

Spain to extend lockdown, as deaths down for second day

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Spain's prime minister announced Saturday an extension of the country's lockdown to combat the coronavirus, saying the measures are "bearing fruit" as the number of deaths fell for a second day in a row.

A nationwide 15-day state of emergency was first announced on March 14 barring people from leaving home except for essential outings such as buying food or seeking [medical care](#). It was to end on April 11 after being extended by two weeks.

"The cabinet on Tuesday will again ask for authorisation from parliament to extend for a second time the state of alert until Saturday April 25 at midnight," Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said in a televised speech.

The extra weeks are "the time that our [health system](#) needs to recover," he said.

Hospitals, in particular the intensive care units, have been overwhelmed by an influx of [coronavirus](#) patients.

However, Spain on Saturday recorded a second successive daily fall in coronavirus-related deaths with 809 fatalities. The total number of deaths in the country stands at 11,744, second only to Italy.

The number of new Spanish cases also slowed to 7,026, taking the total to 124,736.

"We know that these three weeks of isolation are bearing fruit," Sanchez said.

The confinement has allowed "a containment of the avalanche on the hospitals, the care of the sick and saved lives."

But to "ease up now would have a worse result," he said, warning of a "second wave" of infections.

"Yes, we are seeing a glimmer of hope," but "we are entering a new phase that will not be easy, the transition phase," said Dr. Maria Jose Sierra of the health ministry's emergencies centre.

Sanchez said he could not rule out further extensions, but said an easing of the strict regulations could be possible if the situation improves.

Spain is still racing against the clock to procure more medical equipment for its overstretched hospitals, notably respirators.

About 50 arrived from Germany on Friday, after Spain appealed to its NATO allies.

Another shipment was to be sent from Turkey but was eventually requisitioned by Turkish authorities.

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