

Virus-hit Italy gets more isolated as nations restrict entry

March 10 2020, by Nicole Winfield



A man pulls a trolley at an empty Campo dei Fiori open-air market, in Rome, Tuesday, March 10, 2020. The Italian government is assuring its citizens that supermarkets will remain open and stocked after panic buying erupted after broad anti-virus measures were announced nationwide, sparking overnight runs on 24-hour markets. (AP Photo/Andrew Medichini)

Italians faced travel restrictions inside and outside the country Tuesday as nations near and far isolated Italy with flight bans and sweeping national measures went into effect in a bid to slow the coronavirus' silent spread across the peninsula.

Police at Rome's main train station checked commuters' paperwork to ensure they had legitimate reasons to leave their residential neighborhoods for work, health or other "necessary" reasons. Carabinieri teams patrolled cafes to make sure owners were keeping customers 1-meter (yard) apart.

Internationally, Italy's status as the center of Europe's [coronavirus outbreak](#) grew even after the government on Monday extended limits on movement to the whole country to slow infections.

Malta and Spain announced a ban on air traffic from Italy. Malta turned away another cruise ship and British Airways canceled flights to the whole country. Austria barred travelers from crossing the border without a medical certificate. Britain, Ireland, Hong Kong and Germany strengthened travel advisories or flat-out urged their citizens to leave.

Even the Vatican erected a new barricade at the edge of St. Peter's Square.

Italy now has more [coronavirus](#) cases than anywhere but China, registering 10,149 infections with 631 deaths. And officials say they expect many, many more.



A traveler wears a mask inside Rome's Termini train station, Tuesday, March 10, 2020. In Italy the government extended a coronavirus containment order previously limited to the country's north to the rest of the country beginning Tuesday, with soldiers and police enforcing bans. (AP Photo/Andrew Medichini)

"Get out of northern Italy if you're there. We don't know how long the Italian authorities will keep the window open," said Erik Broegger Rasmussen, head of consular services for Denmark's foreign ministry.

The governor of northern Lombardy, the region hardest hit by the coronavirus, said Tuesday he will ask the government to tighten measures further after new data showed the contagion continuing to spread. Atilio Fontana told La7 private television that the mayors of the 12 provincial capitals had agreed to seek measures to close non-essential

stores and shut down local public transport.

"It's bad. People are terrorized," said Massimo Leonardo, whose family has run a vegetable stand in Rome's Campo dei Fiori market since 1980. While some customers were stocking up on blood oranges and artichokes, others called him asking for home deliveries, fearful of going outside.



People wait inside Rome's Termini train station, Tuesday, March 10, 2020. In Italy the government extended a coronavirus containment order previously limited to the country's north to the rest of the country beginning Tuesday, with soldiers and police enforcing bans. (AP Photo/Andrew Medichini)

"I've never seen anything like it," he said.

Europe's airports say they expect 187 million fewer passengers this year due to the [virus outbreak](#), which is "turning into a shock of unprecedented proportions for our industry."

ACI Europe, which represents the sector, estimated Tuesday that the outbreak will mean a 13.5% drop in airport passengers in the first quarter alone. That translates to 1.32 billion euros (\$1.5 billion) in lost revenue. Airports in Italy are most affected.

"What they are now bracing for is a total collapse in air connectivity and the prospect of losing most of their revenues," said Olivier Jankovec, director general of ACI Europe. He urged the Italian government to provide emergency [financial support](#).

Ordinary Italians, though, appeared to be taking Premier Giuseppe Conte's draconian new containment measures to heart and where possible, stayed home. The streets of Rome, the Italian capital, were as quiet Tuesday morning as during the country's annual mid-August vacation shutdown.



A traveler wears a mask as he fills out a form at a check point set up by border at Rome's Termini train station, Tuesday, March 10, 2020. In Italy the government extended a coronavirus containment order previously limited to the country's north to the rest of the country beginning Tuesday, with soldiers and police enforcing bans. Writing on glass window reads in Italian "control". (AP Photo/Andrew Medichini)

The SWG polling firm found Tuesday that Italians have finally realized the gravity of the virus, with nearly 55% "very concerned" compared to 37% a week ago.

"Let's say that I am reasonably worried," said Juan Preto, a Spanish citizen who lives in Rome.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. But for some, especially [older adults](#) and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illnesses, including pneumonia. More than 115,800 people have been infected worldwide and over 4,000 have died.

The World Health Organization says people with mild illness recover in about two weeks, while severe cases may last three to six weeks. In mainland China, where the outbreak emerged in December, almost three-fourths of its more than 80,000 patients have recovered.



Italian soldiers wear mask as they monitor the travelers' situation inside Rome's Termini train station, Tuesday, March 10, 2020. In Italy the government extended a coronavirus containment order previously limited to the country's north to the rest of the country beginning Tuesday, with soldiers and police

enforcing bans. (AP Photo/Andrew Medichini)



A traveler wears a mask as he waits inside Rome's Termini train station, Tuesday, March 10, 2020. In Italy the government extended a coronavirus containment order previously limited to the country's north to the rest of the country beginning Tuesday, with soldiers and police enforcing bans. (AP Photo/Andrew Medichini)



An Italian soldier and border police officer wear masks as they monitor the travelers' situation inside Rome's Termini train station, Tuesday, March 10, 2020. In Italy the government extended a coronavirus containment order previously limited to the country's north to the rest of the country beginning Tuesday, with soldiers and police enforcing bans. (AP Photo/Andrew Medichini)



Restaurants are closed in Piazza della Signoria square, in Florence, Italy, Tuesday, March 10, 2020. Italy entered its first day under a nationwide lockdown after a government decree extended restrictions on movement from the hard-hit north to the rest of the country to prevent the spreading of coronavirus. (Jennifer Lorenzini/LaPresse via AP)



Jewelry shops along the historic Ponte Vecchio old bridge are closed and few visitors walk along the bridge, in Florence, Italy, Tuesday, March 10, 2020. Italy entered its first day under a nationwide lockdown after a government decree extended restrictions on movement from the hard-hit north to the rest of the country to prevent the spreading of coronavirus. (Jennifer Lorenzini/LaPresse via AP)



Few people walk in Piazza della Signoria square, in Florence, Italy, Tuesday, March 10, 2020. Italy entered its first day under a nationwide lockdown after a government decree extended restrictions on movement from the hard-hit north to the rest of the country to prevent the spreading of coronavirus. (Jennifer Lorenzini/LaPresse via AP)



In this Friday, Feb. 28, 2020 file photo, gondoliers wait for customers in Venice, Italy. With the coronavirus emergency deepening in Europe, Italy, a focal point in the contagion, risks falling back into recession as foreign tourists are spooked from visiting its cultural treasures and the global market shrinks for prized artisanal products, from fashion to design. (AP Photo/Francisco Seco, File)

In Rome, communications freelancer Brett Ashley Jackson said she woke up stunned at the surreal turn of events. She had spent the night in the the capital to catch a Tuesday flight to New York for an uncle's funeral, only to find it was abruptly canceled. She wondered how or if she could get home to her main residence in Lucca.

"This is life until April 3rd," she wrote to friends on Facebook. "Thanks for your concern and well-wishes. At least we're in a beautiful prison."

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