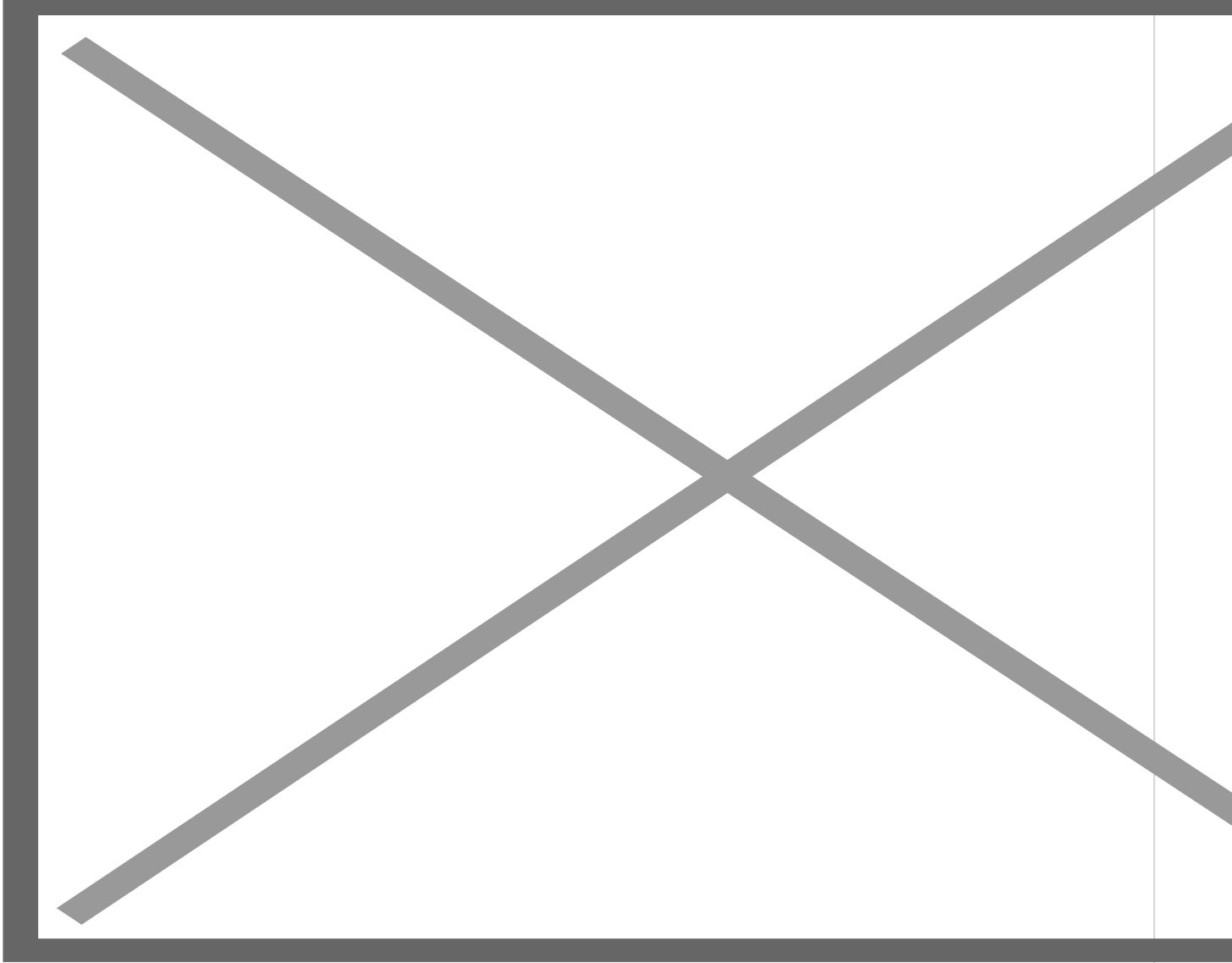


# *Netherlands to go into tough COVID lockdown beginning Sunday*

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**The partial lockdown already in place in the Netherlands has been toughened to combat a surge in Omicron COVID-19 cases [Peter Dejong/AP Photo]**

Amsterdam, December 19 (RHC)-- The Netherlands will go into a tough lockdown from Sunday morning to limit a feared COVID-19 surge due to the Omicron variant, Prime Minister Mark Rutte said. Rutte told a news conference on Saturday that all non-essential shops, restaurants, bars, cinemas, museums and theatres must stay shut until January 14, while schools must close until at least January 9.

Only shops considered essential – such as supermarkets and pharmacies – are exempt from the orders. The number of guests that people are allowed in their house is also being cut from four to two, except for Christmas Day. Gatherings outside are also limited to a maximum of two people.

“I stand here tonight in a sombre mood,” Rutte said. “The Netherlands will go back into lockdown from tomorrow. It is inevitable with the fifth wave and with Omicron spreading even faster than we had feared. We must now intervene as a precaution.”

Rutte said the announcement builds on a partial lockdown already in force that requires bars, restaurants and other public gathering places such as cinemas and theatres to close at 5 p.m. A failure to act now would likely lead to “an unmanageable situation in hospitals”, which have already scaled back regular care to make space for COVID-19 patients, Rutte said.

The head of the Dutch outbreak management team, Jaap van Dissel, told the news conference that the Omicron variant would overtake the Delta strain to become dominant in the Netherlands by the end of the year.

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<https://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/internacionales/280267-netherlands-to-go-into-tough-covid-lockdown-beginning-sunday>



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