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Kenya bans travel in and out of Nairobi to fight coronavirus

April 6 2020, by Tom Odula and Mogomotsi Magome

In this image made from video, a group of local residents demonstrate outside a coronavirus medical reception facility that was under construction in the Yopougon area of the commercial capital Abidjan, Ivory Coast, Monday, April 6, 2020. The protesters hampered the government's effort to build the emergency coronavirus medical reception facility in the crowded Yopougon area, ransacking the site and destroying equipment to be used to construct the center, saying they are worried that the triage center could expose their community to COVID-19. (AP Photo)

Kenya increased its restrictions to combat the coronavirus on Monday, announcing travel bans into and out of the capital city, Nairobi, the port of Mombasa and two counties.

Forty-three of Africa's 54 countries have closed their borders, according to the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. More than half of Africa's 54 countries have imposed lockdowns, curfews, travel bans or other restrictions to try to contain the spread of COVID-19. Fifty-one of the continent's countries report cases of the disease.

In Kenya, President Uhuru Kenyatta said all movement by rail, road and air in and out of the Nairobi metropolitan area will halt starting Monday at 7 p.m.

Movement will also be halted in and out of Mombasa, Kenya's second largest city, as well as Kilifi and Kwale counties on Kenya's Indian Ocean coast starting Wednesday. The restrictions will last for an initial 21 days. Movement of food supplies and cargo will continue as normal, Kenyatta said.

Kenya already has a dusk-to-dawn curfew to contain the virus that has infected 158 people in the country, according to government statistics. Four people have died in Kenya from the disease.

Kenyatta said 82% of the confirmed cases came from Nairobi and 14% were reported from Kilifi, Kwale and Mombasa counties.

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The East African nation of 50 million people has 578 intensive care beds.

South Africa leads other African countries with 1,655 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 11 deaths, and was among the first to impose travel restrictions as confirmed cases increased in the country and across Africa.

The country is in a strict three-week nationwide lockdown that started on March 27 and is set to last until April 17.

A couple was arrested at their wedding over the weekend in Richards Bay in Kwazulu-Natal province for breaking the lockdown restrictions which ban gatherings including church services. Forty wedding guests and a pastor were also arrested for attending the ceremony, according to the police.

A video of the couple being arrested and led into a police vehicle circulated on social media.

In the Western Cape province, which includes the city of Cape Town, police arrested a 33-year-old man who was allegedly part of a group that looted a liquor store in the city. Liquor sales are not allowed under South Africa's lockdown, which also prohibits cigarette sales.

In this image made from video, security forces fire tear gas after a group of local residents demonstrated outside a coronavirus medical reception facility that was under construction in the Yopougon area of the commercial capital Abidjan, Ivory Coast, Monday, April 6, 2020. The protesters hampered the government's effort to build the emergency coronavirus medical reception facility in the crowded Yopougon area, ransacking the site and destroying equipment to be used to construct the center, saying they are worried that the triage center could expose their community to COVID-19. (AP Photo)

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, currently the chairman of the African Union, has rallied African leaders to unite in the fight against the spread of the coronavirus.

Ramaphosa on Monday lauded the recently announced African Union response fund, which has raised $12.5 million to help African countries fight the virus.

The fund is to help lessen critical shortages of personal protective equipment for medical staff that have been reported in several African countries in Africa as global demand for these increases and flight restrictions hamper delivery of aid and other necessary supplies.

The continental body would also channel an additional $4.5 million towards the Africa Centers for Disease Control, which is leading the fight against the virus on the continent.

The African Union fund is similar to the national fund Ramaphosa has established in South Africa.

County workers practise social distancing and wear masks as they queue to renew their employment contracts in Uhuru Park in downtown Nairobi, Kenya Monday, April 6, 2020. Kenya on Monday increased its restrictions to combat the new coronavirus, announcing travel bans into and out of the capital city, Nairobi, the port of Mombasa and two counties. (AP Photo/John Muchucha)

The South Africa fund has already raised at least $150 million, which will be used to get medical and protective supplies, and support struggling small business and employees in distress due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"In uniting behind this global health emergency, as African countries we have shown once again our ability of transcend political and other differences in pursuit of a common objective," Ramaphosa said in a

statement. "We should seize this moment to deepen collaboration across other areas, such as development and trade."

In Ivory Coast Monday, protesters in the commercial center Abidjan hampered the government's effort to build an emergency coronavirus medical reception facility in the crowded Yopougon area. The rioters ransacked the site and destroyed equipment to be used to construct the center.

Police used tear gas to disperse the protesters, whose attacks began Sunday evening. Protesters said they are worried that a triage center would expose their community to COVID-19.

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Ivory Coast, Monday, April 6, 2020. The protesters hampered the government's effort to build the emergency coronavirus medical reception facility in the crowded Yopougon area, ransacking the site and destroying equipment to be used to construct the center, saying they are worried that the triage center could expose their community to COVID-19. (AP Photo)

In this photo taken Sunday, April 5, 2020, laboratory technicians, seen behind a blue-tinted window, work on testing patient samples for the new coronavirus that causes COVID-19, at the Pathologists Lancet Kenya laboratory in Nairobi, Kenya. The company, which is offering tests to patients with a doctor's referral, was previously having to send samples to South Africa for testing but is now completing the testing in-house in Kenya. (AP Photo/Brian Inganga)

In this photo taken Sunday, April 5, 2020, laboratory technician Irene Ooko walks outside to take a nasal sample from a patient seeking a test for the new coronavirus that causes COVID-19, at the Pathologists Lancet Kenya laboratory in Nairobi, Kenya. The company, which is offering tests to patients with a doctor's referral, was previously having to send samples to South Africa for testing but is now completing the testing in-house in Kenya. (AP Photo/Brian Inganga)

"They should build their centers outside the town," said Patrice Djedje, a Yopougon resident. "The whole world is fighting against the virus, and yet it's here, in the middle of the city that they come and install their center."

Abidjan is Ivory Coast's biggest city, with a population of about 4.5

million.

Local officials came to the site Monday to engage with the locals who are opposed to the center.

"The president made the decision to protect the population, it's for you," said Abidjan prefect Vincent Toh Bi Irié. "Would a government install a center to infects its own people? It's not possible."

Ivory Coast registered its first case of COVID-19 on March 11. As of Sunday, the country had 261 cases, including 3 deaths and 37 recoveries, according to health officials. Abidjan has been cut off from the rest of the country, with a curfew imposed.

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