

Greece orders private doctors to join COVID-19 battle

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In this Thursday, March 11, 2021, file photo, Greek Health Minister Vassilis Kikilias makes statements to the Associated Press in Athens. Kikilias is requisitioning the services of private sector doctors from certain specialties in the wider Athens region on Monday, March 22, 2021, to help fight a renewed surge in coronavirus infections that is straining hospitals to their limits. (AP Photo/Thanassis Stavrakis, File)

Greece's health minister is requisitioning the services of private sector doctors from certain specialties in the wider Athens region to help fight a renewed surge in coronavirus infections that is straining hospitals to their limits.

In an announcement released Monday, Vassilis Kikilias said that despite repeated appeals for private doctors to volunteer to help in the public sector, very few came forward. Therefore, the minister said, he was ordering specialists in pathology, pneumonology and general medicine to help.

Kikilias had said Friday he would requisition private sector doctors unless at least 200 volunteered within 48 hours. Government spokeswoman Aristotelia Peloni said Monday that only 61 doctors had stepped forward voluntarily.

"It was the last measure, if you will, in the context of the emergency plan prepared by the Health Ministry, and it was decided that it was now necessary to mobilize private doctors as part of this great struggle, this national effort, after all the opportunities for voluntary participation were exhausted," Peloni said.

The requisition order is for one month for 206 doctors, [health](#) authorities said.

Greece has been experiencing a renewed surge of COVID-19 despite lockdown-related measures being in force since early November, with dozens of daily deaths recorded, as well as increasing numbers of patients hospitalized in intensive care units. About 500 people are hospitalized each day across the country with COVID-19, [health authorities](#) say, with 200 of them being in the wider Athens region.



The first visitors wearing face masks to protect against the spread of coronavirus, stand atop of Acropolis hill, with the Parthenon temple in the background, in Athens, Monday, March 22, 2021. Greece's government reopened the Acropolis and other ancient sites nationwide after four months as it prepares to restart the tourism season in mid-May. (AP Photo/Thanassis Stavrakis)



The first visitors wearing face masks to protect against the spread of coronavirus, take photographs atop of Acropolis hill in Athens, Monday, March 22, 2021. Greece's government reopened the Acropolis and other ancient sites nationwide after four months as it prepares to restart the tourism season in mid-May. (AP Photo/Thanassis Stavrakis)



A cat walks atop of the Acropolis hill as visitors wearing face masks to protect against the spread of coronavirus, stand near the Parthenon temple in Athens, Monday, March 22, 2021. Greece's government reopened the Acropolis and other ancient sites nationwide after four months as it prepares to restart the tourism season in mid-May. (AP Photo/Thanassis Stavrakis)



Employees at a hair salon wearing face masks to prevent the spread of coronavirus, work on customers in Athens, Monday, March 22, 2021. Greece's government reopened a limited number of barbershops and hair salons on Monday. (AP Photo/Thanassis Stavrakis)



An employee of a hair salon wearing a face mask to prevent the spread of coronavirus, cleans a chair in Athens, Monday, March 22, 2021. Greece's government reopened a limited number of barbershops and hair salons on Monday. (AP Photo/Thanassis Stavrakis)



The first visitors wearing face masks to protect against the spread of coronavirus, walk atop of Acropolis hill, as the Parthenon temple is seen in the background in Athens, Monday, March 22, 2021. Greece's government reopened the Acropolis and other ancient sites nationwide after four months as it prepares to restart the tourism season in mid-May. (AP Photo/Thanassis Stavrakis)

On Sunday, Greece reported 1,514 new [coronavirus](#) cases and 41 more deaths, bringing total confirmed cases in the country of around 11 million people cases to 237,125 and its pandemic death toll to 7,462.

Despite the rising numbers, authorities have announced a slight relaxation of lockdown measures, with hairdressers, nail salons and open-air archaeological sites reopening as of Monday. Amateur fishing, which had also been banned, is also being allowed for those living in coastal

areas, as access to the sea is allowed only on foot or bicycle.

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