

IFRC COVID-19 Emergency Decree Research: The Union of the Comoros

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Below answers are based on policies and regulations published by the government of Comoros as of 20 April 2020. Please note that some links to the source documents indicated in the footnotes may need to be copied and pasted as URL.

Overview.

At the moment of writing, there are no known cases of coronavirus in the Union of the Comoros.¹ A few precautionary measures have however been introduced in response to the pandemic. The first measures introduced in the country were announced with a press release by the President Azali Assoumani on March 16.² Village Chiefs, Mayors, Prefects, Cadis are assigned by the President the responsibility to ensure the enforcement of the measures announced in his speech. They will be supported, if necessary, by the police and security forces.

On 18th March further restrictions were announced by the President, including the introduction of a hotline number for information about the disease (1717), the regulation of the activities in public markets, and the obligation for prefects, mayors, heads of villages and local community, police and gendarmerie, as well as the naval forces, to ensure the strict application of the additional measures.³

Sources of information for this review include the official page dedicated to the Comorian authorities' response to the epidemic,⁴ the facebook page of the Ministry of Health of the Union of the Comoros,⁵ newspaper articles and travel information sections of foreign Governments' websites. It is advisable to continue to monitor these pages for relevant updates.⁶

1. Is there coordination between state and non-state actors, e.g. through a national emergency response mechanism?

There is no express coordination between state and non-state actors in the documents reviewed.

¹ African Arguments, *Coronavirus in Africa Tracker: How many covid-19 cases & where?*, 20 April 2020, available at: <https://africanarguments.org/2020/04/20/coronavirus-in-africa-tracker-how-many-cases-and-where-latest/>

² Union des Comores, *Présidence de la République, Adresse à la Nation II de Son Excellence Monsieur Azali Assoumani Président de l'Union des Comores Sur le COVID 19*, 16 March 2020, available at: <https://beit-salam.km/actualit%C3%A9s/adresse-%C3%A0-la-nation-ii-de-son-excellence-monsieur-azali-assoumani-pr%C3%A9sident-de-l%E2%80%99union-des-comores-sur-le-covid-19.html>

³ U.S. Embassy in Madagascar and Comoros, *Further restrictions announced by President Azali to combat the spread of COVID-19*, 18 March 2020, available at: <https://mg.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/security-and-travel-information/march-16-2020-restrictions-announced-by-president-azali-to-combat-covid-19-2/>

⁴ Stop Coronavirus Website: <https://stopcoronavirus.km/>

⁵ Ministère de la Santé, Union des Comores, Facebook page : <https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Government-Website/Minist%C3%A8re-de-la-Sant%C3%A9-Union-des-Comores-320950001695355/>

⁶ See also Al-Watwan Newspaper: <https://alwatwan.net/>

2. Is there mention of the role of Red Cross (RC) or humanitarian actors? In what areas/sectors? What responsibilities are ascribed to RC?

The Red Crescent of Comoros is mentioned for their contribution in the prevention effort through the development and implementation of awareness-raising activities on hygiene measures for the prevention of the epidemic.⁷

3. Are there exceptions to travel restrictions that will facilitate the movement of RC/humanitarian relief teams and/or aid across borders? What (if any) quarantine requirements or other conditions are attached?

In the resources reviewed, there are no explicit exceptions to travel restrictions for humanitarian relief teams.

As regards the restrictions introduced, the Comorian authorities have since 19th March banned all travelers arriving from a country that has reported more than 10 cases of coronavirus on its territory from entering the Union of the Comoros.⁸

On 23rd March, all international commercial flights were suspended until further notice by decision of the Comorian Government with effect from 24th March 2020.⁹ Cargo flights are however not affected by this measure.¹⁰ Ports are closed to traffic from affected countries.¹¹ Maritime transit of passengers between the Islands of the Union of the Comoros and Madagascar, as well as Tanzania and Mayotte, is prohibited.¹² The National Agency for Maritime Affairs further announced that all movement of people between East Africa and the Union of the Comoros is strictly prohibited.¹³ On March 18th sea travel between islands has been suspended until further notice. This measure particularly affects travel on board the *Kwassa-Kwassa*, between the four islands of Comoros.¹⁴

⁷ <https://stopcoronavirus.km/actualite/C3%A9s/2020/03/26/bambao,-boinkou,-dimani,-itsahidi...-les-%C3%A9quipes-de-sensibilisation-sont-chez-vous-depuis-ce-matin/> See also: Stop Coronavirus Website, *Bambao, Mboinkou, Dimani, Itsahidi... les équipes de sensibilisation sont chez vous depuis ce matin*, 23 March 2020, available at : <https://stopcoronavirus.km/actualite/C3%A9s/2020/03/22/sensibilisation-communautaire-avec-la-soci%C3%A9t%C3%A9-civile,-le-croissant-rouge-et-le-minist%C3%A8re-de-la-sant%C3%A9/>

⁸ République Française, Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères, Travel Information Section of Comoros, available at : <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/conseils-aux-voyageurs/conseils-par-pays-destination/comores/>

⁹ République Française, La France en Union des Comores, Ambassade de France à Moroni, Communiqué n°2 de l'ambassade à la communauté française, 26 March 2020, available at : <https://km.ambafrance.org/Communique-no2-de-l-ambassade-a-la-communaute-francaise>

¹⁰ U.S. Embassy in Madagascar and Comoros, COVID-19 Information: <https://mg.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/security-and-travel-information/covid-19-information/>

¹¹ Government of the United Kingdom, Travel Advice on Comoros: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/comoros/coronavirus>

¹² République Française, La France en Union des Comores, Ambassade de France à Moroni, Communiqué n°2 de l'ambassade à la communauté française, 26 March 2020, available at : <https://km.ambafrance.org/Communique-no2-de-l-ambassade-a-la-communaute-francaise>

¹³ U.S. Embassy in Madagascar and Comoros, COVID-19 Information: <https://mg.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/security-and-travel-information/covid-19-information/>

¹⁴ République Française, La France en Union des Comores, Ambassade de France à Moroni, Communiqué n°2 de l'ambassade à la communauté française, 26 March 2020, available at : <https://km.ambafrance.org/Communique-no2-de-l-ambassade-a-la-communaute-francaise> See also: U.S. Embassy in Madagascar and Comoros, Further restrictions announced by President Azali to combat the spread of COVID-19, 18 March 2020, available at : <https://mg.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/security-and-travel-information/march-16-2020-restrictions-announced-by-president-azali-to-combat-covid-19-2/>

In a statement of 30th March, the President of Comoros mentioned the closure of borders as one of the prevention measures adopted.¹⁵

As regards quarantine measures, on 7th February, the Ministries of Health and Transport signed a joint communiqué calling on all Comorian nationals coming from China to observe a 14-day quarantine in a third country not affected by the epidemic before arriving on national territory.¹⁶ The communiqué informed the air and maritime shipping companies serving the Comoros to observe the prevention instructions issued and that in case of non-compliance and/or violation of these instructions, the company "will assume full and complete responsibility in terms of quarantine and care" of passengers.

In his speech of 16th March, the President announced that quarantine measures for a minimum of 14 days is to be observed by all travelers coming from countries affected by the pandemic and considered to be "countries at risk".¹⁷ As a prevention measure the government has decided on 29th February to set up an isolation site at the airport made of prefabricated houses to host positive cases of covid-19 entering the borders.¹⁸

4. Are there exceptions to quarantines, curfews and other restrictions on movement that allow RC/humanitarian organizations access to vulnerable populations (including for psychosocial or non-medical aid)?

With the exception of the quarantine measures reported in the answer to question n.3, no absolute restriction on movement throughout the national territory has been introduced in the Union of the Comoros. In his statement of 30th March, however, the President of Comoros urged the population to stay at home and leave their domicile only when necessary.¹⁹

Visits to the *El-Maarouf* hospital center have been strictly prohibited since 19th March (until further notice).²⁰

¹⁵ Stop Coronavirus Website, *Le Président de l'Union des Comores annonce des mesures pour soutenir l'économie comorienne face au Covid-19*, 30 March 2020: <https://stopcoronavirus.km/actualite/C3%A9s/2020/03/30/le-pr%C3%A9sident-de-l%E2%80%99union-des-comores-annonce-des-mesures-pour-soutenir-l%C3%A9conomie-comorienne-face-au-covid-19/>

¹⁶ Al-Watwan Newspaper, *Les mesures de surveillance se renforcent au fil des jours aux frontières*, 10 February 2020, available at: <https://alwatwan.net/sante/epid%C3%A9mie-de-coronavirus-i-les-mesures-de-surveillance-se-renforcent-au-fil-des-jours-aux-fronti%C3%A8res.html>

¹⁷ Union des Comores, *Présidence de la République, Adresse à la Nation II de Son Excellence Monsieur Azali Assoumani Président de l'Union des Comores Sur le COVID 19*, 16 March 2020 : <https://beit-salam.km/actualite/C3%A9s/adresse-%C3%A0-la-nation-ii-de-son-excellence-monsieur-azali-assoumani-pr%C3%A9sident-de-l%E2%80%99union-des-comores-sur-le-covid-19.html>

¹⁸ Al-Watwan Newspaper, *Un site d'isolement attendu «dans les cinq prochains jours»*, 3 March 2020, available at : <https://alwatwan.net/sante/pr%C3%A9vention-contre-le-covid-19-aux-comores-i-un-site-d%E2%80%99isolement-attendu-%C2%ABdans-les-cinq-prochains-jours%C2%BB.html> See also Al-Watwan Newspaper, *Douze personnes sous surveillance au site de Vwadju*, 11 February 2020, available at : <https://alwatwan.net/sante/pr%C3%A9vention-contre-le-coronavirus-i-douze-personnes-sous-surveillance-au-site-de-vwadju.html>

¹⁹ Stop Coronavirus Website, *Le Président de l'Union des Comores annonce des mesures pour soutenir l'économie comorienne face au Covid-19*, 30 March 2020: <https://stopcoronavirus.km/actualite/C3%A9s/2020/03/30/le-pr%C3%A9sident-de-l%E2%80%99union-des-comores-annonce-des-mesures-pour-soutenir-l%C3%A9conomie-comorienne-face-au-covid-19/>

²⁰ U.S. Embassy in Madagascar and Comoros, *Further restrictions announced by President Azali to combat the spread of COVID-19*, 18 March 2020, available at: <https://mg.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/security-and-travel-information/march-16-2020-restrictions-announced-by-president-azali-to-combat-covid-19-2/>

5. Have any special legal facilities or exemptions been put in place for the importation of medical aid or other relief items or personnel (International Disaster Response Law)? What (if any) quarantine requirements or other conditions are attached?

In his statement of 30th March, the President of Comoros announced that the Minister of Finance will put in place exceptional measures to enable citizens to bear the tax and social security charges and to meet the financial obligations with the banks for the repayment of their loans. These include the simplification of customs procedures and the reduction by 30% of taxes and custom duties for food products, essential medicines and hygiene products and materials. Until 31st July, customs clearance procedures will be eased for certain products subject to rules.²¹

6. Is the RC (or humanitarian organizations) categorized as 'essential' or 'emergency' services, for the purposes of exemptions to restrictions on business operations and opening hours?

The Red Crescent or humanitarian organizations are not explicitly categorized as "essential" services. The only restriction to business that has been officially announced so far (according to the available resources reviewed) is the limitation of the opening hours of the capital's open-air markets (from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m.).²²

7. What other measures are provided in the emergency decrees? (for governmental actors, for communities, for health workers, etc).

The President's speech of 16th March informed the community that wedding ceremonies²³ and annual commemorations are suspended, and other gatherings are banned until further notice. Funeral attendance is restricted to close relatives, neighbors, and friends. The President further announced that other measures will be taken progressively and communicated in due time. A Scientific Committee has been set up to lead the fight against the virus.²⁴

The additional measures announced on 18th March include the obligation to play all sporting events behind closed doors in sports arenas and the strict regulation of bus travel.²⁵

²¹ Stop Coronavirus Website, *Le Président de l'Union des Comores annonce des mesures pour soutenir l'économie comorienne face au Covid-19*, 30 March 2020: <https://stopcoronavirus.km/actualite%C3%A9s/2020/03/30/le-pr%C3%A9sident-de-l%E2%80%99union-des-comores-annonce-des-mesures-pour-soutenir-l%C3%A9conomie-comorienne-face-au-covid-19/>

²² République Française, *La France en Union des Comores, Ambassade de France à Moroni, Communiqué n°2 de l'ambassadrice à la communauté française*, 26 March 2020, available at: <https://km.ambafrance.org/Communique-no2-de-l-ambassadrice-a-la-communaute-francaise>

²³ No more than 20 people may be present at private wedding ceremonies (NIKAH).

²⁴ Union des Comores, *Présidence de la République, Adresse à la Nation II de Son Excellence Monsieur Azali Assoumani Président de l'Union des Comores Sur le COVID 19*, 16 March 2020: <https://beit-salam.km/actualite%C3%A9s/adresse-%C3%A0-la-nation-ii-de-son-excellence-monsieur-azali-assoumani-pr%C3%A9sident-de-l%E2%80%99union-des-comores-sur-le-covid-19.html> See also: Stop Coronavirus Website, *Le Président de l'Union des Comores annonce des mesures pour soutenir l'économie comorienne face au Covid-19*, 30 March 2020: <https://stopcoronavirus.km/actualite%C3%A9s/2020/03/30/le-pr%C3%A9sident-de-l%E2%80%99union-des-comores-annonce-des-mesures-pour-soutenir-l%C3%A9conomie-comorienne-face-au-covid-19/>

²⁵ U.S. Embassy in Madagascar and Comoros, *Further restrictions announced by President Azali to combat the spread of COVID-19*, 18 March 2020, available at: <https://mg.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/security-and-travel-information/march-16-2020-restrictions-announced-by-president-azali-to-combat-covid-19-2/>

Private and public schools and universities have been closed, as well as mosques and places of worship²⁶. Friday prayers and collective prayers have been suspended.²⁷

The Government of Comoros has organized awareness-raising and dissemination events to train the staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the border authorities, “*la Brigade de la gendarmerie des transports aériens*”, and others²⁸ on the preventive measures to take in order to contain the spread of the virus, including quarantine measures, social distancing rules and hygiene measures.²⁹

In his statement of 30th March, the President of Comoros announced that the Minister of Economy and Energy will ensure that for the duration of the emergency all measures will be taken to guarantee the regular supply of water or electricity.³⁰

The Ministry of Health established a Treatment and Care Committee whose objective is to coordinate the actions of the medical staff in the three islands of the Union of the Comoros.³¹ On 3rd April, the President of Comoros has issued a Decree establishing the High-level Inter-ministerial Committee and the National Coordination Committee as part of the prevention effort for the covid-19 pandemic.³²

8. Have restrictions been adopted or put in place that ban the export of protective medical equipment?

There is no explicit ban on the export of protective medical equipment in the resources reviewed.

²⁶ Union des Comores, Ministère de l'Education Nationale, de l'Enseignement et de la Recherche Scientifique, Décret No. 20-046/MENERS/SG, 26 March 2020, available at: <https://stopcoronavirus.km/actualite/C3%A9s/2020/03/26/fermeture-des-ecoles-coraniques-et-cadrassats/>; See also: Stop Coronavirus Website, *Le Président de l'Union des Comores annonce des mesures pour soutenir l'économie comorienne face au Covid-19*, 30 March 2020: <https://stopcoronavirus.km/actualite/C3%A9s/2020/03/30/le-pr%C3%A9sident-de-l%E2%80%99union-des-comores-annonce-des-mesures-pour-soutenir-l%C3%A9conomie-comorienne-face-au-covid-19/>

²⁷ Union des Comores, Président de l'Union, Décret No. 20-050/PR, 25 March 2020, available at: <https://stopcoronavirus.km/actualite/C3%A9s/2020/03/26/decret-pr%C3%A9sidentiel-suspension-de-la-priere-hebdomadaire-du-vendredi-et-des-pri%C3%A8res-collectives/>

²⁸ Al-Watwan Newspaper, *Des agents portuaires et aéroportuaires sensibilisés sur la pandémie*, 13 March 2020, available at: <https://alwatwan.net/sante/covid-19-i-des-agents-portuaires-et-a%C3%A9roportuaires-sensibilis%C3%A9s-sur-la-pand%C3%A9mie.html>

²⁹ See Al-Watwan Newspaper, *Le personnel du ministère des Affaires étrangères sensibilisé sur le Coronavirus*, 16 March 2020, available at: <https://alwatwan.net/sante/pr%C3%A9vention-contre-le-covid-19-i-le-personnel-du-minist%C3%A8re-des-affaires-%C3%A9trang%C3%A8res-sensibilis%C3%A9-sur-le-coronavirus.html>

³⁰ Stop Coronavirus Website, *Le Président de l'Union des Comores annonce des mesures pour soutenir l'économie comorienne face au Covid-19*, 30 March 2020: <https://stopcoronavirus.km/actualite/C3%A9s/2020/03/30/le-pr%C3%A9sident-de-l%E2%80%99union-des-comores-annonce-des-mesures-pour-soutenir-l%C3%A9conomie-comorienne-face-au-covid-19/>

³¹ République Française, *La France en Union des Comores, Ambassade de France à Moroni, Communiqué n°2 de l'ambassadrice à la communauté française*, 26 March 2020, available at: <https://km.ambafrance.org/Communique-no2-de-l-ambassadrice-a-la-communaute-francaise>

³² Union des Comores, Président de l'Union, Décret No. 20-005/PR, 3 April 2020, available at: <https://stopcoronavirus.km/assets/documents/DocumentP1.pdf>