

French doctor warns his country has 'lost control' of virus

October 26 2020, by Angela Charlton and Mike Corder



Commuters wearing face masks walk on the platform, of a Paris subway, Sunday Oct.25, 2020. A curfew intended to curb the spiraling spread of the coronavirus, has been imposed in many regions of France including Paris and its suburbs. (AP Photo/Lewis Joly)

A French doctor warned Monday that his country has "lost control of the

epidemic," a day after health authorities reported more than 52,000 new coronavirus cases as nations across Europe enact more sweeping restrictions to try to slow surging infection rates.

Spain—the first European country to surpass 1 million confirmed COVID-19 cases—[declared a state of emergency](#) Sunday that included a nationwide overnight curfew, a cap of six people on social gatherings and possible travel bans in and out of the hardest-hit regions.

The effect was clear on Barcelona's famed Las Ramblas promenade, which was deserted Sunday night when it normally would have been teeming with people.

In two major Italian cities, people took to the streets amid a pushback from small sections of society to new restrictions. On Friday, demonstrators in Naples protested a locally imposed 11 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew and clashed with police. On Saturday night, far-right and neo-fascist groups led a similar protest in Rome against a curfew. Another protest is planned for Tuesday in Milan.

Dr. Jean-François Delfraissy, president of the scientific council that advises the French government on the virus, said the country is in a "very difficult, even critical situation."

"There probably are more than 50,000 new cases every day. Our estimate at the Scientific Council is closer to 100,000 – twice as many," Delfraissy told RTL radio. "Between those who aren't tested and asymptomatic patients, we're close to that number of cases. This means the virus is spreading extremely fast."



Health care workers prepare to transport a COVID-19 patient from an intensive care unit (ICU) at hospital in Kyjov to hospital in Brno, Czech Republic, Thursday, Oct. 22, 2020. Coronavirus infections in the Czech Republic are on a steep rise, setting a new record high for the second straight day. About 4,500 COVID-19 patients have filled up the country's hospital with the government expected the health system will be overwhelmed by Nov 11 if the surge doesn't slow. (AP Photo/Petr David Josek)

France declared a state of emergency earlier this month and has been imposing more and more restrictions since September to try to ease the pressure on France's hospitals, where COVID-19 patients occupy more than half of all ICU beds.

Dr. Eric Caumes, head of the infections and tropical diseases department at Paris' Pitie-Salpetriere Hospital, said the country needs to lock down

again.

"We lost control of the epidemic but that doesn't date from yesterday," he said on broadcaster Franceinfo. "We lost control of the epidemic several weeks ago already."

Europe's confirmed death toll has surpassed 250,000 according to a count by Johns Hopkins University, which puts the global toll at more than 1.1 million.

A senior World Health Organization official said national lockdowns could be avoided if people are willing to make sacrifices.



Two women stand in the deserted city of Berchtesgaden, Germany, Monday, Oct. 26, 2020. Authorities have posed the Berchtesgaden region under a

lockdown since Oct. 20, 2020 due to a rising number of cases of the pandemic COVID-19 disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus in the district of Berchtesgadener Land. Local authorities in Bavaria's Rottal-Inn county, on the border with Austria, said Monday that the restrictions will begin at midnight. (AP Photo/Matthias Schrader)

Maria Van Kerkhove, WHO's technical lead on COVID-19, said she hoped countries would use other tools to stop transmission, including strengthening their surveillance, testing and contact tracing systems.

"We can avoid national lockdowns," Van Kerkhove said. She said people should take personal responsibility for everyday decisions, like whether or not they should go to crowded places, avoiding closed settings and postponing social gatherings.

Italy, the first country in the West to get slammed by COVID-19, took new measures over the weekend to try to rein in the new outbreak, ordering restaurants and bars closed by 6 p.m., and shutting down gyms, pools and movie theaters.

The measures, which took effect Monday, also require high schools to transition to at least 75% distance learning while letting younger students remain in classrooms. Indoor and outdoor gatherings, including those for religious reasons, are barred, and the government is strongly recommending people avoid having house guests and traveling in the country except for work, health or other necessities.



A art sculpture wearing a face mask in the deserted city of Berchtesgaden, Germany, Monday, Oct. 26, 2020. Authorities have posed the Berchtesgaden region under a lockdown since Oct. 20, 2020 due to a rising number of cases of the pandemic COVID-19 disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus in the district of Berchtesgadener Land. Local authorities in Bavaria's Rottal-Inn county, on the border with Austria, said Monday that the restrictions will begin at midnight. (AP Photo/Matthias Schrader)

The new restrictions sent Rome resident Matteo Serba to the city's Villa Borghese for a run Monday.

"I used to go to gym. Now jogging in the park is the alternative," Serba said. "Unfortunately, we have no other alternatives but coming here. It's sad but we have been asked to do it and we comply with the rules."

Italy has been registering around 20,000 new confirmed infections per day and health authorities have warned that some hospital COVID-19 wards risk hitting the saturation point in the next week or two.

British authorities are likely to tighten restrictions on more areas of the country this week, amid mixed signs about whether measures introduced in the last few weeks have stemmed a steep rise in infections.

Government scientific advisers say there are some signs the increase has begun to level off since a three-tier system of restrictions came into force, but that it is too soon to be certain.



People pass a sign reading 'Face masks mandatory from here' in the deserted city of Berchtesgaden, Germany, Monday, Oct. 26, 2020. Authorities have posed the Berchtesgaden region under a lockdown since Oct. 20, 2020 due to a rising

number of cases of the pandemic COVID-19 disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus in the district of Berchtesgadener Land. Local authorities in Bavaria's Rottal-Inn county, on the border with Austria, said Monday that the restrictions will begin at midnight. (AP Photo/Matthias Schrader)

A large chunk of northern England, including the major cities of Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield, has been placed in the top tier of "very high" risk, with pubs closed and people from different households barred from mixing. The government said that Warrington, another large town in the northwest, will be added to the top tier on Tuesday. Another city, Nottingham, will follow on Thursday, authorities there said.

Lawmakers in the Czech Republic, which has been one of the hardest-hit nations in the pandemic's resurgence in Europe, are set to approve this week a government plan to draft up to 300 military health personnel from NATO and EU countries to help treat the influx of patients.

They will help their Czech colleagues at Prague's military hospital and at a field hospital for 500 patients that the armed forces completed over the weekend at Prague's exhibition ground. The first group of 28 National Guard doctors from the United States is expected to arrive later this week.



A COVID-19 patient from the Netherlands arrives for treatment by helicopter to the University hospital in Muenster, Germany, Friday, Oct. 23, 2020. The transfer is intended to reduce the coronavirus pressure on the intensive care units in the Netherlands. (AP Photo/Martin Meissner)



Medical workers wearing protective gear transport a patient suspected of having coronavirus from an ambulance to a hospital in Rostov-on-Don, Russia, Thursday, Oct. 22, 2020. Russia is facing a sharp rise in infections, but the Kremlin has ruled out a new lockdown. (AP Photo)



A sports center worker wearing a face mask to curb the spread of COVID-19 walks outside a closed swimming pool of the Forum sports center, Monday, Oct. 26, 2020. For at least the next month, people outdoors except for small children must now wear masks in all of Italy, gyms, cinemas, swimming pools, and movie theaters will be closed, ski slopes are off-limits to all but competitive skiers and cafes and restaurants must shut down in early evenings, under a decree signed on Sunday by Italian Premier Giuseppe Conte, who ruled against another severe lockdown despite a current surge in COVID-19 infections. (AP Photo/Alessandra Tarantino)



An Italian Carabinieri paramilitary police car patrols an empty street leading to the Spanish Steps and Trinita' dei Monti Church Rome, early Monday, Oct. 26, 2020. Since midnight last Friday and for the next 30 days, people in Lazio are not allowed to leave their homes from midnight to 5 a.m. daily, except to go to or return from work or for other urgent reasons such as health issues. (AP Photo/Alessandra Tarantino)



Musicians wearing face masks to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, perform as a woman records a video with her cellphone on Ermou Street, Athens' main shopping area, Monday, Oct. 26, 2020. Greece's government has imposed a nightly curfew in greater Athens and other areas with high infection rates as well as more generalized mask use as the daily number of deaths and infections nationwide has rising in recent weeks. (AP Photo/Thanassis Stavrakis)



A man wearing a face mask, walks by a Charlie Chaplin street art, in the Montmartre district of Paris, Sunday Oct.25, 2020. A curfew intended to curb the spiraling spread of the coronavirus, has been imposed in many regions of France including Paris and its suburbs. (AP Photo/Lewis Joly)



People sit in a terrace of a bar in downtown Madrid, Spain, Friday, Oct. 23, 2020. (AP Photo/Manu Fernandez)



A resident walks with a dog on an empty street after curfew in Barcelona on Sunday, Oct. 25, 2020. Spain orders nationwide curfew to stem worsening outbreak. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez has declared a second nationwide state of emergency in hopes of stemming a resurgence in coronavirus infections. (AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti)



People sit at a restaurant in Piazza Navona, in Rome, Monday, Oct. 26, 2020. For at least the next month, people outdoors except for small children must now wear masks in all of Italy, gyms, cinemas, swimming pools, and movie theaters will be closed, ski slopes are off-limits to all but competitive skiers and cafes and restaurants must shut down in early evenings, under a decree signed on Sunday by Italian Premier Giuseppe Conte, who ruled against another severe lockdown despite a current surge in COVID-19 infections. (AP Photo/Andrew Medichini)

Authorities also said they are canceling Prague's major Christmas markets because of the virus.

The Bavarian city of Nuremberg also canceled its big Christmas market, one of Germany's best-known and a major tourist draw. City officials originally wanted the bustling Christkindlesmarkt to go ahead under

strict hygiene rules, but Mayor Marcus Koenig said they concluded it would send the wrong signal as virus cases rise.

"This decision is very difficult for us. The Christkindlesmarkt with its great tradition belongs to Nuremberg," Koenig said.

Germany's rising coronavirus numbers also prompted Chancellor Angela Merkel's party to delay for the second time a decision on who will become its new leader—one that had already been pushed by the pandemic from the spring to December.

Whoever wins the Christian Democratic Union's leadership will be in a position to become the center-right candidate to succeed Merkel as chancellor in a German election expected next fall, although that isn't guaranteed.

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