

Virus curbs rile Europeans as global deaths near one million

September 27 2020, by Daniel Silva



Madrid demonstrators complain the regional government isn't doing what's needed on public health

New infection control restrictions in Europe stirred anger and frustration on Sunday as around the world the global coronavirus toll inched towards

one million dead.

Demonstrators in Madrid complained that new lockdowns to confront mounting case numbers were discriminatory as they mostly affected poorer districts.

And in France, authorities tried to soothe the pain of a shutdown for bars and restaurants in the Mediterranean city of Marseille that has owners up in arms.

Saturday saw a 10,000-strong anti-lockdown demonstration in central London that was broken up by police.

Worldwide at least 999,301 people had died of Covid-19 by around 1930 GMT from among almost 33 million infections, according to an AFP tally from official sources.

Greek officials reported Sunday the first death of a migrant who had been living in one of Greece's overcrowded camps, a 61-year-old father of two from Afghanistan, from the virus.

Squalid conditions at the camps on the mainland and on Greece's Aegean Sea islands have prompted fears the virus could spread rapidly.

More than 240 who were transferred to a temporary camp on Lesbos after the notorious Moria camp burned down this month have contracted coronavirus.



People exercise at a park along the Yarra River in Melbourne a day before lockdown restrictions were to be eased

But there were glimmers of positive news, as residents of the Chinese city of Wuhan—where the virus emerged late last year—reported a hesitant return to normality, while the French Open got under way at Roland Garros in Paris.

In Australia, Victoria Premier Daniel Andrews said Melbourne residents would be free from Monday to leave their homes for work, exercise, shopping for essentials or providing care after active cases in the state fell below 400 for the first time since June 30.

Anti-lockdown protests

Protesters in the Spanish capital hit the streets a day before a partial lockdown was to be extended beyond the 850,000 people already covered.

The 37 districts already affected are mainly low-income areas.

"It makes no sense that you can go to work in a wealthier area but can't go have a drink," 27-year-old electrician Marcos Ruiz Guijarro told AFP.

"Infections are rising everywhere, the rules should be the same for everyone."

In Marseille, authorities said closures of bars and restaurants until October 11 in France's hard-hit south would affect only the port city and nearby Aix-en-Provence, sparing the surrounding region.



Police move in on lockdown protesters in London's Trafalgar Square

Nevertheless, landlords will respond with "physical and legal actions in the coming hours and days," said Bernard Marty of the local hotel federation.

France has seen new cases mount sharply in recent weeks, topping 16,000 on Thursday and again on Friday.

In the UK thousands of demonstrators against infection control measures and potential coronavirus vaccines were driven from central London's Trafalgar Square on Saturday by police with batons, who said they had failed to take precautions like maintaining distancing and arrested 10

people.

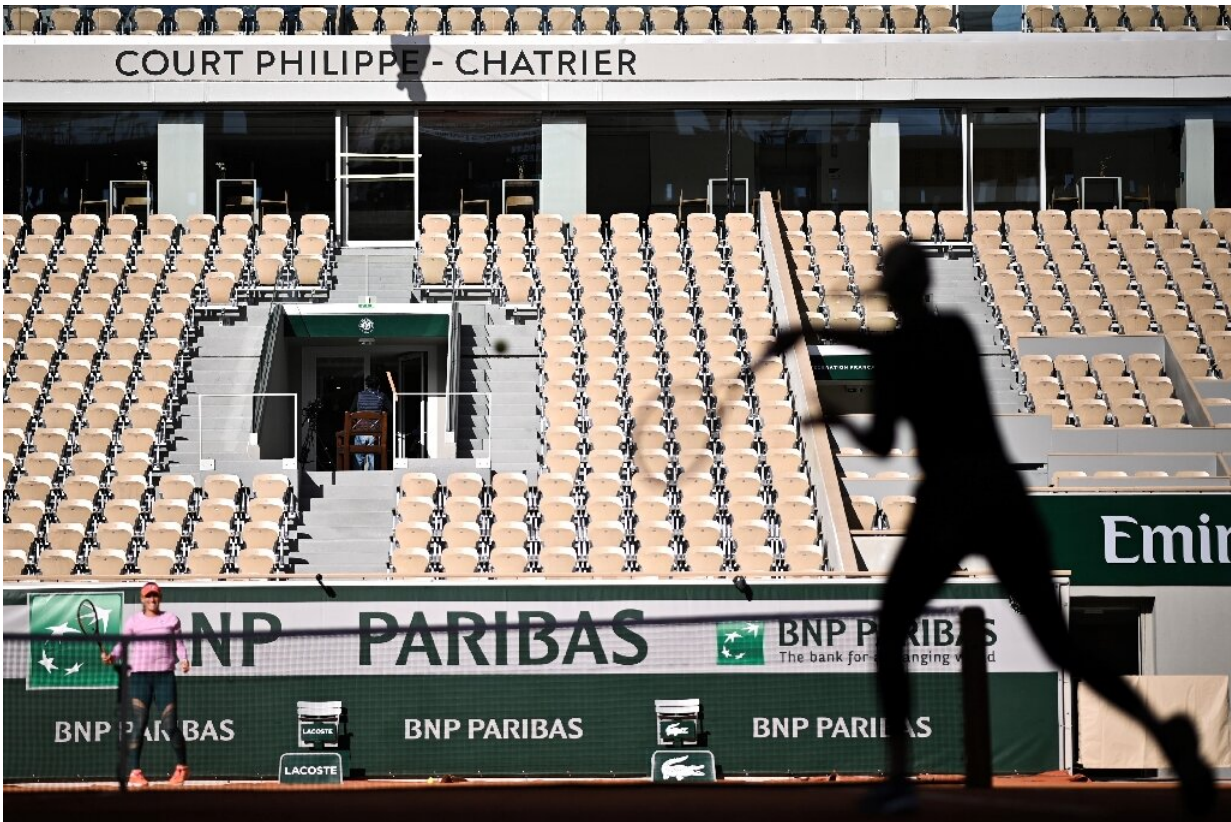
Faced with a mounting second wave, Britain has imposed a ban on gatherings of more than six people and ordered pubs and restaurants to close at 10 pm in a bid to slow the spread of the virus, which has claimed 42,000 lives in the country so far—making it the worst-affected nation in Europe.

In India, meanwhile, infections closed in on six million on Sunday as Prime Minister Narendra Modi called on people to keep wearing face masks in public.

"They are potent tools to save the life of every citizen," he said.

Health ministry figures showed that the total number of cases had risen to 5,992,532.

India is expected to overtake the United States—which has reported more than seven million cases so far—as the worst-hit country in the next few weeks.



Players take part in a French Open warm-up session without spectators at Roland Garros

Back to normal?

In Paris, a limited number of spectators watched live tennis for the first time in months as the French Open starts—four months later than scheduled.

It will be an eerily unfamiliar tournament as only 1,000 spectators will be allowed into the grounds each day because of a resurgence of the virus.

"Having no fans stinks," American 21st seed John Isner complained, bemoaning the loss of the tournament's usually "unbelievable"

atmosphere.

For residents of Wuhan, where the coronavirus first emerged late last year, life is already back to normal.

There have been 50,340 confirmed cases and 3,869 deaths in Wuhan, according to the official figures—the majority of mainland China's toll—but no new infections since May.

Families are once again packing amusement parks, and shopping streets were full over the weekend—although residents remained cautious.

"The people have experienced tragedy and deeply know that a happy life is not easy to come by," said a woman named Wang.

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Citation: Virus curbs rile Europeans as global deaths near one million (2020, September 27)
retrieved 24 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-09-virus-curbs-rile-europeans-global.html>

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