

Beat: Politics

Spain, in a state of alarm

Until May 9

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USPA NEWS - The Spanish Government approved this Sunday, in an extraordinary session, the declaration of a state of alarm throughout the national territory, except the Canary Islands, for six months, until next May 9, with the aim of curbing the spread of the coronavirus. The state of alarm entered into force this same Sunday, with an initial duration of fifteen days, but the Government, as Prime Minister Pedro SÁnchez explained at a press conference, will request an extension of the measure from Congress until adding a total time of six months.

The state of alarm was requested from the Government by ten Spanish regions and the autonomous city of Melilla, on the North African coast. Unlike the one that was decreed in March, during the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic, this time the command will be exercised by the presidents of the regional governments, who will have some freedom to manage it. The Spanish Government only established the bases of what will govern during the state of alarm: its duration, until May 9, and the application of a curfew between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m., although regional governments they will be free to advance or delay those hours by sixty minutes, according to the health, economic and social circumstances of their territories.

Between those night hours it will be forbidden to go outside, except for the usual exceptions: going to work, the hospital or the pharmacy; return home or care for minors or elderly assisted. The fines for breaking the curfew will range between 600 and 600,000 euros. This is to put an end to private meetings that, according to experts, are the cause of massive infections when held in non-ventilated spaces and relax security measures: wear a mask, keep a safe distance and wash the hands frequently. Meetings of more than six people are prohibited at any time of the day and are restricted to cohabitants during the night hours.

Regional governments will also have the power to decide whether to confine their entire territory or only the areas with the highest number of infections. In this connection, travel from one region to another is prohibited, unless the regional authorities concerned decide otherwise.

The President of the Spanish Government, Pedro SÁnchez, asked the conservative Popular Party to support the state of alarm. Conservatives rule Madrid and have previously opposed the declaration of a curfew. SÁnchez said this Sunday that the state of alarm is the "most effective tool to stop the contagion curve and keep the virus at bay again." The president insisted that "from an epidemiological point of view, the reasons for its approval are fully justified." Spain currently has 1,046,132 active cases and 34,752 deaths from the disease.

Only the Canary Islands are left out of the declaration of the state of alarm because, according to Pedro SÁnchez, their epidemiological situation allows it. The archipelago began this week to receive German and British tourists, after Spain negotiated with those two countries the opening of a safe corridor to the islands. Germany and the United Kingdom announced that they will not require their nationals to carry out diagnostic tests upon their return from the Canary Islands, as they consider these islands safe territory. For the archipelago, the arrival of tourists is a respite, since 60% of its population lives from tourism.

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