

Virus keeps 500 million people home around the world

18 March 2020



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Some 500 million people have been subject to lockdown measures around the world because of the coronavirus outbreak that started in China and has quickly ballooned globally, according to an AFP count.

From China to the Czech Republic to Venezuela, governments have told their citizens to stay indoors to try and slow the spread of the pandemic.

Here are the populations affected.

Obligatory confinement

The central Chinese province of Hubei and its capital Wuhan where the COVID-19 virus broke out late last year, have been cut off from the world since late January.

Quarantine is still in force there, but restrictions on movement were eased on March 14 for the province's more than 50 million inhabitants.

At least eight other countries have followed the Chinese province in enforcing confinement: Italy

since March 10, Spain from March 14, Lebanon on March 15, the Czech Republic on March 16, France, Israel and Venezuela on March 17 and Belgium on March 18.

That means 240 million people in these eight countries are obliged to stay at home.

In most of these places it is possible to leave the house to buy basic necessities, access health care or go to work if staying at home is not an option.

Some countries have taken more targeted measures, including Bulgaria which has put the ski resort town of Bansko under quarantine.

Egypt has confined all employees in the Red Sea tourist area.

Inhabitants of the Colombian capital Bogota are to go through a trial isolation exercise from March 20 to 23, which may pave the way for a full quarantine.

Confinement recommended

At least four countries—Austria, Britain, Germany and Iran—have urged people to limit as much as possible their movements and contacts, without going as far as enforcing confinement.

These four countries are home to around 240 million people.

These appeals from the authorities have however had limited effect.

In Germany, where several "Corona-parties" have been organised in parks, Chancellor Angela Merkel on Wednesday called on the population to rise to the task of fighting the virus.

In Iran the authorities have complained that in spite of warnings, bazaars are brimming as the Iranian New Year approaches on Friday.

Curfews

At least six countries or territories have imposed curfews banning movements in the evening and overnight: Tunisia, Bolivia, Serbia, the US states of New Jersey and Puerto Rico, and the Philippines' capital Manila.

These territories hold more than 50 million inhabitants.

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