

Cyprus locks down southwest over surge in coronavirus cases

November 12 2020



Cypriot men sit at a social club and watch the televised address of Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades explaining the need for additional restrictions to beat back a surge in COVID-19 cases in Nicosia suburb of Lakatamia, Cyprus, on Tuesday, Nov. 11, 2020. Cyprus has put its entire southwest under a strict 19-day lockdown, banning any non-essential movement of people and shuttering bars and restaurants after a string of escalating restrictions failed to curb a sharp increase in COVID-19 infections. (AP Photo/Petros Karadjias)

Cyprus put its entire southwest under a strict 19-day lockdown Wednesday, banning any non-essential movement of people and shuttering bars and restaurants after a string of escalating restrictions failed to curb a sharp increase in coronavirus infections.

Health Minister Constantinos Ioannou said the lockdown was deemed necessary after consultations with the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control because infections in the Limassol and Paphos districts jumped from 28% to 70% of the national average in the last six weeks while two-thirds of hospitalized COVID-19 patients now receiving treatment hail from there.

Ioannou said a strict 8 p.m.-5 a.m. curfew will be in effect from Thursday through Nov. 30 and movement to and from the two districts will be barred to all except for emergency medical reasons and for those working in essential services such as [health workers](#).

All public gatherings are banned, religious services will be conducted without any worshippers, public and [private high schools](#) and colleges will conduct classes online, and non-essential government employees will work from home. Museums and [archaeological sites](#), theaters and cinemas, [shopping malls](#), beauty parlors and hairdressing salons, gyms, pools and casinos cannot open.

The measures mirror restrictions during a nearly three-month, island-wide lockdown that Cypriot authorities imposed at the start of the pandemic earlier this year, which officials credited with keeping infections low.

Ioannou said the uncertainty created that the eight month-old pandemic has fatigued many, but authorities are under tremendous strain to trace the large number of contacts each infected person has had.

Speaking earlier in a televised address, President Nicos Anastasiades said that he has observed the rising number of infections in recent weeks with "great anxiety" and that neither he nor his government could remain indifferent to the risk of a rising death toll.

"We are witnessing on a daily basis the tragic events unfolding in other countries. I'm sure that none of you would want to live through similar circumstances," said Anastasiades.

As in other European countries, a [coronavirus](#) resurgence in the island nation of 875,000 people has alarmed authorities that the health care system could be overwhelmed. As of Wednesday, Cyprus has recorded 6,461 confirmed cases and 33 deaths.

Anastasiades pledged to counter the economic impact of the new lockdown with an additional batch of support measures.

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