Sierra Leone announces three-day lockdown against coronavirus

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Sierra Leone has declared a three-day lockdown, the government said on Wednesday, after authorities recorded a second coronavirus case in the poor West African state.

Speaking at a press conference in the capital Freetown on Wednesday, Sierra Leone's coronavirus response coordinator told reporters that the stay-at-home order will apply from Sunday.

The announcement comes after health authorities announced a second coronavirus case in the former British colony on Wednesday, in a doctor working in a Freetown hospital.

"Health workers will be provided with face masks," said Defence Minister Kellie Conteh, the coronavirus coordinator, who added that citizens should strive to wear masks too.

Conteh did not respond to a question from AFP asking why the lockdown will last for only three days, however.

Nigeria has locked down its megalopolis Lagos for two weeks, for example, while South Africa has ordered people to stay at home for three weeks.

There are fears that Sierra Leone—a poor country of some 7.5 million people—is ill-equipped for a large outbreak.

The country was already badly hit by the 2014-2016 West African Ebola crisis, which killed almost 4,000 people in Sierra Leone.

Conteh, the defence minister, said that all religious gatherings would now also be banned.

The government had already shut land borders and schools, and stopped international flights in a bid to curb the virus.

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