



U.K. in Lockdown; Boris Johnson Tells Country, “You Must Stay at Home”

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has essentially put the entire United Kingdom under a house arrest in an attempt to halt the spread of the coronavirus. Violators of the new lockdown will face fines of up to £1,000 or possibly even arrest when police are given emergency powers.

The U.K. [currently reports](#) just over 8,000 confirmed cases of the COVID-19 virus, with 422 deaths so far. The mortality rate in the U.K. for the virus is disturbingly high compared to some other countries. Despite more than 30,000 cases in Germany, they report only 149 deaths. The United States currently has close to 50,000 confirmed cases but only 622 deaths.



Johnson addressed the nation on Monday evening. “All over the world we’re seeing the devastating impact of this invisible killer,” Johnson told the nation from number 10 Downing Street.

Johnson called for sacrifice by all British citizens: “The time has now come for us all to do more. From this evening, I must give the British people a very simple instruction. You must stay at home. Because the critical thing we must do is stop the disease spreading between households.”

Among the measures being taken by the British government:

- Any gathering of more than two people in public is now strictly forbidden. All social events, including weddings and baptisms are banned for the time being.
- Any shop or business considered “non-essential” must close until for at least three weeks. Among those businesses [considered essential](#) are supermarkets, pharmacies, veterinarians, news sources, pet shops, hardware stores, launderettes, banks, post offices and mortuaries.
- Except to host funerals, all places of worship must be closed.
- Any travel on roads, trains or buses is forbidden unless needed to get to work. As of now there are no transportation closures since some people still need to get to work.

As of now, U.K. citizens may leave their home for only four reasons: They may travel to and from work for those in essential jobs, they may shop for basic necessities, they may go out for exercise one time per day either alone or with members of their household, and they may go to medical appointments or provide care to a vulnerable person.

Calling the coronavirus “the biggest threat this country has faced for decades,” Johnson laid out the reasoning for the draconian steps.

“Without a huge national effort to halt the growth of this virus, there will come a moment when no



Written by [James Murphy](#) on March 24, 2020

health service in the world could possibly cope,” Johnson said. “Because there won’t be enough ventilators, enough intensive care beds, enough doctors and nurses, and as we’ve seen elsewhere, in other countries who have fantastic health care systems, that is the moment of real danger.”

The new lockdown order will stay in place for at least three weeks, at which time it will be reviewed to see if the spread of the virus has been quelled. But, privately, aides at Number 10 Downing Street have reportedly said that the strict new measures could last into May and possibly even June.

“I know the damage that this disruption is doing and will do to people’s lives, to their businesses and to their jobs,” Johnson said. “But at present there are just no easy options. The way ahead is hard, and it is still true that many lives will sadly be lost.”

A previous government request that people remain at least two meters apart went largely unheeded over last weekend. Political opponents of Johnson lamented that the social distancing edict by Johnson in the previous week had been voluntary and not mandatory.

Former Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt told the House of Commons that it “may be too late to avoid Italy,” referring to the disastrous spread of the virus in Italy.

“It’s time to stop asking people to do social distancing — we must enforce it,” Hunt said. “Not this week, not tomorrow, but today.”

The new restrictions represent a major shift in policy by Johnson, who as recently as last Thursday said that there was “zero prospect” of a lockdown in London. Now, he has locked down the entire nation.

Photo: AP Images

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