

# [Dubai extends national sterilization program by one week](#)

Fri, 2020-04-17 19:08

DUBAI: Dubai has announced that it will extend the comprehensive national sterilization program for one week in efforts to curb the outbreak of the coronavirus, Emirates News Agency reported on Friday.

The emirate announced a two-week lockdown starting on April 4 at 8 p.m. to disinfect certain areas and contain the coronavirus.

As it stands, the UAE's total number of coronavirus infections stands at 5,825 cases, with the death toll at 35.



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Dubai transforms World Trade Centre into COVID-19 hospital  
Dubai issues new movement permit restrictions

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## Algeria mobilizes prisoners to make coronavirus protection gear

Author:

AFP

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1587135791525763400

Fri, 2020-04-17 14:57

ALGIERS: Inmates at 30 Algerian prisons are being mobilized to make personal protective equipment to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus, official news agency APS reported.

Authorities will “open sewing workshops for the production of 200,000 masks by prisoners in 30 penitentiaries... to meet their own needs and those of the courts,” prisons chief Faycal Bourbala told APS on Thursday.

Prisoners will also make clothing and protective suits for medical personnel, he added, with disinfection chambers also being manufactured at three facilities.

Prisoners will take part on a voluntary basis at the sewing workshops, which already exist and mainly attract female detainees who want to become dressmakers.

Authorities say no confirmed cases of the COVID-19 illness have been detected among 58,000 inmates at the country’s 150 prison facilities.

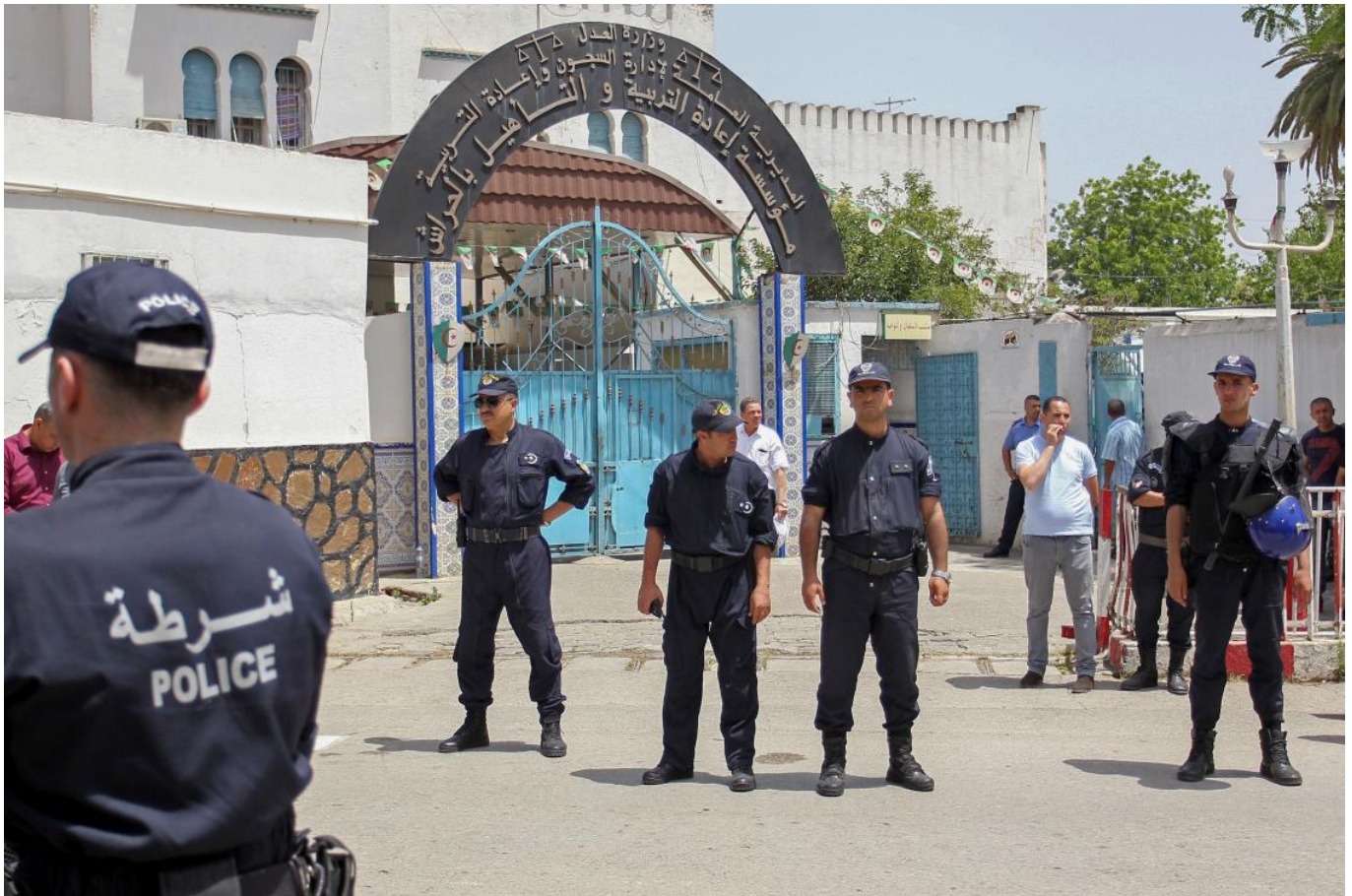
Since the start of the outbreak, the justice ministry has suspended family visits and ordered new prisoners into 14-day quarantines in isolated rooms.

Inmates are not allowed to leave the prisons except in case of emergency, and all direct contact with their lawyers has been banned.

According to officially declared figures, Algeria has seen Africa’s deadliest coronavirus outbreak so far.

It has seen 348 deaths and 2,268 cases since the end of February, from a population of 44 million.





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Human rights groups urge Israel to release virus-vulnerable Palestinian prisoners  
Amnesty: Prisoners killed by Iran's security forces during coronavirus protests

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## [Turkey parliament passes law to mitigate coronavirus impact](#)

Author:

Fri, 2020-04-17 15:45

DUBAI: The Turkish parliament has ratified a bill that would alleviate the economic and social impact of the coronavirus pandemic in the country.

Among the raft of measures in the legislation includes the postponement of rental payments for three months on several types of state-owned immovable

properties. Municipalities and their sub-institutions will also be able to postpone water bills for three months for private homes and companies.

Municipalities will also be able to provide financial support to natural and legal persons who have public transport certificates or postpone several types of payments to provide uninterrupted public transport services, Hurriyet Daily News reported.

Annual advertisement and environment taxes supposed to be collected from enterprises, but were closed due to the coronavirus lockdown measures, will not be collected during this period.

Payments on student loans have also been postponed for three months, while those on some agricultural loans have been postponed until next year, the paper added.

The validity of some commercial licenses has been likewise extended by the newly passed legislations.



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Turkey's new amnesty law excludes dissident journalists and politicians  
Turkey's interior minister says resigns over short-notice coronavirus curfew

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# Ramadan prayers banned at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque due to virus

Author:

Reuters

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Thu, 2020-04-16 17:30

JERUSALEM: Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque compound will be closed to Muslim worshippers throughout the holy fasting month of Ramadan due to the coronavirus epidemic, Muslim clerics at Islam's third-holiest site said on Thursday.

Ramadan typically draws tens of thousands of Muslims daily to the mosque and the adjoining Dome of the Rock for evening prayers known as Taraweeh. Muslim faithful believe the site to be where the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven.

The decision to ban Muslim prayer at the 35-acre complex, revered by Jews as the Temple Mount and site of the Jewish temples of antiquity, extends a March 23 ban on Muslim prayer there.

In a statement, the Jordan-appointed council that oversees Islamic sites on the sacred compound called the decision "painful" but said it was "in line with legal fatwas (clerical opinions) and medical advice."

Muslims should "perform prayers in their homes during the month of Ramadan, to preserve their safety," the council said.

Ramadan will start around April 23.

In one sign of normalcy, the Muslim call to prayer will still take place five times daily at the site during Ramadan, and religious workers will still be allowed entry, the statement added.

Jerusalem has sites sacred to Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and all three religions have taken coronavirus precautions.

Last week, Jews marking Passover in Jerusalem and across Israel were required to stay at home and celebrate only with immediate family.

Typically large Passover prayers at Jerusalem's Western Wall, the holiest place Jews are allowed to pray in the city, were attended by only a handful of worshippers.

At the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, what are usually festive, pilgrim-filled Easter ceremonies at the shrine revered as the site of Jesus' crucifixion and burial have been marked by small groups of clergy, often wearing face masks.

Israel has reported at least 140 deaths and nearly 12,600 cases of coronavirus. There have been two deaths and nearly 300 cases in the Palestinian Gaza Strip and the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

All mosques in Gaza have been closed since March 25, and since March 14 in the West Bank.





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## Muslims grapple with Ramadan rituals in coronavirus era

Author:

By MARIAM FAM | AP

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Thu, 2020-04-16 18:03

WINTER PARK, FLORIDA: Seattle resident Maggie Mohamed was looking forward to spending the Islamic holy month of Ramadan in her native Egypt.

Now, with the spread of the new coronavirus, flying is off the table. So is having friends and relatives over for a potluck iftar, the breaking of the fast. Mohamed is older than 65 and says she cannot risk it.

"It's very sad. We were very excited," she said. But, "I don't take it as a punishment. I take it as a wake-up (call)."

Ramadan, which starts later this month, unites Muslims the world over in fasting and worship. This year, it follows a string of religious holidays that have also unified the faithful from different religions in grappling with how to observe familiar rituals and celebrations in a time of unfamiliarity.

Mohamed is contemplating workarounds. She always looks forward to the special Ramadan prayers, known as "taraweeh," at the mosque. She will now pray at home with her daughter. But what about the dua, or supplication? The imam moves her to tears. As he prays for dead loved ones or those suffering in faraway lands in his "miraculous" voice, sobs rise from the faithful and intermingle with chants of "Amen" recited in unison.

Mohamed wonders: Can he make dua over Zoom video conferencing?

"That would help us a lot," she said, even as she noted it wouldn't be the same. At her mosque, female worshippers hug and chat after the prayers as children scurry around and dates and chocolate are passed from hand to hand. During Ramadan, the faithful abstain from food and drink from sunrise to sunset as they strive for self-purification and empathy. It's a time for prayers, introspection and charity. Normally, it's also a time for family, friends and festive feasting.

This year, there are indications the outbreak will cast a pall over many beloved rituals.

Many Muslims have been praying for the coronavirus cloud, which has already disrupted Islamic worship the world over, to lift before Ramadan. Mosque closures and modified calls for prayers urging the devout to pray at home have left many feeling emotional. They are relying on worship at home and online religious classes. This year, some are planning virtual interfaith

iftars.

Texas-based imam Omar Suleiman said empty mosques are reason for reflection. "How do we build ourselves to where we are more connected to Him?" asked Suleiman, who has been streaming virtual sermons and nightly reflections to more than 1.4 million Facebook followers.

"Now we have a chance to develop empathy with those that have not had access to their religious spaces due to oppressive circumstances."

Malaysia, Brunei and Singapore have banned popular Ramadan bazaars where hawkers sell food and drinks in congested open-air markets or roadside stalls. In predominantly Muslim Malaysia, vendors are now planning to bring their businesses online through mobile apps or digital platforms provided by local authorities during the fasting month.

Mohamad Fadhil, a trader in Malaysia's southern Johor state, said he was resigned to not being able to do business at the Ramadan bazaar or perform the taraweeh prayers at the mosque. "We just have to be patient and follow orders," he said.

In Iran, which is suffering one of the world's worst outbreaks, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei suggested that mass gatherings may be barred through the holy month. "Remember to heed your prayers and devotions in your lonesomeness," he said.

The Islamic Waqf, which administers the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, Islam's third-holiest site, announced today that the mosque will continue to be closed to worshippers for Ramadan.

It's difficult, Sheikh Azzam Khateeb, the director general of the Waqf, said before the latest announcement, but "the health of the worshippers comes before anything else."

Zuher Dubie, a 71-year-old mosque preacher in the West Bank city of Nablus, has been observing Ramadan and praying in mosques since he was 10. For the first time since, Dubie said, he wouldn't be able to practice some of the month's rituals.

"There will be no social gatherings, no Ramadan aroma in the markets, no collective prayers ... in mosques," he lamented.

In Egypt, the Ministry of Religious Endowments decided to suspend communal Ramadan activities, including mass charity iftars around mosques. Mosques have already closed for prayers there and the country is under a night-time curfew.

Ramadan is normally lively in the country of more than 100 million – and steeped in tradition.

Ordinarily, worshippers fill mosques and shoppers swarm markets. Loved ones gather over scrumptious iftars. Strangers break bread together in street banquets that feed the needy. Cafes teem with patrons chatting over a cacophony of gurgling water pipes and blaring music. And Ramadan lanterns cast a colorful glow over bustling streets.

In some areas, a "mesaharati," bangs on a drum as he wakes up residents for "suhoor," the pre-dawn meal that will sustain them through another day of fasting.

Souad Selim, an Egyptian, has been wondering what all the changes this year would mean for a cherished Ramadan ritual.

Before, she would slip early to bed as many binge watch television shows produced for Ramadan entertainment. At around 3:00 a.m., she would wake up to have "suhoor" and cook up a storm. Using groceries that she and co-workers



had pitched in to buy, she would prepare dozens of meals before she left for work. Before iftar, Selim and other volunteers would go outside to distribute boxes neatly packed with salad, rice, chicken or meatballs. Now, she likely won't be able to hand out meals on the street but she's determined to send iftars to the homes of those she knows need them. "It's hard to describe how much goodness and blessings Ramadan brings," she said.







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Egypt to ban Ramadan gatherings to counter spread of coronavirus Muslims grapple with Ramadan rituals in coronavirus era