

Liberia to lock down capital over virus threat

April 8 2020

Liberian President George Weah declared a state of emergency in the West African country on Wednesday, with the capital Monrovia set to go into lockdown in a bid to curb coronavirus.

In a televised statement, the president said that all movement between Liberia's 15 counties would be banned from 11:59 pm on Friday, and that all non-essential businesses and government offices would close.

Residents of four counties—including Monrovia's, which is home to about 1 million people—must also stay at home for two weeks, he said.

Authorities in those counties will allow people to leave their homes only to buy food or for health reasons.

"We have to ask ourselves why we should abide by these measures. The answer is simple: to save lives," Weah said.

Wednesday's announcement escalates earlier health measures which banned large gatherings as well as flights to and from virus-stricken countries.

As with other [poor countries](#) in the region, there are fears that Liberia is ill prepared to handle a large outbreak.

The nation of some 4.8 million has recorded 13 [coronavirus](#) cases to date, with three deaths.

But Liberia was badly hit during the West Africa's 2014-16 Ebola crisis, which killed more than 4,800 people in the country.

Weah warned that the coronavirus was the greatest threat facing Liberia since Ebola.

"The horrific scenarios that are beginning to emerge should serve as sufficient warning for every one of us to spring into action," he said.

Coronavirus "has already arrived in Liberia, and confirmed cases are now on the rise," Weah added.

Decimated after back-to-back [civil wars](#) from 1989 to 2003, Liberia also suffers economic woes including rampant inflation and fuel shortages.

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Citation: Liberia to lock down capital over virus threat (2020, April 8) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-04-liberia-capital-virus-threat.html>

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