

# Virus pandemic's reach worsens; 10,000 dead worldwide

March 20 2020, by Lori Hinnant and Nick Perry

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A woman buys fruits at a supermarket in Bergisch Gladbach that is open in the morning only for elderly people from 65 years to minimize their risk of infection due to the coronavirus outbreak in Germany, Friday, March 20, 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/Martin Meissner)

The U.S. warned Americans to avoid all international travel and told citizens abroad to return now or face an "indefinite" absence, and California's governor asked all 40 million residents to stay home, to try to slow a pandemic toll that on Friday surpassed 10,000 people worldwide.

Wuhan, China, where the outbreak began, offered a ray of hope with no new infections reported for a second day in a row and only 39 cases reported nationwide—all of them brought from the outside, the government said.

In a measure of how the fortunes of East and West have shifted, a Chinese Red Cross official heading an aid delegation to Milan castigated Italians for failing to take their national lockdown seriously. Sun Shuopeng said he was shocked to see so many people walking around, using public transportation and eating out in hotels.

"Right now we need to stop all economic activity, and we need to stop the mobility of people," he said. "All people should be staying at home in quarantine."

But globally, governments are trying to balance the need to lock down residents with the need to keep food, medicine and other essentials flowing.

French President Emmanuel Macron urged employees to keep working in supermarkets, production sites and other necessary businesses amid stringent restrictions of movement.

"We need to keep the country running", Macron said.



French President Emmanuel Macron attends a meeting at the emergency crisis center of the Interior Ministry in Paris, Friday, March 20, 2020. French President Emmanuel Macron urged employees to keep working in supermarkets, production sites and other businesses that need to keep running amid stringent restrictions of movement due to the rapid spreading of the new coronavirus in the country. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness. (Gonzalo Fuentes/Pool via AP)

Italy surpassed China in deaths from the outbreak, and Iran's official toll was rising quickly as well amid fears it is underreporting the scale of the pandemic.

Iran accused the United States of helping spread the virus by retaining

sanctions that prevent it importing desperately needed medicine and medical equipment.

In other words, while the U.S. is trying to curb the virus internally, it is helping the spread of the virus externally," Iran's U.N. mission said in a statement.

Worldwide, the [death toll](#) from COVID-19 passed 10,000 and infections exceeded 244,000, according to a Johns Hopkins University tally. Italy, with 60 million citizens, has recorded 3,405 deaths, exceeding the 3,248 in China, a country with a population over 20 times larger.

Though the illness is mild in most people, the elderly are particularly susceptible to serious symptoms. Italy has the world's second-oldest population, and the vast majority of its dead—87%—were over 70.



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Jonas Schmidt-Chanasit, a virologist at Germany's Bernhard Nocht Institute for Tropical Medicine, offered another reason for Italy's high death rate: "That's what happens when the health system collapses."

More than 86,000 people have recovered, mostly in China, but the pace is much slower than the spread of the virus. Recovery takes two weeks or so for mild cases but can be up to six weeks for those that turn serious, according to the World Health Organization.

Nations are imposing ever-stricter border controls and lockdowns to keep people at home and keep away outsiders, hoping to slow the spread of the virus while preparing for an onslaught of sick patients. U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned of a looming [global recession](#) "perhaps of record dimensions."

In California, Gov. Gavin Newsom said that if strong action wasn't taken, 56% of the state's 40 million residents could contract the virus over the next eight weeks. He expanded restrictions on nonessential movement outside of homes, saying it was necessary to control the spread of the virus, which was threatening to overwhelm California's medical system.



Passengers queue at an Air New Zealand ticketing counter at Christchurch Airport in New Zealand, Friday, March 20, 2020. New Zealand's government is bailing out its national airline by offering more than US\$500 million in loans. Air New Zealand has already stopped most international routes and cut back on domestic flights due to the coronavirus outbreak. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness. (AP Photo/Mark Baker)

Similar restrictions are in place in virus hotspots like Italy, Spain and central China.

The Trump administration upgraded its already dire warning to Americans against all international travel, and the State Department

announced new restrictions on the issuance of passports to U.S. citizens. In Morocco, several hundred Americans are scattered in cities around the country, sleeping on floors in the Marrakech airport, holed up in one of the last hotels open in Rabat and banding together on a Facebook group—U.S. Citizens Trapped in Morocco.

"The airport in Marrakech is crowded. People are touching shoulder to shoulder and many are sleeping on the floor," said student Corrine Schmaedeke, who managed to get a ticket Thursday to fly home after eight cancellations.

"The U.S. Embassy did nothing to help us," she said, adding that information was coming instead from the British Embassy.



A member of Indonesian Red Cross receives assistance from a colleague to adjust his protective suit as they prepare to disinfect Cipinang Prison compound to prevent the spread of new coronavirus outbreak, in Jakarta, Indonesia, Friday, March 20, 2020. The vast majority of people recover from the new coronavirus. According to the World Health Organization, most people recover in about two to six weeks, depending on the severity of the illness. (AP Photo/Achmad Ibrahim)

At home, the U.S. Army prepared mobile military hospitals for deployment in major cities, and motorists waited in long lines for nurses to swab their nostrils at new U.S. drive-thru testing sites. Deaths have reached at least 205 and New York City is rapidly becoming a U.S. epicenter, with more than 4,000 cases.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said the state needs to acquire thousands of ventilators, which would help the critically ill breathe, before the outbreak overwhelms hospitals. At a [video conference](#) with Trump, governors complained they were having difficulty obtaining such things as swabs and [protective gear](#) for doctors and nurses.

"We literally have people in China shopping for ventilators which is one of the largest manufacturers," Cuomo said.

Damage to the world's largest economy kept increasing, with the number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits surging by 70,000 last week.





A worker wearing protective gears disinfects as a precaution against the new coronavirus at a shopping district in Seoul, South Korea, Friday, March 20, 2020. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness. (AP Photo/Lee Jin-man)



A worker sprays disinfectant as a precaution against the new coronavirus at Chatuchak Market in Bangkok, Thailand, Friday, March 20, 2020. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness. (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit)



A military official checks the body temperature of a man before Friday prayers at a mosque in Bali, Indonesia, Friday, March 20, 2020. The vast majority of people recover from the new virus. According to the World Health Organization, people with mild illness recover in about two weeks, while those with more severe illness may take three to six weeks to recover. (AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati)



In this photo released on Friday, March 20, 2020 by the official website of the office of the Iranian supreme leader, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei poses for a portrait prior to delivering his message for the Iranian New Year, or Nowruz, in Tehran, Iran. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Hassan Rouhani in separate new year messages vowed to overcome the new coronavirus and increase economic growth. (Office of the Iranian Supreme Leader via AP)



People wear face masks as they walk through an office complex in Beijing, Friday, March 20, 2020. Italy's deaths from the coronavirus pandemic eclipsed China's on Thursday as the scourge extended its march across the West, where the United States and other countries increasingly enlisted the military to prepare for an onslaught of patients and California's governor ordered people in the most-populous U.S. state to stay home. The virus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough, for most people, but severe illness is more likely in the elderly and people with existing health problems. (AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein)



People wear face masks as they walk through an office complex in Beijing, Friday, March 20, 2020. Italy's deaths from the coronavirus pandemic eclipsed China's on Thursday as the scourge extended its march across the West, where the United States and other countries increasingly enlisted the military to prepare for an onslaught of patients and California's governor ordered people in the most-populous U.S. state to stay home. The virus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough, for most people, but severe illness is more likely in the elderly and people with existing health problems. (AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein)



South Korean police officers wearing face masks move as they guard near the U.S. embassy in Seoul, South Korea, Friday, March 20, 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/Ahn Young-joon)



Women wear face masks and gloves as a precaution against the spread of the new coronavirus, in Quito, Ecuador, Thursday, March 19, 2020. The government has declared a "health emergency," restricting movement to only those who provide basic services, enacting a curfew, and closing schools. (AP Photo/Dolores Ochoa)





Blue Impulse of the Japan Air Self-Defense Force fly over during Olympic Flame Arrival Ceremony at Japan Air Self-Defense Force Matsushima Base in Higashimatsushima in Miyagi Prefecture, north of Tokyo, Friday, March 20, 2020. The Olympic flame from Greece arrived in Japan even as the opening of the the Tokyo Games in four months is in doubt with more voices suggesting the games should to be postponed or canceled because of the worldwide virus pandemic. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)



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Three-time Olympic gold medalists Tadahiro Nomura, right, and Saori Yoshida light the torch as Tokyo 2020 Olympics chief Yoshiro Mori, left, watches during Olympic Flame Arrival Ceremony at Japan Air Self-Defense Force Matsushima Base in Higashimatsushima in Miyagi Prefecture, north of Tokyo, Friday, March 20, 2020. The Olympic flame from Greece arrived in Japan even as the opening of the the Tokyo Games in four months is in doubt with more voices suggesting the games should to be postponed or canceled because of the worldwide virus pandemic. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)



The Via Expresa highway, closed by the government to discourage citizens from circulating, is free of traffic in Lima, Peru, Thursday, March 19, 2020, the fourth day of a state of emergency decreed by the government to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



A food vendor wears a face mask and goggles as a preventive measure against the spread of the new coronavirus, at a market in Caracas, Venezuela, Thursday, March 19, 2020. (AP Photo/Ariana Cubillos)

Congress is weighing a proposed \$1 trillion emergency package that would dispense relief checks to households in as many as two rounds, the first of which would consist of payments of \$1,000 per adult and \$500 for each child.

And New York Mayor Bill de Blasio lashed out at the president as "the Herbert Hoover of your generation," referring to the man who was president when the stock market crashed in 1929 and the Depression set in.

A Houston hospital that opened its doors to drive-thru testing quickly saw a line of hundreds of vehicles stretching more than a mile. At a white tent, workers in masks and head-to-toe protective gear swabbed motorists. Petra Sanchez waited to find out whether she had the virus.

"I have an 80-year-old dad, and I haven't been around him for the same reason," she said. "I don't know what I have."

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