

# Paris tightens screws on virus lockdown

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Paris will order food shops to close at 10:00 pm and outlaw nighttime food deliveries and alcohol sales, officials said Thursday, hoping to prevent people gathering at some restaurants and grocery stores despite a new coronavirus lockdown.

"Police have noted movements and groupings of people, in particular in the evenings and at night (delivery people, clients...) in and outside these establishments," the Paris police department said in a statement.

"Alcohol sales, especially by night shops, risk encouraging these nighttime gatherings, with no social distancing, on sidewalks as well as in private homes," it said.

Mayor Anne Hidalgo had announced on Twitter earlier that "faced with the worrying health situation" she had agreed on the closures with police officials.

But it fell short of a blanket curfew for the capital announced by the government's spokesman on Tuesday—which was quickly denied by the prime minister.

"The situation is very serious," said health minister

Olivier Veran as he presented an update Thursday on the alarming surge in COVID-19 cases since last month that is again pushing hospitals to the brink.

"The second wave is here and it is violent," Veran said.

Several prominent doctors have warned that the latest lockdown, which allows a range of stores to stay open as well as schools, will not be enough to slow the outbreak fast enough.

New daily cases have topped 40,000 or even 50,000 over the past week, far above the limit of 5,000 that President Emmanuel Macron said was his goal when announcing the new lockdown last week, set to run until at least December 1.

Veran said new cases in the past 24 hours had topped 58,000.

"The goal of getting back to just 5,000 cases won't be reached with a lockdown as light as this," Gilles Pialoux, an infectious disease specialist at the Tenon hospital in Paris, told French daily La Croix.

## 'Very worrying'

Like other governments across Europe, the French government is trying to halt the outbreak without bringing the economy to its knees.

"We're doing everything we can to minimise the risks without paralysing the country," Veran said Wednesday.

But already many business owners fear the lockdown might have to be extended into the all-important holiday season, which could force many to close for good despite the billions of euros in aid deployed by the state.

"We won't see the effects from the lockdown before another 10 days," Philippe Juvin, head of emergency services at Paris' Pitié-Salpêtrière hospital,

told CNews television Thursday.

Hidalgo described a "very worrying situation" in the capital and its suburbs, which count for about a quarter of intensive care cases nationwide.

She said extra space would be made available for school classes, such as using libraries, theatres and gymnasiums emptied by the new lockdown, to ensure adequate social distancing for pupils and staff.

The overall French death toll from the virus now stands at 38,674, with 4,089 people in intensive care, out of 6,400 beds currently available nationwide.

Officials have said a total of 7,500 beds will soon be available, and eventually more than 10,000, but doctors warn that will require turning operating blocs into intensive care units, forcing the cancellation of other operations.

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