

As infections rise, Sarajevo's hospitals feel the pressure

March 18 2021, by Eldar Emric



A medic wearing full protective gear works with a patient on oxygen support in the COVID-19 ward at a the General Hospital in the capital Sarajevo, Bosnia, Thursday, March 18, 2021. As Bosnia faces soaring coronavirus infections and rapidly-filling hospitals, two doctors from Turkey have arrived in Sarajevo to help and offer their insight in the treatment of COVID-19. Bosnia is seeing a huge rise in infections and hospitalizations after a period of relaxed measures and the winter season that saw ski resorts staying open unlike in most of Europe. (AP Photo)

As Bosnia faces soaring coronavirus infections, pressure has grown on hospitals in the capital of Sarajevo that have struggled with rising numbers of COVID-19 patients.

The Abdulah Nakas General Hospital in Sarajevo on Thursday morning had 181 patients on its COVID-19 ward and 20 more were trying to be admitted. Dozens of other COVID-19 patients were seeking treatment at other Bosnian hospitals and many more were waiting in lines to see doctors at outpatient clinics.

The Balkan nation of 3.3 million is facing a surge in new [coronavirus](#) infections and hospitalizations after relaxing restrictive measures and keeping its ski resorts open through the winter, unlike most areas in Europe. In fact, many part of Central and Eastern Europe are seeing surges in new infections that experts blame on more transmissible virus variants like the one first found in Britain.

The number of new daily infections in Bosnia reached 1,700 on Thursday compared to few hundred a day only weeks ago. Authorities said 57 more COVID-19 patients died.

This has added additional pressure on Bosnia's already weak health care system, which was devastated during the country's 1992-95 war. The impoverished Balkan nation has yet to start mass vaccinations.



Doctors from the Amerikan Hastanesi hospital in Istanbul and local medical staff pass through the corridor in the COVID-19 ward at a the General Hospital in the capital Sarajevo, Bosnia, Thursday, March 18, 2021. As Bosnia faces soaring coronavirus infections and rapidly-filling hospitals, two doctors from Turkey have arrived in Sarajevo to help and offer their insight in the treatment of COVID-19. Bosnia is seeing a huge rise in infections and hospitalizations after a period of relaxed measures and the winter season that saw ski resorts staying open unlike in most of Europe. (AP Photo)

On Thursday, two doctors from Turkey visited the Sarajevo General hospital to offer support and their insight into treatment of COVID-19 patients.

"We appreciate so much that a delegation of our colleagues ... is visiting

at this tough moment," said hospital manager Ismet Gavrankapetanovic.

Another Sarajevo clinic, the University Hospital, earlier this week declared an emergency and pulled back all staff from vacations to deal with the influx of new patients.

Sarajevo authorities imposed a lockdown over last weekend, but they have been reluctant to further tighten the rules fearing this would weaken the country's already impoverished economy.

Meanwhile, lawmakers in the Bosnian entity run by the Bosniaks and Croats were set Thursday to discuss measures to curb the spread of the virus.

Inside Sarajevo General Hospital, the Bosnian doctors and their Turkish colleagues from the Amerikan Hastanesi [hospital](#) in Istanbul wore protective suits and face shields while checking on COVID-19 patients. The idea behind the visit was to exchange experience, improve clinical practice and help reduce COVID-19 deaths, they said. Overall, Bosnia has seen over 5,720 virus-related deaths in the pandemic.



Doctors from the Amerikan Hastanesi hospital in Istanbul and local medical staff taking care for patients in the COVID-19 ward at a the General Hospital in the capital Sarajevo, Bosnia, Thursday, March 18, 2021. As Bosnia faces soaring coronavirus infections and rapidly-filling hospitals, two doctors from Turkey have arrived in Sarajevo to help and offer their insight in the treatment of COVID-19. Bosnia is seeing a huge rise in infections and hospitalizations after a period of relaxed measures and the winter season that saw ski resorts staying open unlike in most of Europe. (AP Photo)



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A patient on oxygen support in the COVID-19 ward at a the General Hospital in the capital Sarajevo, Bosnia, Thursday, March 18, 2021. As Bosnia faces soaring coronavirus infections and rapidly-filling hospitals, two doctors from Turkey have arrived in Sarajevo to help and offer their insight in the treatment of COVID-19. Bosnia is seeing a huge rise in infections and hospitalizations after a period of relaxed measures and the winter season that saw ski resorts staying open unlike in most of Europe. (AP Photo)



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One COVID-19 patient, Emir Leso, had a message for his fellow Bosnians.

"I didn't believe in it until I got it. Now I am telling people to take care as much as they can, this is a tough disease," he said.

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