

## *On Day 1 of Broad Lockdown, a Debate Arises: Can Italians Follow the Rules?*

Italy's prime minister implored the public to cooperate in the largest clampdown against the coronavirus in the Western world. "We are the new Wuhan," said one Milan resident.



ROME – Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte finished his press conference at 2:15 a.m. to announce the extraordinary closure of northern Italy with a request that other heads of state may not have felt compelled to make.

"We must understand that we must all comply and we must not counteract these measures," he urged in the early hours of Sunday morning. "We shouldn't try to be smart."

Conte has just decreed a series of measures that amount to the greatest repression against the outbreak of coronavirus in the western world, restricting the movement of approximately a quarter of the population of Italy and endangering its economy.

But unlike China, where the outbreak began, this is a democracy, and the debate immediately broke out about how well the government can enforce the new rules, and if the Italians will really obey them.

"We are the new Wuhan," said Elena Lofino, 39, who works in a shopping center in the closed northern region of Lombardy, referring to the closed Chinese city of 11 million people where the virus is believed to have originated. .

While dating her friends, Ms. Lofino said she thought the measures made sense. "It will be a great sacrifice," he said, "but we will accept it."

Hours after the prime minister announced the new restrictions, the number of deaths from the virus in Italy increased by more than 50 percent in a single day to 366 from 233 on Saturday, most of the deaths officially reported in any country were from China. Italy has the worst outbreak in Europe, with more than 7,300 infected.

Many, including Mr. Conte, have appealed to the Italians to reject their tendency to "furbizia,quot;, the Italian word for the kind of cunning or cunning that is usually channeled to circumvent bureaucracy and inconvenient laws .

Furbizia, without a doubt, is a general feature attributed to Italians, often by other Italians.

But on Sunday, it seemed to be in mind when travelers rushed out of Lombardy trains before the decree entered into force in the afternoon and when experts and health officials implored the public to respect the law and act responsible way.

Italy's social media broadcasts on Sunday were full of famous singers and media personalities who participated in a shame campaign.

"You need to stay at home!" Barbara Balanzoni, a doctor, said in a video that she went viral in Italy. She said there were not enough respirators to help people with the virus.

"There are too many people walking," protested Dr. Balanzoni.

When museums closed across the country, the Italian culture minister, Dario Franceschini, thanked "the many protagonists of music, film and entertainment,quot; who promoted the hashtag "I'm staying at home,quot; on social networks .

"It's a very important message for our youth," he wrote on Twitter.

In Rome, outside the "red zones,quot; blocked further north, the authorities recommended that people limit their movements to what is "strictly necessary." Valeria Graziussi, a Neapolitan woman living in Rome, said she and her friends had decided to "do an experiment."

On Sunday, he went for coffee in the afternoon at Café Sant'Eustachio, one of the city's best-known cafés, which is usually full. "You can rarely stand at the counter for more than 30 seconds," he said.

Ms. Graziussi still found lines to be taken care of at the counter, so she considered the experiment a success.

"We have not been terrified enough," said her friend Davide d & # 39; Andrea shrugging.

The new and strict decree entered into force on Sunday afternoon and includes three months of potential jail for people who do not comply with some of its provisions, including those that restrict the movement of people who test positive for the virus and prohibitions in the meetings.

The Italian authorities have systematically taken some of the most aggressive steps to stop the spread of the virus. They have canceled flights from China in January, quarantining entire cities in February and now severely limiting movement throughout Lombardy, home of Milan's economic power, as well as in fringes of other nearby regions and iconic cities such as Venice.

That has not been enough for some European officials. Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis said Sunday that Italy should ban all its citizens from traveling to Europe.

In Italy, critics said calls to civic duty were undermined by confusion.

They said that the contradictory messages from the government and officials in the northern regions about what people could do and where they could go were not helping. They also criticized the national government in Rome for a schizophrenia that oscillates between the alerts of leaving everything and the guarantees of only washing their hands.

While Prime Minister Conte said the Italians were "forced,quot; to stay in the northern delimited areas unless they had been granted permission to go through the police checkpoints, the Lombardy official who led the region's response To the crisis he said it was not so strict.

Giulio Gallera, the main health care official in the Lombardy region, said in a live Facebook post that the decree signed overnight by Mr. Conte had raised "doubts,quot; among citizens. Gallera suggested that citizens, in order to preserve the country's economy, should be able to move to work. And he said the national government should clear up any confusion on the matter.

Matteo Salvini, the leader of the opposition league party in Italy, echoed the sentiment.

"Clarity, clarity, clarity!" He said in a statement. "Who can do what? Where can you go What can you bring?"

In the days before the decree, elders outside the quarantined city Zorlesco joked that their friends often eluded the rules and avoided police checkpoints by taking old country roads to the bar for a drink outside the area closed.

But Italian officials clearly do not believe any of this is funny, and they have lost patience with any invocation of furbizia.

In the southern regions of the country, governors say that anyone who comes from blocked northern areas must go to quarantine.

Giuseppe Ippolito, director of the National Institute of Infectious Diseases Lazzaro Spallanzani in Rome, said on Italian television that "people who fled last night are a potential risk to the country." He urged them to get in touch with health services, report their situation and "be prepared for eventual isolation."

Some people thought they were doing the right thing by leaving Milan to the south.

At the central train station in Milan on Sunday morning, Giorgia Caredda, a 30-year-old social media manager, waited for a train to Rome to help take care of his father, who has heart problems, "in case something bad happen. "

"One side of me feels really dumb," he said about being prompted to leave for a sense of impending doom. "It gave me the feeling of being chained and I needed to get out."

The authorities of the Lazio region, where the regional president said on Saturday that he had contracted the virus, posted photos of busy squares and streets of Rome on Facebook with the title #wecantdothis.

In Luigi Barzini's classic 1964 study of his countrymen, "The Italians," he attributed the value that Furbizia was given to Italy's habit of being conquered and ruled by a long line of hated aliens or cowards, from Napoleon to Habsburg

"Under the surface, the Italians invented ways to defeat oppressive regulation," Mr. Barzini wrote. "Because they could not protect their national freedom on the battlefield, they fought vigorously to defend the freedom of the individual and his family, the only freedom they understood anyway."

The writer compared the rules that those leaders imposed on "hedges in an obstacle course,quot; that the Italians used to show their speed. Laws, he said, became a necessary evil if only because they provided the pleasure of evading them.

"How could one avoid the laws if there were none?" he wrote.

This is precisely the kind of thinking that Mr. Conte urged Italians to avoid.

"We must safeguard our health," he said early Sunday, "and that of those we love."

In some unlikely quarters, that message seemed to be coming.

Antonio Ponti, 47, a D.J. In the Milan club scene, I had planned a party in defiance of the repression of the city's nightlife. To bypass an ordinance against events in places that do not allow people to stay at a distance of one meter from each other, he ingeniously planned the outdoor party.

But as the number of viruses grew and there was talk of strong restrictions in Milan, he said no He wants to be seen as a "plague spreader." He followed the example of other promoters and disconnected.

"It's wiser," he said, "if we help things get better."