

english.alarabiya.net

Albania reports first coronavirus death in western Balkans

2-3 minutes

Albania reported the first death from the novel coronavirus in the Western Balkans on Wednesday, as one of Europe's poorest regions braces for the spread of virus wreaking havoc across the globe.

Albania has detected only 11 other known infections so far but is considered vulnerable because it lies just across the Adriatic from Italy - the center of Europe's outbreak - and has a huge diaspora living there.

After the death of a 73-year-old woman in coastal Durrës was reported on Monday, Prime Minister Edi Rama quickly followed with the announcement that all bars, restaurants and clubs in that city and the capital Tirana should be shuttered.

Writing on Facebook, the premier gave his "apologizes for taking this action."

"This is not a time for holidays and entertainment but a time for war," he wrote, saying it was necessary to "radically change the way of life" in order to protect others.

The woman who passed away had “several chronic illnesses,” according to a statement from the Ministry of Health.

“The doctors and nurses who took care of the woman at the Durres hospital have been quarantined and are all to be tested,” health authorities added.

After detecting its first infections earlier this week, Albania moved quickly to close school classes and bar mass gatherings for two weeks.

Flights and ferries to Italy, where more than 600 people have died from the virus, have also been cancelled, as have parliamentary sessions and court trials.

So far authorities have recorded more than 50 infections of COVID-19 in the Western Balkans, a region which also includes Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo.

But the number of those tested has also been limited to several hundred or less in each country.

As the contagion sweeps Europe, Balkan governments have issued a slew of new restrictions, including Serbia’s move to temporarily ban entry from foreigners coming from zones in the hardest-hit countries like Italy, China, South Korea and Iran.

Visit our [dedicated coronavirus site here](#) for all the latest updates.

SHOW MORE

Last Update: Wednesday, 20 May 2020 KSA 10:02 - GMT
07:02