

Coronavirus cases surge in Europe and Latin America

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Germany and Poland enforced new restrictions to fight the coronavirus Saturday, as the number of cases surged in Europe and breached 10 million in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Bars and restaurants are to close at 11:00 pm (2100 GMT) in Berlin until October 31 in a partial curfew, a measure already imposed—but starting an hour earlier—in the financial capital Frankfurt.

With more than 400 new cases daily in Berlin, the shutdown of the German capital's legendary nightlife also covers all shops except pharmacies and petrol stations, although they will be banned from selling alcohol.

"This is not the time to party," said Berlin mayor Michael Muller. "We can and we want to prevent another more severe confinement."

Police said "several thousand" people marched through Berlin on Saturday in a silent protest against restrictions. Protesters also rallied in Rome, Warsaw and London against mask-wearing requirements and virus curbs.

Governments across the globe are struggling to keep up with a sharp rise in infections and manage growing public frustration over a new restrictions as the pandemic enters a second wave.

Since it emerged in China late last year, the virus has killed more than one million worldwide, infected nearly 37 million and forced millions more out of work as the pandemic batters the global economy.

Latin America and the Caribbean marked 10 million cases Saturday and with more than 360,000 deaths, the region is the worst hit in terms of fatalities, according to official figures.

In Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel had already warned Friday that high-infection areas would be given 10 days to bring down cases or face tougher action, calling [big cities](#) the "arena" to keep the pandemic under control.

In neighbouring Poland, authorities told people to wear [face masks](#) in all [public spaces](#) after coronavirus cases hit a new record daily high of 4,280.

To the south, the Czech Republic faced the prospect of a new lockdown as the growth in COVID-19 cases set a fourth straight daily record. The number of 8,618 was the fastest spike in Europe.

Anti-mask protests

EU Commissioner Mariya Gabriel was the latest high-profile figure to test positive for COVID-19. She announced the news on Saturday, the first top Brussels official known to have caught the coronavirus.

British cyclist Simon Yates pulled out of the Giro d'Italia after he tested positive.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who himself spent time in hospital for the virus, is to outline a new three-tier lockdown system on Monday.

But as with the Berlin march, new restrictions have often run into opposition as public frustration grows over curbs on social life, mask requirements and business shutdowns.

Local leaders bristled at London's plans, with Manchester mayor Andy Burnham saying "We will not surrender our residents to hardship this Christmas or our businesses to failure".

In Rome, hundreds of people gathered for two separate marches against mask-wearing orders, one organised by a far-right group, the other bringing together conspiracy theorists, "anti-vaxxers" and other protesters.

"Of course there is a virus, but from a political and philosophical point of view, they are just exaggerating," Giulio Lessi, a Rome protester, said of the government measures.

Spain's government also faces increasing public resistance to anti-virus measures after declaring a state of emergency and a new partial lockdown for Madrid on Friday.

People were barred from leaving the city except for work, school or medical reasons, measures denounced by the city's right-wing authorities.

Defiance in Madrid echoes problems the French government faced last month when it shut bars and restaurants in Marseille, provoking the fury of local officials.

Partial shutdowns have since been extended to Paris and other major urban areas, and another four French cities were placed on maximum coronavirus alert Thursday, with bars ordered closed and public gatherings limited.

Trump 'safe return'

US President Donald Trump was to give a public speech at the White House Saturday for the first time since he tested positive for COVID-19. He also announced plans to hold a rally in Florida on Monday, despite receiving treatment all week for coronavirus.

Trump's doctor issued a statement saying he was fit for a "[safe return](#) to public engagement" from Saturday.

But there is widespread scepticism about the president's health, given doctors' refusal to explain exactly when he might have been infected and

when he last had a negative test.

Media reports said the White House was preparing a \$1.8 trillion economic rescue plan, but with political divisions firmly entrenched ahead of the November presidential election, it faces major roadblocks.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on Saturday wished [coronavirus](#) sufferers around the world good health at a military parade that defied the pandemic while claiming his country was free of the virus.

Pyongyang closed its borders in January to try to protect itself from the disease and regularly said it had no cases.

In a rare display of normality on Sunday, New Zealand and Australia are to play the first rugby Test since the pandemic began, in front of a packed, largely mask-free crowd in Wellington.

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