



WHITE & CASE

IFRC COVID-19 Emergency Decree Pro Bono Research: Rwanda

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

No coordination between state and non-state actors with respect to a national emergency response to COVID-19 has been publicly reported. The government is working internally on a 'social protection plan' to provide assistance to more vulnerable populations.¹ On March 17, it implemented fixed prices on food goods across the country to help stabilize food prices and capped the amount of each product that an individual can buy each day.² The government has also begun to distribute food staples, including beans, flour, cooking oil, rice, sugar, salt and soap, rationed based on the number of people per household, to more vulnerable citizens.³

The government has established a coronavirus hotline to report potential close contact with a confirmed case or contact with someone being evaluated for COVID-19 (calling number 114).⁴ The government has also set up two health centers in Kigali, and one in the south of Rwanda to deal with the pandemic.⁵

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

Publicly available materials do not address the role of RC or humanitarian actors.

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?

The government implemented a two-week nationwide shutdown that took effect on March 21.⁶ No exemptions have been publicly reported for RC/humanitarian relief teams, however, travel for "medical

¹ See "Coronavirus: Kagame plans support for the vulnerable," The East African, available at: <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/ea/Rwanda-announces-measures-support-vulnerable-covid19/4552908-5507910-fcayx3/index.html> (March 29, 2020).

² See "Rwanda's successes and challenges in response to COVID-19," The Atlantic Council, available at: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/africasource/rwandas-successes-and-challenges-in-response-to-covid-19/> (March 24, 2020).

³ See "Rwanda Distributes Food Under Coronavirus Lockdown," Taarifa, available at: <https://taarifa.rw/rwanda-distributes-food-under-coronavirus-lockdown/> (Mar. 28, 2020).

⁴ See "Coronavirus Disease COVID-19," Rwanda Biomedical Centre, available at: <https://www.rbc.gov.rw/index.php?id=707> (visited on March 30, 2020).

⁵ See "Rwanda coronavirus cases rise to 50," BBC, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/cwlv3xz0zdet/rwanda> (March 27, 2020).

⁶ The Atlantic Council, *supra* note 2.

reasons” is exempted from restrictions, and “healthcare” is listed as an essential service.⁷ Non-essential businesses are closed, travel between cities and districts is suspended indefinitely, and non-essential movement outside the home are not permitted.⁸ On March 19, 2020, Rwanda suspended all passenger flights in and out of the country.⁹ Public transportation has been banned.¹⁰ Policemen and soldiers have been deployed to enforce this shutdown and anyone found to be violating it will be arrested or fined.¹¹ Borders are closed for thirty days except for goods and cargo.¹² Returning Rwandan citizens and legal residents are permitted to enter the country but must comply with a mandatory 14-day quarantine at designated locations.¹³

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)?

No exceptions to quarantines, curfews or other restrictions have been declared for RC/humanitarian workers who have arrived to the country from a location with local transmission of COVID-19 or who have confirmed cases of COVID-19. However, restrictions do not apply to travel for medical reasons.¹⁴

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?

The closure of the border exempts the importation of goods and cargo,¹⁵ which presumably should include medical supplies. As of March 31, 2020, no specific exemptions have been put in place for relief personnel.

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?

There is no mention of the RC or other humanitarian organizations as “essential” or “emergency” services exempt from restrictions. However, the emergency decree lists “healthcare” as an essential service.¹⁶

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

Other essential services listed in the emergency decree include “food shopping” and “banking”. Shops selling food, medicine, hygiene and cleaning products, and other essential items remain open. The delivery of food and essential items, as well as the transportation of goods and cargo are still permitted.¹⁷

⁷ See “Announcement on Enhanced COVID-19 Prevention Measures,” Office of the PM Rwanda on Twitter, available at: <https://twitter.com/PrimatureRwanda/status/1241412264193937412> (March 21, 2020).

⁸ See “Update on COVID-19 Coronavirus – 30 March 2020,” Republic of Rwanda Ministry of Health, available at: https://www.rbc.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/announcement/CV%20update%2030%20Mar%20Eng.pdf (March 30, 2020).

⁹ See “Rwanda suspends flights as coronavirus cases rise,” BBC, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/cwlv3xz0zdet/rwanda> (March 19, 2020).

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ See “Rwanda begins 14-day complete lockdown,” The East African, available at: <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/ea/Rwanda-begins-14-day-complete-lockdown/4552908-5506784-lqvynk/index.html> (March 28, 2020).

¹² The Atlantic Council, *supra* note 2.

¹³ See “Announcement on Enhanced COVID-19 Prevention Measures,” Republic of Rwanda Ministry of Health, available at: https://www.rbc.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/guide/announcement%20on%20enhanced%20COVID-19%20prevention%20measures.pdf (March 21, 2020).

¹⁴ Office of the PM Rwanda on Twitter, *supra* note 7.

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ *Id.*

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

Based on our research of publicly available sources, no restrictions have been adopted regarding the export of protective medical equipment.