

Italy imposes partial lockdown for Christmas holiday

December 19 2020, by Colleen Barry



Loletta Bruschi, 96 years old, meets her son through a plastic film screen to avoid contracting the new coronavirus at the San Michele Arcangelo nursing home in San Michele Mondovi, northern Italy, Friday, Dec. 18, 2020. The Italian Government is weighing whether to impose a tighter lockdown over Christmas to prevent gatherings and the ensuing surge in new cases. (Marco Alpozzi/LaPresse via AP)

Italian Premier Giuseppe Conte on Friday announced there will be a partial lockdown nationwide for most of the Christmas holiday season, citing concerns that gatherings of families and friends could re-ignite the virus's spread.

The new decree puts strict limits on movements on holidays and weekends from Dec. 21 through the Jan. 6 Epiphany holiday, with a slight easing on four weekdays. To allow a glimmer of Christmas cheer, personal visits to friends or [family members](#) of no more than two people are allowed on any given day.

Conte called the limits "a painful decision."

The move comes as Lombardy, Veneto and Lazio registered a rate of transmission of over 1, meaning the virus is again spreading in three key regions after weeks of decrease in the contagion curve. The national rate is 0.86, meaning on average the curve is flattening.

"The virus continues to circulate everywhere. We can bend it, but we cannot defeat it," Conte said. "This is why even among our experts there is a strong concern that the contagion curve could surge during the Christmas period."

Italy was the first Western country hit by the pandemic, and also has recorded the highest death toll in Europe, reaching nearly 67,900 on Friday. Conte said the launch of the vaccination program Dec. 27 will mark the beginning of "the end of this nightmare."



A man wearing a Santa Claus costume checks his mobile phone as he waits to pose for pictures at a mall in Rome, Friday, Dec. 18, 2020. The health ministry reported another 18,236 confirmed cases Thursday, in line with recent days. The government is weighing whether to impose a tighter lockdown over Christmas to prevent gatherings and the ensuing surge in new cases. (AP Photo/Gregorio Borgia)



Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte speaks during the press conference at Palazzo Chigi regarding the anti-COVID-19 rules that will regulate the end of year holidays, in Rome, Italy, Friday, Dec. 18, 2020. (Mauro Scrobogna/LaPresse via AP)



Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte attends a press conference at Palazzo Chigi regarding the anti-COVID-19 rules that will regulate the end of year holidays, in Rome, Italy, Friday, Dec. 18, 2020. (Mauro Scrobogna/LaPresse via AP)



Maria Ansaldi, 89 years old, meets her daughter through a plastic film screen to avoid contracting the new coronavirus at the San Michele Arcangelo nursing home in San Michele Mondovi, northern Italy, Friday, Dec. 18, 2020. The Italian Government is weighing whether to impose a tighter lockdown over Christmas to prevent gatherings and the ensuing surge in new cases. (Marco Alpozzi/LaPresse via AP)



Nurse Glenda Grossi, second from right, talks with her colleague in the COVID-19 ICU of the Tor Vergata Polyclinic Hospital as she starts the early morning shift, Sunday, Dec. 13, 2020. The coronavirus pandemic has posed unprecedented challenges for families around the world managing work and home life with children kept home from school and after-school activities. For the Di Giacobbe family, the juggling is even more complicated since mom and dad are intensive care nurses in the same COVID-19 ward and spend their days tag-teaming shifts, trying to give their patients the level of personal care and attention they would give their own children. (AP Photo/Alessandra Tarantino)



Maurizio Di Giacobbe, left, and Glenda Grossi, right, place decorations on a Christmas tree, with their children from left, Tiziano, 4, Arianna, 9, and Flavio 10, in their house in the outskirts of Rome, Saturday Dec. 12, 2020. The coronavirus pandemic has posed unprecedented challenges for families around the world managing work and home life with children kept home from school and after-school activities. For the Di Giacobbe family, the juggling is even more complicated since mom and dad are intensive care nurses in the same COVID-19 ward and spend their days tag-teaming shifts, trying to give their patients the level of personal care and attention they would give their own children. (AP Photo/Alessandra Tarantino)



Nurse Maurizio di Giacobbe helps a patient with a video call in the COVID-19 ICU of the Tor Vergata Polyclinic Hospital, Sunday, Dec. 13, 2020. The coronavirus pandemic has posed unprecedented challenges for families around the world managing work and home life with children kept home from school and after-school activities. For the Di Giacobbe family, the juggling is even more complicated since mom and dad are intensive care nurses in the same COVID-19 ward and spend their days tag-teaming shifts, trying to give their patients the level of personal care and attention they would give their own children. (AP Photo/Alessandra Tarantino)

The new restrictions will mean no Christmas lunches in restaurants, as had been foreseen in a previous decree, although take-out and deliveries are allowed. To soften the blow to a sector already devastated, the decree includes 645 million euros in aid.

In anticipation of the ban on movement between regions, which already had been announced, many people moved up holiday travel to this weekend.

The new decree further limits movements to the towns and cities of residence, and during the partial lockdown period permits outings only for work, health reasons and necessities like grocery shopping or going to the pharmacy. On four non-[holiday](#) weekdays, other stores will be open for business until 9 p.m.

In addition, a 10 p.m.-5 a.m. curfew will remain in place throughout the duration.

Conte said the strengthened measures were necessary to "confront the upcoming holidays in a way to better protect ourselves, and also in view of the general resumption of activities that will come in January."

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Citation: Italy imposes partial lockdown for Christmas holiday (2020, December 19) retrieved 27 April 2024 from

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