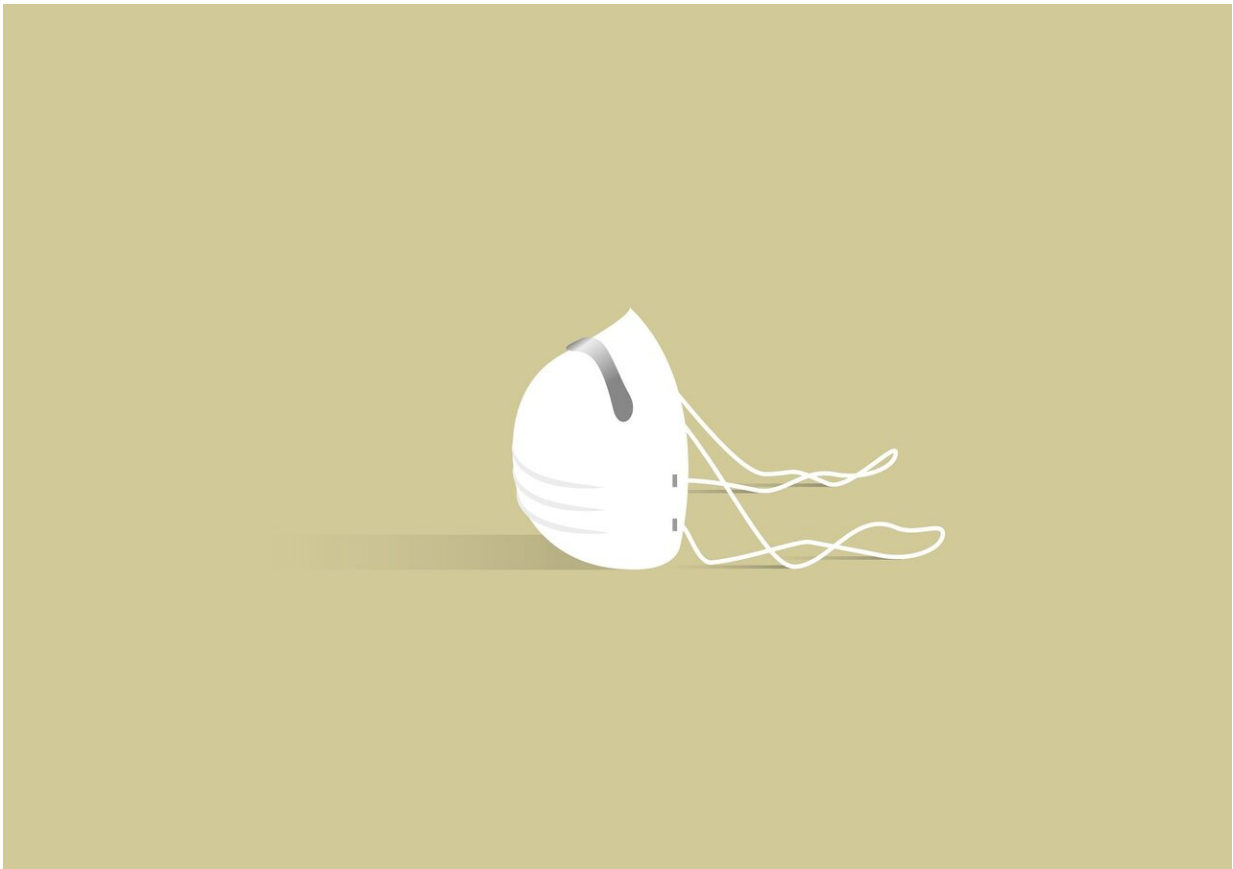


Czechs close Christmas markets, nightclubs over COVID

November 25 2021



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The Czech government declared a 30-day state of emergency on Thursday, closing Christmas markets as well as nightclubs in a bid to

stem COVID-19 infections.

An EU member of 10.7 million people, the Czech Republic saw 18,004 new infections on Wednesday following a record-high 25,877 new cases the day before.

Hospitals in the east of the country are on the brink of their capacity and some have begun to move patients across the country by helicopters and ambulance.

Some hospitals have also reduced non-acute care because of the inflow of largely non-vaccinated patients.

"The situation will worsen in the weeks to come with a peak expected around Christmas," Health Minister Adam Vojtech told reporters.

But, unlike neighbouring Austria and Slovakia, which have imposed pre-Christmas lockdowns, the centre-left Czech government due to be replaced by a centre-right cabinet in the weeks to come was less radical.

Vojtech said restaurants, nightclubs, discos and casinos would remain closed between 10pm and 5am as of Friday evening, while Christmas markets are banned, just like drinking in public.

The government also reduced the number of people at parties to 100, while sports and cultural events can be attended by a maximum of 1,000 people.

Restrictions in force since Monday already ban non-vaccinated Czechs and those who have not recently recovered from the disease from restaurants, cafes or sports facilities.

Outgoing Prime Minister Andrej Babis, whose ANO party moved into

opposition after losing a [general election](#) in October, said mandatory vaccination was an option as only some 6.3 million Czechs are fully vaccinated.

"We must introduce [mandatory vaccination](#) for people working in [health care](#) and [social services](#), firefighters, soldiers, [police officers](#) and people over 60," Babis said.

The Czech Republic had registered more than two million confirmed cases and over 32,500 deaths as of Thursday.

It has been among the worst-hit countries in terms of infections and deaths per capita over the last seven days, after topping the global statistics for several weeks early this year.

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