
Europe Exceeds 20,000 Deaths by COVID-19

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Europe has suffered the brunt of the coronavirus crisis in recent weeks, with millions across the continent on lockdown and the streets of Paris, Rome and Madrid eerily empty.

The accelerating death toll from the COVID-19 epidemic sweeping the globe increased to more than 20,000 in Europe Saturday, with Italy and Spain the most affected, reporting more than 800 dead in a single day.

The worst-hit country, Italy, announced 889 new COVID-19 deaths on Saturday, pushing it past the 10,000 mark, and Spain added 832, as well as Madrid officials, said the epidemic seemed to be nearing a peak.

Spanish official Fernando Simon told AFP that the virus was "very, very close" to peaking in his country: "The increase is slowing or stabilizing little-by-little."

Spain has the world's second-highest death toll, and its cases jumped to 72,248 on Saturday as the country moves to ramp up testing.

For its part, Italy also recorded almost 1,000 deaths from the virus on Friday, the worst one-day toll anywhere since the pandemic began.

Belgium and Luxembourg saw a steep climb in deaths, with 353 recorded in the former on Saturday -- up from 289 the day before -- and 15 in the grand duchy, up from nine.

France also has seen close to 2,000 fatalities, and the British toll passed 1,000 on Saturday.

Europe has suffered the brunt of the new coronavirus crisis in recent weeks, with millions across the continent on lockdown and the streets of Paris, Rome, and Madrid eerily empty.

Meanwhile, the United States now has the world's highest number of COVID-19 cases, but per capita, European nations are still the worst hit as well as the emergency services across the globe are struggling to cope with the virus.

As many as one-third of the world's population is now living under lockdown, and according to the World Health Organization (WHO), there are already more than half a million cases of COVID-19 worldwide since the outbreak began late last year.