

# Iran says virus cases top 180,000

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More than 180,000 people have been infected in Iran's coronavirus outbreak since it first emerged nearly four months ago, an official said on Thursday.

As the figures were announced, President Hassan Rouhani called on Iranians to stick to guidelines aimed at stopping the spread of COVID-19.

"If everyone follows the health instructions exactly, then all jobs can be reopened," he said in remarks broadcast on state television.

"We are progressing slowly and step by step (because we don't want) our people to think that the [coronavirus](#) era has passed.

"This would pose a major health problem for us," Rouhani said.

Health ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari said 2,238 new infections in the past 24 hours took the total to 180,156.

She said 78 new deaths brought the overall toll to 8,584.

Iran reported its first COVID-19 cases on February 19—two deaths in the Shiite holy city of Qom.

The government has struggled to contain what quickly became the Middle East's deadliest [coronavirus outbreak](#).

Since April, however, it has gradually lifted health protocols in order to reopen its sanctions-hit economy.

That has coincided with a fresh surge in cases, which the government denies amounts to a second wave, saying they are due to increased testing.

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