

# Iran turns away Medecins Sans Frontieres coronavirus hospital

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Tue, 2020-03-24 22:05

LONDON: Iran has turned away a major international aid operation to help the country treat coronavirus cases.

Iran is being crippled by one of the worst Covid-19 outbreaks in the world, with the regime's figures claiming 1,934 people had died as of Tuesday.

Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), a global medical charity, had sent a mobile 50-bed hospital and team of medics to Isfahan to help hospital workers there handle the huge volume of cases.

On Tuesday, MSF said it was incomprehensible that Iranian health ministry officials had removed approval for the organization to help manage severe cases after the team and equipment had already arrived in Tehran.

"We are deeply surprised to learn that the approval for the deployment of our treatment unit has been revoked," said Michel Olivier Lacharite, manager of the MSF Emergency programmes in Paris. "The need for this intervention, and the authorisations needed to start it, were discussed and agreed with relevant Iranian authorities during the past weeks. Our teams were ready to start medical activities at the end of this week."

The announcement came after an Iranian health ministry adviser said on Monday that the country did not need MSF's help.

"We currently do not have a need for hospital beds set up by foreign forces," Alireza Vahabzadeh tweeted.

Earlier, MSF said the operation involved an inflatable hospital and a nine-person team of emergency and intensive care doctors and logistics personnel to treat patients critically ill with the virus.

The hospital had been flown from France and was to be set up inside the compound of Amin hospital in Isfahan.

"Iran is by far the hardest hit country in the region, and Isfahan the second worst-affected province in Iran," says Julie Reverse, MSF's representative in Iran. "We hope our assistance will relieve at least some of the pressure on the local health system."

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, on Sunday turned down a US offer of humanitarian assistance, saying "they could be giving medicines to Iran that spread the virus or cause it to remain permanently in Iran."

The outbreak has swept through Iran where the government has been criticized for its slow response and covering up the true extent of those infected.

Last week officials conceded that someone was dying from Covid-19 every 10 minutes in the country.



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[Medecins Sans Frontieres \(MSF\)](#)

[coronavirus](#)

About half of Iran's state workers are staying homeIran reports 127 more virus deaths; death toll now 1,812

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## [UAE airports to suspend all passenger flights as of Thursday](#)

Author:

Reuters

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Tue, 2020-03-24 10:09

DUBAI: Dubai Airports and Abu Dhabi Airport said they will suspend all passenger flights as of 11:59 p.m. local time on Thursday for two weeks, with the exception of evacuation flights, as part of measures to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

The latest statements from the United Arab Emirates' main airports came after the government announced early on Monday that all passenger and transit flights to and from the country would be suspended after 48 hours.

"We would like to inform you that all passenger flights to, from, and through AUH will be temporarily suspended starting March 26 23:59 UAE time for two weeks except cargo and evacuation flights," Abu Dhabi Airport tweeted on Tuesday.

Dubai Airports' website carried the same notice for Dubai International (DXB) and Dubai World Central (DWC) airports.



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# Egypt announces two-week, night-time curfew to slow coronavirus

Author:

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Tue, 2020-03-24 11:30

DUBAI: Egypt has announced a two-week, 7 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew for its over 100 million people to slow the spread of the new coronavirus.

Prime Minister Moustafa Madbouly told a news conference on Tuesday that the 11-hour curfew would go into effect Wednesday across the country and last for two weeks. He says all kinds of transportation will be halted during the curfew.

Egypt, the Arab World most populous country, has 366 confirmed cases and 21 fatalities, including two senior military officers.

There are over 31,000 confirmed cases of the virus across the Mideast, the vast majority in the hard-hit nation of Iran. While most recover from the virus and the COVID-19 illness that it causes, bottoming crude oil prices have put additional strain on even the wealthiest countries of the region. That in turn could affect their ability to spend on needed supplies as the virus challenges medical systems worldwide.

Already, countries have reacted by either urging or ordering hundreds of millions of people to stay home.

In Egypt, tourist cancelations have reached 80 percent, while retail and hospitality sectors have also been hard-hit in countries like the United Arab Emirates where tourism is a pillar of the economy, according to the IMF.

The arrival of the global pandemic in Syria with one positive case, as well as in the Gaza Strip, has raised concerns the virus could run rampant in some of the most vulnerable areas in the Middle East. War-torn Libya and Yemen, which have yet to report any cases, are also a source of concern.

The worst outbreak in the Mideast is unfolding in Iran, where authorities reported another 122 deaths on Tuesday, bringing the total number of fatalities to more than 1,900 amid more than 24,800 confirmed cases. The dead included the mother-in-law of the son of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the state-run IRNA news agency said Monday.



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Second Egyptian military official dies of coronavirus  
Egypt to allocate 20bn Egyptian pounds to support bourse amid virus fears

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## [Lebanese cabinet to resume talks on capital control bill amid opposition](#)

Author:

Tue, 2020-03-24 14:17

DUBAI: A cabinet session is due Tuesday in Lebanon to continue negotiations on the proposed capital control law, which aims to organize relationships between banks and clients, amid fierce opposition, Lebanon's The Daily Star reported.

Lebanese Prime Minister Hassan Diab is set to chair the session at 1 p.m. local time at the Grand Serail, as the country faces harsh economic and social conditions.

“Some ministers made observations about the capital control draft law, while others have not been informed of the full text of the law. It was agreed that ministers will send their written remarks to the finance minister over the weekend ahead of the Cabinet meeting Tuesday,” a source told local media. Another meeting will be held at the Baabda Palace on Thursday on the same matter.

Several political groups have criticized the bill, saying it harms interests of depositors.

“There will be losers and there will be losses, but we must make our efforts to reduce losses,” Diab has earlier said.



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[As UAE malls fall silent amid](#)

# coronavirus controls, the supermarkets will remain open

Tue, 2020-03-24 13:56

DUBAI: As the UAE's iconic malls close on Wednesday amid coronavirus concerns, their boulevard like walk ways will fall silent, shoppers told to remain in their homes.

It is not a complete close down, the UAE's supermarkets will remain open, allowing people to buy the supplies they need.

Brands like Lulu Group, Union Coop, Al-Maya Supermarkets, Choithrams, Abu Dhabi Cooperative Society and Spar group, Spinneys and Carrefour, will operate according to their usual schedules, including 24-hour shops. Supermarkets are providing hand sanitizers at entrances, asking staff to wear masks and using floor markings to encourage social distancing.

UAE authorities said on Sunday that all shopping malls will close down after 48 hours for a period of two weeks. Meanwhile, all restaurants, cafes and cafeterias in Dubai were closed on Sunday for two weeks.

Earlier, private and public beaches, parks, pools and gyms were also closed for the same period of time.

The decisions come as part of the country's regulations to curb the spread of coronavirus.



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