

Nigeria extends coronavirus lockdown in key cities for two weeks



Abuja, April 13 (RHC)-- Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari has announced a 14-day extension to a lockdown in Lagos, Abuja and Ogun states to combat the coronavirus pandemic. In a televised address on Monday, Buhari said: "It has become necessary to extend the current restriction of movement" that was set to expire later in the day.

There are currently 323 confirmed cases of the virus in Nigeria, with 71 percent of them registered in Lagos and the capital territory of Abuja. Ten people have died so far. "It is a matter of life and death," Buhari said of the nation's response. "The repercussions of any premature end to the lockdown action are unimaginable."

Nigeria, with 200 million people, is Africa's most populous nation. Some 20 million reside in the megacity of Lagos. Health experts have raised alarms over the impact of a major coronavirus outbreak, warning that the country's unprepared and underfunded healthcare system could quickly become overwhelmed.

The extension of the lockdown is expected to add to the hardship of millions of Nigerians living hand-to-mouth, often on less than one dollar a day. Buhari said he was "fully aware of the great difficulties

experienced especially by those who earn a daily wage."

"But despite these realities, we must not change the restrictions," he added. The government has pledged a series of support measures to ease the financial pain for the most vulnerable, but there have been widespread complaints that not enough is being done for those facing hunger.

"The vast majority of Nigerians depend on daily wages, they have to go out to get money and buy food to put it on the table for their families," stated Al Jazeera's Ahmed Idris, reporting from the capital, Abuja.

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