

Lebanon to lock down nearly 170 districts in virus fight

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Almost 170 Lebanese villages and towns will go into lockdown for the next week, the government said on Sunday, as it grapples with record numbers of novel coronavirus cases.

Authorities have also ordered bars and nightclubs nationwide closed

"until further notice".

An interior ministry statement said 169 villages and towns across the country would be locked down for one week from 6:00 am (0300 GMT) on Monday.

Around half of those localities had already been placed in [lockdown](#) under measures announced this month, including the closure of all public and private institutions excluding bakeries and pharmacies.

Lebanon, a Mediterranean country reeling from its worst economic crisis in decades, has recorded 52,558 novel [coronavirus](#) cases, including 455 deaths.

Infections have spiked in the aftermath of a catastrophic explosion at Beirut's port on August 4 that killed more than 200 people, injured thousands, damaged several hospitals and overwhelmed the capital's [health services](#).

Lebanon's caretaker health minister warned on Monday that increasing virus cases in the country could reach levels seen in Europe and called localised lockdowns a "last chance".

Authorities fear the continuous rise of cases could further overwhelm the country's fragile healthcare sector.

On August 21, authorities imposed an almost nationwide lockdown as well as a night-time curfew, but they eased the restrictions a week later after protest from the [private sector](#).

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