

# DR Congo confines, disinfects business district to fight virus

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Kinshasa on Monday closed off its upmarket business district for two

weeks and began large-scale disinfection in a bid to root out DR Congo's main suspected source of coronavirus, while Kenya isolated its capital Nairobi and other key cities from the rest of the country.

Access to Gombe, which houses the country's main institutions, banks and foreign embassies as well as upscale homes, was barricaded off to everyone except local residents and key workers, an AFP journalist saw.

"The choice of this district is linked to the fact that it's from Gombe that the virus is spreading little by little to other districts," the [health authorities](#) said in a daily statement.

After "massive disinfection of the offices and main buildings in Gombe... other areas will be targeted," it said.

Gombe was put under quarantine from April 6 to 20, with Kinshasa Governor Gentiny Ngobila saying the district "is considered to be the epicentre of the epidemic in the city."

## **'Republic of Gombe'**

According to the Democratic Republic of Congo's official figures, the sprawling country has recorded 161 cases of [coronavirus](#), almost all in the capital and 18 of them fatal.

The central business district, home to 100,000 to 200,000 of Kinshasa's 10 million people, has been dubbed "the Republic of Gombe" for its perceived status as an island of prosperity in a city rife with poverty and dysfunction.

People waited patiently to get through the barricades, clutching passes issued by city hall.

"I waited more than two hours, but I'm not complaining, because this disease is very deadly," said Jerome Lumosi, 35, who works at the National Institute of Biomedical Research—the DRC's scientific vanguard in the fight against coronavirus.



On Thursday, Kinshasa Governor Gentiny Ngobila announced that Gombe would be put under quarantine from April 6 to 20

## **Economic bill**

The total of known coronavirus infections in Africa as a whole is nearly 9,300, of which 444 have been fatal, according to an AFP tally.

Experts say that, as elsewhere, the true number of infections is likely to be far higher—but Africa is especially vulnerable to the disease given its packed urban slums, [poor sanitation](#) and sub-standard health care.

Dozens of countries around Africa have imposed restrictions on mobility such as curfews, lockdowns, flight bans and school closures.

Kenya on Monday imposed a three-week ban on movement in and out of the capital Nairobi, second city Mombasa and the coastal towns of Kilifi and Kwale.

President Uhuru Kenyatta, in a TV address to the nation, stopped short of a full lockdown in these areas but warned: "We must be ready to go even further if necessary."

In Ivory Coast's economic hub Abidjan meanwhile clashes broke out for a second evening in a row in the working-class district of Yopougon between police and residents opposed to the setting up of a coronavirus testing centre fearing infection, an AFP reporter saw.

Riot police fired tear gas and dismantled roadblocks set up by the protesters, making 12 arrests, according to a police source.

Ivory Coast reported 261 infections and three deaths from COVID-19 as of Sunday.





Closed: A market in Abidjan, Ivory Coast's economic hub

The country's Defence Minister Hamed Bakayako said Monday on social media he had tested positive to coronavirus and would self confine for two weeks. Bakayako urged his compatriots to take the disease seriously as "a real illness which spreads quickly."

Angola deployed special police aboard armoured vehicles to patrol Luanda streets to enforce anti-coronavirus regulations as people continued to venture outside.

The southwest African country has so far detected 14 cases of the novel coronavirus and recorded two deaths.

## Millions of jobs under threat

The African Union said nearly 20 million jobs could be threatened if the pandemic continues. Countries relying heavily on tourism and oil production stand to be hit especially hard.

It put forward a "realistic" scenario in which the pandemic lasts until July but Africa "is not very affected", and a "pessimistic" scenario in which it lasts until August and Africa suffers more.

The first would cause the African economy to shrink by 0.8 percent and the second would cause it to shrink by 1.1 percent—both far cries from the 3.4 percent growth the African Development Bank projected for the continent before the pandemic hit.

The AU suggested the African Union Commission "lead negotiations of an ambitious plan for the cancellation of total African external debt", valued at \$236 billion.

Separately, Nigeria, Africa's most populous country and biggest economy, said it had asked for \$6.9 billion from multilateral lenders including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank.

Abuja has said it is planning to establish a \$1.3 billion fund to bolster the country's weak healthcare system.



And Angola deployed special police aboard armoured vehicles to patrol Luanda streets to enforce anti-coronavirus regulations as people continued to venture outside despite restrictions on movement

### **Police rap for party bash**

Also in Nigeria, a popular actress was found guilty of breaking coronavirus lockdown restrictions in economic hub Lagos by throwing a birthday party for her husband, police said.

Funke Akindele, a Nollywood film star popularly known as Jenifa, was arrested and pleaded guilty to hosting the bash at their upscale residence on Saturday.

In Rwanda, meanwhile, politicians and top civil servants were told their salaries this month will be redirected to welfare programmes to help the poor withstand the virus' economic impact.

In Geneva, the head of the World Health Organization angrily slammed recent suggestions by scientists that a vaccine be tested in Africa as "racist" and a hangover from the "colonial mentality".

"Africa cannot and will not be a testing ground for any vaccine," WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a virtual news conference, insisting "we will follow all the rules to test any vaccine or therapeutics all over the world... whether it is in Europe, Africa or wherever."

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