S. Army Europe isolated himself in case he also was exposed.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced that the suburb of New Rochelle, a New York City suburb that appeared to have the biggest cluster of U.S. coronavirus cases, would have a "containment center" where houses of worships and large gathering places would be closed for two weeks.



A member of the medical staff measures the temperature of a traveller at a autobahn park place near Gries am Brenner, Austrian province of Tyrol, at border crossing with Italy on Tuesday, March 10, 2020. Austria authorities started on random checks of arriving vehicles at the border crossings with Italy in reaction to the outbreak of the new coronavirus in Europe, particularly in Italy. As part of the move, officials measure the temperatures of some passengers in cars, trucks and buses. 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. (AP Photo/Kerstin Joensson)

National Guard troops will help clean surfaces and deliver food in the area, a 1-mile-radius (1.6 km) around a point near a synagogue, Cuomo said.

Growing numbers of children were being taught online internationally, as school closures spread. The outbreak has interrupted schooling for nearly 363 million students worldwide, with 15 countries imposing nationwide school closures and 14 implementing localized closures, spanning Asia, Europe, the Middle East and North America, the U.N.'s education agency said.

Greece and Macedonia were the latest to shutter all schools, universities and kindergartens. Students at a growing number of U.S. colleges—including Harvard University and the University of California, Berkeley—were being transitioned to online classes amid a suspension of classroom instruction. Harvard students were told not to return to campus after the March spring break ends.



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The virus has shaken [global markets](#), with stocks on Monday taking their worst one-day beating on Wall Street since 2008 and oil prices suffering their most brutal losses since the start of the 1991 Gulf War—worrying people especially in the U.S. who keep much of their retirement money in stock mutual funds and use the funds to save money to pay for the college education of their children.

On Tuesday, U.S. stocks, oil and other financial markets around the world went on another wild ride and clawed back some ground after their historic plunge the previous day on hopes that the U.S. and other governments will pump in more aid for the virus-weakened global economy.

Investors are likely to see more big swings until the number of infections decelerates, and fear was still rampant that economies stood at the brink of recession, market watchers said. The travel industry is taking a beating: Europe's airports said they expect 187 million fewer passengers this year.



Tents line a wharf as the Grand Princess rests docked, Monday, March 9, 2020, in Oakland, Calif. The cruise ship, which had maintained a holding pattern off the coast for days, is carrying multiple people who tested positive for novel coronavirus. (AP Photo/Noah Berger)



Empty shelves in a supermarket in Madrid, Spain, Tuesday, March 10, 2020. People have emptied shelves of food and supplies in supermarkets in Madrid after Spain's health minister on Monday announced a sharp spike in coronavirus cases in and around the national capital, and said all schools in the region, including kindergartens and universities, will close for two weeks from Wednesday. (AP Photo/Manu Fernandez)



Chinese students wave their hands after they are released from a two-week isolation at a dormitory amid the spread of the coronavirus at the Dankook University in Yongin, South Korea, Tuesday, March 10, 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. (Hong Gi-won/Yonhap via AP)



People carry skis as they arrive at Turin train station, Italy, Tuesday, March 10, 2020. Among other measures against Coronavirus spreading, the Italian government decided to block skiing plants all over the country. 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. (Fabio Ferrari/LaPresse via AP)



A man walks with a stick passes by a huge screen showing a colourful art at a quiet shopping mall in Beijing, Tuesday, March 10, 2020. China's president Xi Jinping visited the center of the global virus outbreak Tuesday as Italy began a sweeping nationwide travel ban and people worldwide braced for the possibility of recession. 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. (AP Photo/Andy Wong)



Two people walk in Rome's Piazza Navona, deserted, Tuesday evening, March 10, 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. (AP Photo/Andrew Medichini)

"We are in a global panic," said Estelle Brack, an economist in Paris.
"We are in the deep unknown."

Italy's travel restrictions were scheduled to last through April 3 and violators risked up to three months in jail or fines of 206 euros (\$225).

In Soave, a wine-producing town near Verona, normal bustling streets were nearly deserted. Cafe owner Valentino Bonturi said he was making

sure that patrons weren't bunched together, stopping them from standing at counters.

"We follow the rules," he said.

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