

# Tunisia government given special powers to handle coronavirus crisis

Author:

Reuters

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Sat, 2020-04-04 17:19

TUNIS: Tunisia's parliament on Saturday ceded some powers to the North African country's government for two months to help it handle the coronavirus crisis and the expected economic fallout.

The decision, backed by all political parties, will allow Prime Minister Elyes Fakhfakh's government to issue decrees, strike purchasing agreements and seek finance without consulting parliament.

Tunisia has 495 confirmed cases of the coronavirus, including 18 deaths, and has imposed a national lockdown until April 19 to slow its spread.

Fakhfakh, who was confirmed as prime minister on Feb. 28 after months of wrangling between rival parties to form a government, said the move was a "necessary weapon" to allow fast decisions to tackle the crisis.

His government has announced a financial package that includes aid for the poor as well as tax and loan repayment holidays. Fakhfakh has said the government may impose exceptional taxes on companies to cover this if the government cannot find the money elsewhere.

Tunisia, which embraced democracy after a 2011 uprising to overthrow veteran autocrat Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, has struggled to develop its economy over the past decade.

An International Monetary Fund loan program expires this month and Finance minister Nizar Yaich told Reuters in March the government had started negotiations with IMF on a new agreement.



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[Elyes Fakhfakh](#)

Tunisia offers free helpline as lockdown sees abuse spike  
Tunisia releases 1,420 prisoners over coronavirus

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## [Dubai announces two week lockdown to disinfect city around the clock](#)

Sat, 2020-04-04 21:01

DUBAI: Dubai announced a two week lockdown on Saturday so that the emirate could be disinfected around the clock to fight the spread of coronavirus.

There will be “strict restrictions on movement across the city and legal action” will be taken against violators, Dubai Media Office said.

The measure is effective from 8:00p.m. on Saturday for a period of two weeks.

# Dubai's Supreme Committee of Crisis and Disaster Management announcement

Dubai to conduct round-the-clock sterilisation and enforce strict restrictions on movement across the emirate & legal action to be taken against violators.



## VITAL SECTORS

exempt from restrictions (24 hours a day)

- Healthcare services (hospitals, clinics and pharmacies).
  - Food supply outlets (Union Cooperative outlets, supermarkets, groceries).
  - Delivery services (food and medicine).
- Restaurants (operations limited to home deliveries only)
- Manufacturers of medicines and providers of healthcare and medical supplies.
  - Industrial sector (vital industries only).
- Water and electricity sector, petrol and gas stations and district cooling services.
  - Telecommunications sector.
  - Media sector .
  - Airports, airlines, ports, shipping.
  - Customs duty and border crossings.
  - Public and private security services.
- Municipality services and public and private service providers involved in garbage collection, sewage management and general cleaning and sanitation.
- Private and government sector organisations involved in combating COVID-19.
  - Public transport (buses and taxis only; metro services suspended).
- Construction sector, subject to obtaining a permit from Dubai Municipality and the Permanent Committee for Labour Affairs.



Supermarkets and pharmacies will be allowed to operate normally and food and medicine deliveries will continue uninterrupted.

Extensive medical testing will be carried out in densely populated areas of the city to stop the spread of the virus and citizens and residents are urged to stay at home.

People can go out only to buy food, receive health care and get tested for coronavirus provided they wear a mask, gloves and maintain social distancing. Shopping should be done by one member of the family only.

Employees in vital sectors are permitted to leave the house at any time to go to work.

The metro and tram services in Dubai will be suspended but buses and taxis will continue to operate.

Bus transportation will be free during the lockdown and a 50% discount on taxi rides will be offered.

Meanwhile, Abu Dhabi on Saturday extended the temporary closure of commercial centres, shopping malls, cinemas, arcades and other places of entertainment in the emirate until further notice.



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UAE officially asks to postpone Expo 2020 Dubai Dubai extends usage of expired health insurances amid coronavirus pandemic

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## [UAE officially asks to postpone Expo 2020 Dubai](#)

Author:

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1586019942446439400

Sat, 2020-04-04 13:56

DUBAI: The UAE has officially requested to postpone the start of the Expo 2020 Dubai until October next year due to the coronavirus pandemic, the body that oversees the world fair said Saturday.

Dubai had hoped to attract some 25 million visits to the multi-billion-dollar, six-month event, which was scheduled to launch October 20 this year. "The government of the United Arab Emirates has formally requested the postponement of World Expo 2020 Dubai," the Paris-based Bureau International des Expositions said in a statement.

"Following consultations with the BIE, participating countries and key stakeholders, the UAE has proposed 1 October 2021 – 31 March 2022 as the new opening dates of Expo 2020 Dubai."

The UAE government also requested approval to continue using Expo 2020 Dubai as the event's official name.

The BIE said it would hold a virtual meeting on April 21 to discuss "options for a change of dates."

"The request of the UAE government has been sent following in-depth discussions by the Expo 2020 Dubai steering committee with the organizer and the BIE on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic," said the statement.

"A final decision on a change of dates can only be made by a two-thirds majority vote of BIE member states."

Dubai, known for hosting hundreds of conferences annually, has already scrapped a string of cultural and entertainment events in recent weeks over the spread of the deadly disease.

Expo 2020 organizers said on Monday they had recommended a one-year postponement due to the pandemic.

"Many countries have been significantly impacted by COVID-19 and they have therefore expressed a need to postpone the opening of Expo 2020 Dubai by one year," Expo 2020 Dubai director-general Reem Al-Hashimi said in a statement. "The UAE and Expo 2020 Dubai have listened. And in the spirit of solidarity and unity, we supported the proposal to explore a one-year postponement."

The UAE has reported 1,505 COVID-19 cases and 10 deaths. It has enforced extensive lockdown measures to curb the spread of the disease including an ongoing nighttime curfew.



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Dubai Expo team member tests positive for COVID-19

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## [Iran escaped prisoners back in jail amid coronavirus epidemic](#)

Author:

Reuters

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1586012434806028800

Sat, 2020-04-04 14:55

DUBAI: Most of the 70 inmates who escaped from a prison in western Iran last month are now back in jail, Iranian authorities said on Saturday, even though about 100,000 prisoners have been granted temporary release due to the

coronavirus epidemic.

Iranian media have reported unrest in several prisons in the country, including the March 27 mass escape from the facility in Kurdistan province. The judiciary's Mizanoline website said some of the inmates had been captured by security forces, while others returned on their own to the prison in the city of Saqqez.

United Nations human rights spokesman Rupert Colville on Friday voiced concern over a possible coronavirus outbreak in prisons in Iran and other countries.

Iran – the Middle East country worst-hit by the epidemic – has already granted temporary release to about 100,000 inmates to curb prison overcrowding and ease fears of the virus' spread.

The Health Ministry said on Saturday 158 more coronavirus patients had died in the past 24 hours, bringing the total death toll to 3,452. The total number of cases reached 55,743.

In a rare comment in Britain's Guardian newspaper, Tehran Mayor Pirouz Hanachi said US sanctions were crippling Iran's fight against the coronavirus.

"As a result (of sanctions), the ability of my colleagues and I to provide the health, logistical and other essential infrastructure necessary to combat the disease has been drastically reduced. We experience this loss every day, and it can be counted in people that would not have died," Hanachi said. Separately, the foreign ministry accused US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo of "medical-terrorism" through the sanctions, which have hit vital sectors such as oil and banking.

"Undisputed fact: US 'diplomats' have long been in the business of coups, arming terrorists," ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Twitter on Saturday. "But @SecPompeo ... and his masters have taken the 'job' to a whole new level: #Medical\_terrorism."

Pompeo and other US officials have stressed that humanitarian supplies are exempt from sanctions Washington reimposed on Tehran after President Donald Trump abandoned Iran's 2015 multilateral deal to limit its nuclear program. However, broader US sanctions deter many US and global firms from humanitarian trade with Iran.

Meanwhile state media quoted President Hassan Rouhani as saying that state support for businesses hit by the coronavirus outbreak would be restricted to enterprises that give assurances not to lay off workers.

Rouhani has said 75% of a total budget allocation of about 1,000 trillion rials to address the pandemic would include grants and low-interest loans to enterprises affected by COVID-19.

The total allocated amount is worth some \$6 billion at the rial's free market exchange rate of about 166,000 rials per dollar. But the government may decide to allocate some of the funds at the official rate of 42,000 which is used to subsidise food and medicine.



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UN 'horrified' as young offender dies in Iran after guard beating

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## [Egypt postpones launch of mega projects to 2021 due to coronavirus](#)

Author:

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1586011376615968000

Sat, 2020-04-04 14:40

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi on Saturday postponed the launch of mega-projects including the Grand Egyptian Museum and moving civil servants to a planned new capital city to 2021 from 2020 due to the coronavirus outbreak, the presidency said.

The new museum had been due to open later this year, while the first group of civil servants was to be transferred to the government district in the new administrative capital in June.

El-Sisi's government has said it wants to start running Egypt from the new city, 45 km (28 miles) east of Cairo, as soon as the middle of 2020. But the \$58 billion project has struggled to raise funds and faced other challenges after some investors pulled out.



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