

19 epidemic in South Afr... X +

inafran.ru/node/2204

YouTube Maps Coat of arms of the...

Russian | english

Federal State Budgetary Institution of Science  
African Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences

Conferences

The organization and holding of conferences occupy a special place in the international and public activities of the Institute. Conferences enliven scientific life, give impetus to research, open up new directions and expand the horizons of research activity.

home Institute structure Scientific field The calendar news Contacts

60th anniversary of the Institute of Africa

Actual comment

Scientific field

Publishing and Publishing

Thesis Advice

Graduate school

### COVID-19 epidemic in South Africa (February – April 2020)

publication date: 04/27/2020

Actual comment

More than 20% of all confirmed cases of a new form of coronavirus in the African continent are detected in South Africa. As of April 17, in South Africa 2783 infected with COVID-19, 60 dead and 903 recovered.

| Mon      | Tue      | Wed      | Th | Fri     | Sat     | Sun |
|----------|----------|----------|----|---------|---------|-----|
|          |          |          |    | 1       | 2       | 3   |
| 4        | 5        | 6        | 7  | 8       | 9       | 10  |
| eleven   | 12       | thirteen | 14 | fifteen | sixteen | 17  |
| eighteen | nineteen | twenty   | 21 | 22      | 23      | 24  |
| 25       | 26       | 27       | 28 | 29th    | thirty  | 31  |

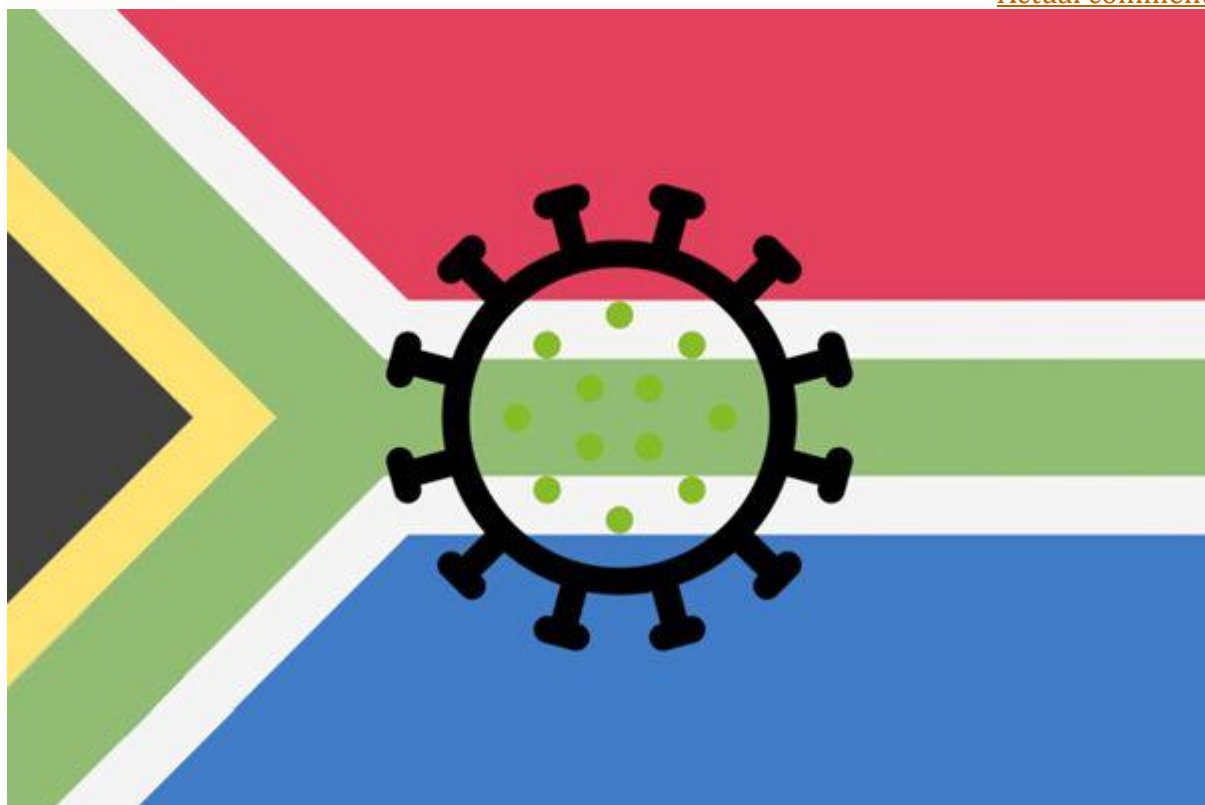
05/12/2020

ENG 13:07  
INTL 2020/05/16

## COVID-19 epidemic in South Africa (February – April 2020)

publication date: 04/27/2020

[Actual comment](#)



More than 20% of all confirmed cases of a new form of coronavirus in the African continent are detected in South Africa. As of April 17, in South Africa 2783 infected with COVID-19, 50 dead and 903 recovered were registered. More cases were confirmed only in Egypt (2844), while Morocco and Algeria were slightly behind South Africa in this indicator - 2670 and 2418 infected, respectively.

The emergency response center in South Africa was established at the end of January 2020, long before the official announcement on March 5 of the first case of COVID-19 infection. On March 15, South African President Cyril Ramafosa called the coronavirus pandemic a disaster of national importance (by then the number of confirmed cases of infection had reached 60).

To combat the virus, the state took emergency measures that went into effect on March 18. On March 27, the State Governing Council for Coronavirus introduced a three-week quarantine throughout the country, which was subsequently extended until April 30. At the time of quarantine, the state border of South Africa is closed, with the exception of several ports of arrival for the transport of fuel, goods and goods. All international and domestic passenger flights, except for special flights for the repatriation of South African and foreign citizens, have been discontinued. The army and the police are involved in quarantine enforcement.

With the beginning of quarantine, the number of new cases of COVID-19 infection detected every day across the country decreased by 10 times. Before quarantine, every day it increased by an average of 42%. According to official figures, the number of infected during quarantine increases by only 4% daily.

In mid-April, epidemiologist Salim Abdul Karim, head of the South African government's coronavirus expert panel, said COVID-19's incidence in South Africa was not growing as fast as previously estimated from events in Europe and the United States. The case of South Africa resembles the development of a pandemic in some countries of Southeast Asia, where the spread of the virus was slowed down at an early stage. In South Africa, this was probably achieved thanks to the early declaration of an emergency and the introduction of quarantine throughout the country. Contact contamination was minimized, which made it possible to smooth out the infection curve and reduce the burden on medical facilities.

Some experts attribute the relatively small number of infections among South African residents to the fact that there are not enough COVID-19 tests in the country. In the first half of April, according to the Minister of Health of the Republic of South Africa, about 3,000-5,000 tests a day were conducted in the country, mainly in state laboratories. The State Service for Sanitary and Hygienic Laboratories has set the task of conducting at least 30,000 tests for coronavirus per day, which is hindered by the inefficiency of the state healthcare system. Testing for COVID-19 can pass any resident of South Africa in the presence of symptoms of coronavirus. About 70 mobile laboratories have been organized for this.

As of April 17, 1.7 tests were conducted in South Africa for COVID-19 per 1000 inhabitants of the country (in Germany, Italy and Spain, this figure reached 20, in Russia - 12.4, the United States - 10.8). Among the countries of Africa with a population of more than two million people, South Africa ranks first in the total number of tests carried out (in Morocco - 0.3, Egypt - 0.2, Algeria - 0.07 per 1000 inhabitants). Among the BRICS countries, South Africa is significantly ahead of India (0.2) and Brazil (0.3) in this indicator.

Government support measures. In South Africa, a state medical support program has been adopted with the aim of establishing an emergency examination system, testing and identifying contacts of infected people, and providing medical assistance to victims. A system

of "centralized patient care" for severe cases and a "decentralized primary care" for patients with a mild form of the disease was introduced. Mobile medical teams conduct examinations and tests in areas with maximum population density and the likelihood of infection.

A state program has been launched that will allow the production of non-invasive ventilation devices to be quickly established. The state stimulates the local production of protective masks, hand sanitizers and pharmaceutical products for the population and medical workers.

The president of Ramafos announced the creation of the Solidarity Fund, whose funds are formed from voluntary contributions from South African individuals and legal entities, as well as a state subsidy of 150 million rand (about 645 million rubles). The fund's activities are aimed at combating the spread of the virus, helping infected and affected by the pandemic. The president of Ramafos, the vice president, all ministers and their deputies transfer one third of their salary to the fund. Top management of the largest companies followed the example of the country's leadership. By April 9, about 2.2 billion rand (almost 10 billion rubles) were donated to the fund. About half of these funds are directed to the purchase of protective masks and gloves, ventilators and test systems.

In the second half of March, South African authorities began to take measures to curb the recession and rising unemployment. The following government support measures are envisaged:

- payment of salaries to employees of companies affected by quarantine and economic downturn, as part of the state Interim Employee Assistance Plan;
- payment of benefits from the Compensation Fund to employees infected at the workplace;
- subsidy in the form of benefits for payment of payroll tax in the amount of up to 500 rand (about 2,000 rubles) per month for four months for employees earning up to 6,500 rand (28,000 rubles) per month (about 4 million inhabitants of the country);
- a subsidy in the total amount of 3 billion rand (about 13 billion rubles) from the budgets of the Corporation for the Development of Industry and the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Competition to help and finance companies on which the fight against the pandemic and the functioning of the economy depend;
- a subsidy in the total amount of 200 million rand (860 million rubles) from the Ministry of Tourism to support small and medium enterprises in the field of tourism and the hotel sector;
- reduction of the refinancing rate by the South African Reserve Bank by 200 basis points to a record 4.25%.

To prevent mass purchases for the future, some supermarkets have imposed restrictions on the sale of the most sought-after goods. The Ministry of Trade and Industry has set an upper limit on the price of essential goods. Speculators face a fine of up to 10 million rand (43 million rubles) or a 12-month prison sentence.

The State Unemployment Insurance Fund has allocated 40 billion rand (172 billion rubles) to help employees of enterprises that have lost the opportunity to work due to quarantine. By April 9, the fund had paid benefits totaling 356 million rand (1.5 billion rubles).

The State Agency for Small Business Financing has introduced a six-month moratorium on loan payments. 500 million rand (2.2 billion rubles) were allocated to help small enterprises. The authorities sent 1.2 billion rand (more than 5 billion rubles) to support small farms and ensure uninterrupted food supplies.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on the South African economy, which continues to worsen. The week of March 9-13 was the worst for the Johannesburg

Stock Exchange in 21 years: stocks lost, on average, 15% of their value. In April, the BankServAfrica economic transaction index, a comprehensive indicator of the state of the South African economy, taking into account transactions of up to 5 million rand, fell by 3.3%. This is the sharpest drop since August 2008. A TransUnion credit bureau survey showed that with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, family income declined in 80% of South African respondents. Every tenth respondent lost his job during this time.

According to estimates by the non-governmental organization Inclusive Society Institute, based on a survey of more than a thousand entrepreneurs in all provinces of South Africa, about 813,000 employees of small, medium and micro enterprises lost their jobs due to quarantine and the economic crisis. If quarantine is terminated by early May and the enterprises can operate, most employers will again invite these employees to work. Extension of quarantine in its current form can lead to the fact that most small and medium enterprises will continue to lay off staff.

Forecasts. In mid-April, the South African Ministry of Health submitted a report to the parliamentary health committee, according to which, in September, the worst-populated province in the country, Gauteng, will have more than 1.5 million infected people. However, many experts doubt this forecast. To prepare for the peak of the pandemic in South Africa, public and private medical facilities will need two more ventilation devices and three times as many beds in intensive care units than there were in mid-April.

Epidemiologist Salim Abdul Karim said the government will only be able to quarantine quarantine when the number of new COVID-19 infections across the country does not exceed forty-four per day. At the same time, he emphasized that quarantine will not be canceled at once, as the number of infected in South Africa will increase exponentially.

The State Commission for Conciliation and Arbitration has warned the government that from April to October, due to long quarantines throughout the country and a decline in production, many small and medium enterprises will be forced to lay off employees due to closures or financial difficulties. Mass layoffs will last from three to six months. High probability of reduction or non-payment of wages, as well as the transfer of employees to unpaid leave.

The management of Investec, a large South African banking group, including the chairman of the Banking Association of South Africa, suggested that the extension of the quarantine will lead to a sharp increase in unemployment, which will have negative socio-political consequences. Damage will be caused not only to the economy, but also to the social structure. Subject to epidemiological requirements, it is necessary to begin to remove restrictions on the functioning of certain sectors of the economy in order to support the country's economy and prevent a decline in the standard of living of the population.

According to the forecast of the South African Reserve Bank, the formal sector will lose about 370,000 jobs in the near future. Continued quarantine will paralyze the economy and, in the long run, exacerbate the recession. It is likely that the demand for goods and services will decrease significantly due to the falling solvency of the population. The consequences of the crisis will be most significant for small businesses, as well as for millions of South African people involved in the informal sector, which is an important component of the national economy.

South African economists suggest a long recession awaits the country. Its cause will be not only a drop in GDP due to quarantine and a pandemic, but also for many years the aggravating problems in the economy, which could not be solved either under President Zuma or under President Ramafos.



The South African finance minister said the pandemic would certainly bring recession closer. Together with the State Treasury, the ministry developed scenarios. The most likely option is a deep recession during 2020, followed by rapid economic growth.

Moody's downgraded South Africa's economic development for 2020. By the end of the year, real GDP will fall by 2.5%, as measures to curb the spread of the virus will reduce household consumption and curtail production capacity, as well as cause serious damage to many sectors of the economy, including transport, tourism and mining.

According to the International Monetary Fund, South Africa's GDP will decline by 5.8% by the end of 2020, and will increase by 4% in 2021. The forecast of the South African Reserve Bank is more pessimistic: a 6.1% decrease in GDP by the end of 2020 (in March, the bank predicted a decrease of only 0.2%). According to the Chairman of the Reserve Bank, the COVID-19 pandemic will have a huge impact on the socio-economic situation in the country, and it is unprecedentedly difficult to predict the development of economic activity in the country for the near future. Nevertheless, in 2021 GDP is expected to grow by 2.2%, and in 2022 - by 2.7%.

BNP Paribas Bank experts believe that the South African economy will face an even worse crisis. Due to falling demand in the domestic market, in 2020 GDP may decline by 8.5%. At the same time, BNP Paribas expects that the country's GDP in 2021 will grow by 2.3%.

Thus, the coronavirus pandemic, with insufficiently thought out steps by the South African authorities, can lead to a sharp aggravation of the already difficult socio-economic and political situation in the country, including a sharp drop in the standard of living of the population, which will inevitably lead to mass protests and violent actions.

Russia, as a South African partner in BRICS, and a country hosting the BRICS summit in 2020 (although it is not yet clear when and in what format it will be held in a pandemic), could gain political points if South Africa provided medical assistance to combat coronavirus, taking into account the experience gained in our country in the fight against infection. Such assistance could be important for the long-term development of bilateral relations.

Gorelik B.M., Ph.D., Institute of Africa