



PRESS RELEASE
For immediate release

The UN Stands in Solidarity With Indonesia As COVID-19 Cases and Deaths Surge

JAKARTA, JULY 9 2021 – Earlier this week, the [UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres](#) announced that worldwide, 4 million people have died of COVID-19. On the same day, Indonesia, the Southeast Asian country hardest hit by the pandemic, recorded its highest ever rise in daily infections and deaths. Those two grim, concurrent milestones underscore the fact that even as some countries move to ease restrictions on movement and social gatherings, the pandemic is not over. In fact, a sustained, concerted global effort is still urgently needed to limit the tragic toll of COVID-19, and contain the spread of variants of concern.

“We are deeply alarmed by the sharp rise in COVID-19 cases and deaths in Indonesia, driven by the highly transmissible Delta variant” said United Nations Resident Coordinator in Indonesia Valerie Julliard. “The crisis we are working to mitigate here serves as a stark reminder that none of us is protected until we all are.”

As of July 9, Indonesia had officially registered 64,631 deaths due to COVID-19. Since June, at least 30 doctors have died, according to the Indonesian Medical Association. In response to the escalating caseload, Indonesia’s President Joko Widodo on July 1 announced new curbs on movement across the archipelago’s most populous island of Java and the island of Bali. The rules, which came into effect on July 3, limit public gatherings, reduce opening hours, and require most people to work from home, among other measures designed to slow the spread of COVID-19.

The UN in Indonesia stands in full support of these measures, which are critical to limiting the transmission of COVID-19, controlling the circulation of the Delta variant, and reducing deaths. But experts warn that the Delta variant poses a threat beyond Java and Bali. “All areas of the country should ensure timely implementation and monitoring of public health and social measures, including movement restrictions,” the World Health Organization (WHO) wrote in its July 7 situation report. “Other provinces should learn from the lessons of Jakarta and Java to proactively implement emergency measures in advance, before the situation gets out of control,” the situation report stated.

Since COVID-19 emerged as a public health threat last year, the UN Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) in Indonesia has supported all aspects of the government-led response to the crisis. The HCT incorporates UN agencies as well as other humanitarian actors like the Indonesian Red Cross Society (PMI), the International Federation of the Red Cross, and many national and international NGOs. The HCT’s Action Plan includes the provision of medical equipment and test kits to support Indonesia’s health system; assisting the national vaccination campaign in the field through capacity building and technical advice; fighting misinformation and providing accurate public health messaging; and insulating some of society’s most vulnerable people from the social and economic impacts of the pandemic.

Several of these interventions have been scaled up in response to the rising caseload. To date, Indonesia has received 8.4 million doses of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine through the COVAX facility, a global mechanism to promote more equitable access to vaccinations, and an additional 6.3

million doses of other vaccines are expected to arrive soon. As of July 8, Indonesia had administered more than 46.8 million COVID-19 vaccine doses with the support of UN agencies including WHO, UNICEF, and UNDP. However, the vaccination rollout needs to be expedited, the WHO says, especially for older populations who have consistently low coverage and for other vulnerable groups.

In fact, urgent action is needed nationwide to respond to the surge in cases, deaths and hospital bed occupancy rates. This action should include the strict implementation of public health and safety measures (PHSM) such as restrictions on movement that have proved effective in India and other countries facing COVID-19 surges. Testing should also be scaled up.

Over half of Indonesia's 34 provinces currently test at a rate below the WHO's recommended benchmark of 1 test per 100 people per week, which makes isolating confirmed cases and contact tracing difficult. The WHO also warns that hospitals nationwide need to be equipped to handle an influx of COVID-19 patients: this includes ensuring the availability of isolation rooms, medical equipment, and oxygen. On 4 July, the Governor of Central Java activated an Oxygen Task force in response to concerns over oxygen shortages in some provinces. The UN is facilitating discussions with bilateral agencies for the potential procurement of oxygen and other life-saving medical supplies.

For the UN, ensuring that society's most vulnerable are protected from the direct and indirect impacts of the pandemic is a central priority. To name just a few interventions, the UN Entity for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (UN Women) and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) have worked towards mainstreaming gender and gender-based violence in emergency response, including measures on ending violence against women during the pandemic. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the WHO are working with the Ministry of Health and partners such as the Indonesian Pediatricians Association to better address the epidemiology of COVID-19 in children. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has provided continuous assistance to prisons, drug treatment facilities, and law enforcement agencies. And Indonesia has also vaccinated more than 1300 refugees, with support from the International Organization for Migration / UN Migration (IOM) and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). That number includes 81 Rohingya refugees who received COVID-19 vaccinations only days after local fishermen encountered their vessel stranded off the East Aceh coast.

As Indonesia continues its fight to mitigate the crisis, the UN remains steadfast in its support of the government and citizens of Indonesia. In an Indonesian language video released on July 9, Resident Coordinator Julliland expressed her solidarity with Indonesians, "whether you struggle with the loss of a loved one, or with economic difficulty, or with the loneliness of physical distancing." She continues in the video message: "I want to reiterate the UN's deep gratitude to the frontline health workers who are working around the clock to keep us all safe. Remember: this storm will pass. And our care for each other is what enables us to weather it."

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