

A brief Summary of the measures taken by the Algerian government to combat the Covid-19 epidemic

I-Measures before detection of the first case in Algeria

As soon as the first cases of Covid-19 were detected in China and in some Asian countries, the Algerian government has taken the necessary preventive measures to monitor this spread of the virus in the national territory, by providing international airports and ports with thermal cameras and by implementing the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO), in particular barrier measures.

At this early stage, 36 nationals living in Wuhan, China, the first epicentre of the pandemic were repatriated and confined for 14 days, at their arrival in Algeria. This measure was extended to 9,750 Algerian returnees on April 30, 2020.

II. Measures taken upon detection of the first imported case in Algeria

This second phase saw a reinforcement of measures in line with the detected cases and the progression of number of deaths:

- Creation of a National monitoring commission for Covid-19 which includes representatives from several ministerial sectors and institutions and mandated to coordinate the national response to the virus.
- Reinforcement of the detection system based on thermal cameras at ports and airports.
- Suspension of flights from and to China, and later of all connections to and from certain European countries, which became the second epicentre of the pandemic after China (Italy, France, Spain).
- Systematisation of quarantine of suspect and positive cases.
- Awareness campaigns through television and radio spots, mosques: explanation of the disease and barrier gestures.
- Cancellation and / or postponement of events (cultural, sporting, etc.);
- Closure of schools, colleges, high schools, universities, nurseries, Koranic schools, professional training centres; large shopping centres; party rooms, hammam and discotheques; mosques, prayer rooms and all places of worship.
- Expansion nationwide of the screening system (Laboratories of the Institute Pasteur in Algiers and new regional analysis laboratories: hospitals of Oran, Ouargla, Sétif, Annaba and Tamanrasset); -
- Following the spread of the virus and starting from March 22, 2020, these measures were tightened to protect the population, for a period of 14 days, as follows: Total containment for the wilaya of Blida, partial for the capital Algiers from March 24, 2020 and extension of the latter to nine other wilayas (Oran, Bejaïa, Sétif, Tizi-Ouzou, Tipaza, Tlemcen, Ain Defla and Médéa) with facilitation for supply;

- It should be noted that in the meantime, the Government has proceeded to the repatriation of a large number of Algerian nationals stranded at airports abroad. The latter were, upon their arrival, confined in hotels and tourist resorts, for 15 days, with medical follow-up and total care by the Government.

- Suspension of all public and private transport inside and inter-wilayas as well as rail traffic.

- Demobilization of 50% of employees except of those of essential services and all working women with young children with full wage benefice.

III. Renewal, relaxation of the curfew

The measures of confinement were extended until April 19, 2020, and relaxed from April 24, with the lifting of the total containment on Blida, whose curfew remains in force from 2 p.m. to 7 a.m. and extending the curfew in Algiers and nine other wilayas (Batna, Tizi-Ouzou, Sétif, Constantine, Médéa, Oran, Boumerdes, El oued and Tipaza) from 5 p.m. to 7 a.m. H 00 in the morning with a validity till May 14, 2020.

IV. Emergency measures to acquire equipment and mobilize health staff.

Hopefully, the government recognized the seriousness of the situation at its early stage. Accordingly, he dedicated two Council of Ministers and two others from the High Security Council to deal with the situation

At the end of these meetings, an urgent response plan was adopted, consisting, firstly, of acquiring equipment and supplies dedicated to the health sector and, secondly of the full mobilization of all health workers.

As a matter of encouragement, The Government has decided, also, to allocate a financial bonus to people engaged in health structures who are in the front line in the fight against the pandemic and to validate 2 months of service as a year of retirement.

V. Measures to reduce the economic and social impact of Covid-19

It was decided from April 26, 2020, the softening of the confinement by allowing a full range of commercial and social activities to resume. These include the following businesses: Urban taxis, hairdressing salons, pastry shops, traditional confectionery and cakes, Clothing and shoes, Appliance trade, Trade in kitchen articles and utensils, trade in fabrics, haberdashery and embroidery, jewellery and watches, Trade in cosmetic products, Trade in office furniture and furnishings, Bookstores and sale of school supplies, Wholesale and retail of construction materials.

In the meantime, the Government has been calling the population to remain vigilante and to respect social distancing and barrier measures.

In the same wake, the Government has decided to allocate 10,000 DA to needy families and those affected by the health crisis through solidarity measures. This measure should concern 2.2 million people.

The Bank of Algeria was asked to put in place exceptional measures to lighten certain prudential provisions applicable to banks and financial institutions in terms of liquidity, equity and classification of receivables. Among these measures, we should mention:

- The minimum liquidity coefficient threshold reduced to 60%.
- -Exemption for banks and financial institutions from the obligation to establish a safety cushion.
- The deferral of payment of the credit tranches, maturing, the possibility of rescheduling of customer receivables, having been impacted by the conjuncture induced by Covid-19, by banks and financial institutions.
- These same establishments may grant new loans to customers who have benefited from the deferral or rescheduling measures.

VI. International Cooperation

- Since the apparition of the Covid-19 in china, Algeria has donated to the Chinese authorities 500,000 three-layer masks, 20,000 protective glasses and 300,000 gloves.
- During the repatriation of the 31 Algerians established in Wuhan, Algeria repatriated Tunisian, Libyan and Mauritanian nationals, in response to the request from the authorities of their respective countries.
- The Algerian Red Crescent has donated to the Italian Red Cross of 300,000 medical gloves intended for Italian hospitals.

VII. Coordination with the United Nations in the global response

Since the proclamation of the pandemic character of the crisis by the World Health Organization (WHO), Algeria has:

- Welcomed all the regional and international initiatives which help to control the spread of this health crisis.
- Endorsed the Secretary General's declaration for a general ceasefire in conflict zones and the need to protect the vulnerable, refugees and displaced persons.
- Underlined the imperative of international coordination and cooperation to provide a comprehensive response to the pandemic by involving civil society and the business community through citizen mobilization and financial resources.
- Decided to respond favourably to the request of the United Nations Development Program for its overall response to COVI 19 by contributing 100,000 USD.

- Reiterated its full support to the World Health Organization and its Director General and called on all stakeholders to respond to the emergency requests it expresses in these exceptional circumstances.
- Appealed for all States to have free and unconditional access to health equipment and supplies and, where appropriate, to the vaccine once validated by the authorized international health authorities
- Declared its solidarity with the developing States hardly hit by the pandemic and invited financial institutions and States to reconsider the repayment schedules if not to alleviate their debt

It should be noted that, on April 22, 2020, Mr. Eric Overvest, Resident Coordinator of the United Nations System in Algeria, lauded the courageous measures taken by Algeria in the fight against Covid-19, since the apparition of first cases of contamination. The same token of appreciation was made by Dr. Bla François Nguessen, Representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Algeria.