Global – COVID-19 Pandemic

On Call International’s Incident Level: WATCH

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**NOTABLE WEEKLY UPDATES:**

**Africa**
- South Africa’s president condemns travel bans against his country.
- Rwanda updates restrictions for international travelers.
- Kenya will allow travel to and from Southern African countries.

**Americas**
- Countries across region implement travel restrictions for foreigners with recent travel history to southern Africa countries.
- The US will soon require all international travelers to the US provide a negative COVID-19 viral test from within 24 hours of entry.

**Asia-Pacific**
- Several countries across the Asia-Pacific region impose travel restrictions against those with recent travel to various countries in southern Africa.
- Australia reverses course on permitting entry to limited groups of foreign nationals.
- South Korea reports its highest ever COVID-19 infection rate.

**Europe**
- Britain brings back mask mandate.
- Vaccines mandatory for senior citizens in Greece.
- Austria extends Covid lockdown.

**Middle East & North Africa**
- Egypt has banned all direct flights to and from several southern African countries due to the Omicron variant.
- Israel becomes the first country to close its borders to all international travelers.
- Kuwait has stopped all direct flights from several southern African countries including South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Lesotho, Eswatini, Zambia, and Malawi.
• Morocco suspended all incoming international flights for 14 days.
• Dubai is restricting travelers originating or transiting from South Africa, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe.

GLOBAL SUMMARY:

The On Call Security & Medical Teams are continuing to monitor the global outbreak COVID-19. As of the issuance of this report on Wednesday 1 December, there have been 263,059,445 confirmed cases of COVID-19 globally with 5,220,060 deaths. Due to the emergence of the Omicron COVID-19 variant, several countries have been reimposing travel restrictions, primarily affecting those with recent travel to various countries in southern Africa. For updated information on individual countries’ travel advisories, COVID-19 case trends, travel restrictions, and healthcare capabilities review On Call International’s COVID-19 Travel Outlook Map.

REGIONAL SUMMARIES:

AFRICA

The discovery of the new Omicron COVID-19 variant has caused global panic, with many countries limiting travel to and from several countries in Southern Africa. At this time, little is yet known about Omicron but there is speculation that it may be more contagious than previous variants. The effectiveness of current COVID-19 vaccines against Omicron is also currently unclear.

South Africa’s President Cyril Ramaphosa called the travel bans against South Africa unjustified and demanded they be urgently lifted. The EU, UK, US, as well as parts of Africa were among many countries that enacted these travel restrictions following the discovery of the Omicron variant. In his speech, President Ramaphosa said the travel bans lack scientific evidence. He also said that these bans will not prevent the transmission of the variant and will only damage the economies of affected nations. Omicron has already been detected in multiple countries including the UK, Australia, and Israel.

Effective immediately, all international travelers to Rwanda will be required to quarantine at designated hotels, regardless of vaccination status, while they wait for their PCR test results. In addition to this, Rwanda also imposed travel bans to and from Southern African countries due to the detection of the Omicron variant. Countries affected by this travel ban include Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Rwanda will also now be offering COVID-19 boosters to any of its citizens over the age of 50.

Kenya will not cut passenger air travel from Southern African countries. The Kenya Civil Aviation Authority (KCAA) announced that the country has issued tighter measures for allowing travelers from Southern African countries. Kenya has enhanced screening for anyone coming from Southern African countries. Travelers from
these countries will have to present a negative PCR test obtained no more than 96 hours before arrival. Travelers must also be fully vaccinated to be allowed into the country.

AMERICAS

Countries across the Americas region have in the past week implemented new restrictions banning the entry of foreigners who have recent travel history to southern Africa countries including South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Eswatini, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Malawi, and Mozambique. Countries doing so across the region include: Argentina (10 day quarantine for all arriving from continent of Africa); The Bahamas; Brazil; Canada (extended ban yesterday to Egypt and Nigeria); Chile; Cuba; Ecuador; Guatemala; Jamaica; Paraguay; Peru; and the US.

Colombia did not ban entry of specific travelers but did extend its health state of emergency to February after it was scheduled to expire December 1.

Some countries have opted to not implement further restrictions at this time including Uruguay and notably Mexico, with its Deputy Health Minister Saturday criticizing measures enacted by others in the international community as “disproportionate.”

The US announced Tuesday that it will soon require all international travelers to the US provide a negative COVID-19 viral test from within 24 hours of entry, regardless of vaccination status, due to the international spread of the recently detected Omicron variant of COVID-19.

ASIA-PACIFIC

Officials in Australia have announced that plans to reopen the border to international student and foreign skilled workers will be delayed for at least two weeks due to the emergence of the Omicron COVID-19 variant. The original plan had stipulated that the aforementioned groups would be permitted to enter Australia as of 1 December. This would have been Australia’s first reduction in entry restrictions for foreigners since the Pandemic began. At this time, it is unclear whether the extension of entry restrictions may be extended beyond two weeks. Domestically, Australia has been reporting new cases of Omicron, primarily in New South Wales. The government has not reimposed any domestic lockdowns as of yet and it remains unclear whether they intend to do so.

After partially reopening its border to limited categories of foreign nationals, officials in Japan have announced that border restrictions have been reimplemented due to the emergence of the Omicron COVID-19 variant. Japan had recently announced a partial reopening of its border to international students and businesspersons but has since banned entry into Japan for all foreign nationals. As of Wednesday 1 December, the Japanese government has also announced that residents of Japan traveling from South Africa, Eswatini, Namibia, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Lesotho, Angola, Botswana, or Zimbabwe will be restricted
from returning to Japan for at least one month. At this time, Omicron cases have also reportedly been detected domestically within Japan.

Officials in the Philippines have announced a temporary suspension of inbound flights from South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Eswatini, and Mozambique due to the emergence of the Omicron COVID-19 variant. This suspension will remain in effect until at least 15 December. Additionally, the government has decided to suspend the entry of all foreign tourists, even those that are fully vaccinated. Domestically, the Philippine government has initiated a three-day COVID-19 vaccine drive with the intention of vaccinating nine million residents. Currently, approximately 33% of the Philippine population is fully vaccinated.

COVID-19 infection rates continue to rise in South Korea, despite the population’s 79% full vaccination rate. Nearly four thousand new COVID-19 cases are now being reported daily, approximately twice as many cases as were being reported a month ago. The cause for the rising case counts likely relates to the recent decision by the South Korean government to lift most domestic restrictions. South Korea’s international borders still remain fairly open to most foreign nationals.

EUROPE

On Saturday, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced that masks would again be mandatory in all shops and on public transportation. Additionally, all UK citizens over the age of 18 are now eligible to receive the Covid booster shot if they have received their second shot at least three months prior. The countries South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Eswatini, Zimbabwe and Namibia have been added to the United Kingdom’s “red list”, meaning any non-UK or Irish travelers are banned from entering from those countries.

On Tuesday, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis declared that all citizens over the age of 60 will be required to receive the Covid-19 vaccine or face a monthly fine of 100 euros. The revenue from the fines will reportedly be used to support government hospitals that are under significant strain from Covid patients. Approximately 500,000 Greeks over the age of 60 have not been vaccinated, and the country is currently averaging more than 6,400 new cases per day.

Austria has extended its nationwide lockdown to 11 December after reports indicated the daily infection rate has decreased since the lockdown began. All non-essential shops are to remain closed, and the nighttime curfew was adjusted from 9:00 pm to 7:00 pm. Additionally, the Covid vaccine will be mandatory for all citizens starting February 1.

MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

Egypt has banned all direct flights to and from several southern African countries as a result of the Omicron variant. The countries include South Africa, Lesotho, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia, and Eswatini.
Israel became the first country to close its borders following the news of the Omicron variant. All foreign travelers are banned from entering the country. Israeli citizens are allowed entry but will be required to quarantine even if vaccinated.

Kuwait has stopped all direct flights from South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Lesotho, Eswatini, Zambia, and Malawi. The government has also advised its citizens against all travel, especially to southern Africa. Kuwaiti citizens arriving from affected countries are required to quarantine for seven days upon arrival. Non-Kuwaiti citizens are not permitted to enter the country if they have traveled to an affected country within the last 14 days.

Morocco has suspended all incoming international flights for 14 days beginning at midnight on November 29 due to the Omicron variant. The Foreign Ministry has stated the policy will be evaluated regularly to adjust if necessary.

According to Emirates Airline, Dubai in the United Arab Emirates is restricting travelers originating or transiting from South Africa, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe.
STANDING ADVICE:

- Review On Call International’s COVID-19 Travel Outlook Map for updated information on individual countries’ travel advisories, COVID-19 case trends, travel restrictions, and healthcare capabilities.
- Maintain enhanced personal hygiene. This includes washing your hands often with soap and water, clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe, wear a face covering at all times while in public locations, and avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Practice good cough etiquette by covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when coughing or sneezing. Do not use your hands because subsequent contact of your hands to surfaces or other people can spread the infection.
- If feeling ill, remain indoors and limit your contact with others.
- Be advised that many countries are implementing complete entry/exit bans, applicable to citizens and non-citizens alike. Review a country’s specific travel restrictions prior to making travel arrangements.
- Consider that commercial flight availability is limited. Even if a country does not restrict entry, it may be difficult to find flights to the area.
- Expect enhanced health screening procedures to be conducted at transportation hubs such as airports.
- Many countries have imposed domestic lockdown measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. If traveling to a country, review its domestic restrictions prior to setting out.
- If you believe you may be infected with COVID-19, contact a medical facility by phone or email prior to arrival to ensure the medical facility have the proper time to prepare for your arrival. Be advised that due to the volume of confirmed cases in some locations, medical workers may advise you to self-isolate at home if your symptoms are not severe.
- Review the CDC’s website and the WHO’s website for the most up-to-date information relating to COVID-19 exposure, risk, and prevention.
Incident Classification

**MONITOR**

**Definition:** Continue to conduct normal operations without significant security concerns.

**Conditions:**
- Standard security operations protocols are in place
- Operating environment is considered stable
- Daily activities within the locality are proceeding as normal
- Operations expected to proceed with no impediments

**Advice:** Continue to follow best practices and travel safety tactics. Follow standing advice indicated in briefing.

**WATCH**

**Definition:** Continue to conduct normal operations. Indicators and warnings suggest heightened awareness and additional precautions may need to be implemented.

**Conditions:**
- Noticeable changes in daily activities within the locality
- A small-scale increase of civil unrest or crime
- Natural Disaster seasons are approaching

**Advice:** Review Emergency Action protocols, liaise with embassy sources and trusted local contacts to ascertain latest on the ground information, and report any pertinent information to travelers and security provider. Follow standing advice indicated in briefing.

**WARNING**

**Definition:** A specific threat or threats have been identified determined by accurate intelligence and assessment of the situation. The threat has the potential to be ongoing or escalate.

**Conditions:**
- State Department or relevant health authority issues a warning
- Significant natural disaster is forecast
- Significant intelligence indicating a potential disruptive incident

**Advice:** Consider restricting movement of personnel in impacted areas, have choice of action in place if situation worsens, ensure constituents have adequate emergency supplies, and establish daily communication windows with constituents in country.

**TAKE ACTION**

**Definition:** The current, credible, and specific threat is imminent, occurring or has occurred and has caused significant disruption to daily operations and activities in country.

**Conditions:**
- A major event occurs with significant economic, political or security disruptions expected over a short or long term period
- Large presence of military or police in streets with continuing presence expected; state of emergency declared
- US State department raises the travel rating or evacuates non-essential personnel or staff

**Advice:** Establish immediate communication with personnel, consider communicating with affected personnel’s emergency contacts and family, and liaise with both local and non-local authorities and like-minded organizations to support your response.
The information provided to you within this briefing has been compiled from a multitude of available sources and is based on current news and analysis at the time of writing. The security team at On Call International, LLC. has provided this analysis, supporting advice, and recommendations in good faith to assist you in mitigating risks that could arise. However, no implied or express warranty against risk, changes in circumstance, or other fluid and unforeseen events can be provided. Based on your request for this assessment, you agree that any reliance you place on this information is therefore strictly at your own risk and that you will not hold On Call International, LLC. or the authors responsible for any inaccuracies, errors or oversights herein.