

Irish PM extends coronavirus lockdown to May 5

April 10 2020

Prime Minister Leo Varadkar announced on Friday that Ireland's coronavirus lockdown measures rolled out last month will be extended until 5 May.

The government accepted an "expert recommendation" that the current ban on non-essential movement should be prolonged, Varadkar said.

"What we're doing is difficult, but it's making a difference and we have to keep going," he added.

"Too many have died and sadly more will die and get sick before this is over. So today's message is that we cannot be complacent and we cannot lose focus."

The Irish government closed schools and universities on 12 March, ramping up controls until a full [lockdown](#) on non-essential movement was imposed on 27 March.

The order had been due to expire at midnight (2300 GMT) on Sunday.

Health Minister Simon Harris said the current measures had successfully reduced the spread of infection.

"Just a couple of weeks ago a person who got the virus typically infected about four others," he said.

"Last night we learned from our scientific experts that it's now approaching one, but we need to get it lower again."

Unprecedented police powers to enforce the lockdown will also remain in place.

Under emergency powers passed in the Irish parliament two weeks ago, those violating the ban are liable to a fine of up to 2,500 euros (\$2,700) and/or six months in prison.

Irish police began enforcing the new regulation on Wednesday, with roadblocks nationwide and at the border with the British province of Northern Ireland.

Varadkar said Friday the powers would be used "sparingly".

There have been 263 COVID-19 related deaths and 6,574 confirmed cases in the republic, according to department of health figures released Thursday.

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