

France reports 987 more coronavirus deaths, toll tops 13,000

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France on Friday reported 987 more COVID-19 deaths registered in hospitals and nursing homes over the last 24 hours, although the number of patients in intensive care fell for the second day in a row.

The new deaths—including 554 in hospitals and 433 in nursing homes — brought the total toll in France to 13,197 since the [epidemic](#) began, top health official Jerome Salomon told reporters.

A child aged under 10 infected with COVID-19 died, but Salomon said that the causes of the death were "multiple".

In better news, Salomon said there were now 62 fewer people in [intensive care](#) for a total of 7,004 patients, continuing a trend first seen on Thursday.

"This is pale ray of sunshine," said Salomon. "But this timid light is very important for all the [medical staff](#)."

He added: "A plateau seems to be setting in—a very high plateau with an epidemic that is very dynamic."

France has been in lockdown since March 17 in a bid to slow the spread of the epidemic, with only essential trips allowed that must be justified with a signed piece of paper.

"We have been starting to see over the last days the first effects of the confinement," noted Salomon, noting a "slight slowing of the epidemic".

French President Emmanuel Macron is due on Monday to address the nation for a third time during the crisis.

He is expected to announce that the lockdown will be extended beyond its current April 15 expiration date.

Macron will have to steer a careful course amid tentative signs of improvement, telling people they must still stay at [home](#) while giving indications about how the confinement may end.

The president on Friday hosted a video conference with business groups and union leaders to help prepare for his address.

Macron had "two messages. This is not the moment to drop our guard as the confinement is the way to halt the epidemic. But we need to think about ending the lockdown, even if it seems we are not there yet," said Yves Veyrier, head of the FO union.

French authorities on Friday transferred 45 more patients by two TGV high-speed trains to the southwest of the country in a bid to relieve pressure on strained hospitals in the Paris region.

Some 200 patients have already been evacuated by road, rail or air from the Paris region since April 1. The southwest of the country is one of the areas least impacted by the virus.

The situation in nursing homes remains one of acute concern.

The top health official for the Ile-de-France region of Paris and its surroundings, Aurelien Rousseau, said on Friday that over 400 of the 700 nursing homes in the region had registered at least one COVID-19 case.

Meanwhile, the French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle has registered 50 cases of novel [coronavirus](#) among the crew, the armed forces ministry said Friday

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