

New Year's Eve Curfew

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On New Year's Eve (31st December 2021), the South African government lifted the curfew and adjusted the restrictions on gatherings. The government said that this was due to the drop in the number of COVID-19 infection cases and the decrease in hospital admissions. However, many townships like Lawley and Finetown (south of Johannesburg) were very unsettled and busy.

The lifting of the curfew brought joy to many communities and businesses but it was also seen as a risk as some believe that the infectious rate of COVID -19 was high, especially during the festive season.

Many people in townships and other local areas were not very informed about the health protocols or social distancing needed to maintain and protect themselves; and prevent the virus from spreading.

With no restrictions on the movement of people and licensed alcohol establishments allowed to operate beyond midnight within local townships, areas like taverns, pubs and clubs were a hotspot for COVID-19 during the festive season. In these areas people cared less about observing their physical distance from others, wearing masks and strictly following the necessary health protocols. People gathered in large groups without physical distancing, giving the virus a chance to be more transmittable.

According to Karabo Kopanye, lifting the curfew on New Year's Eve put the lives of South Africans at risk of contracting the virus. Already there's a new variant of the virus [Omicron] that is said to be infectious and with many people in townships being uninformed there's a high chance a rapid increase in cases of COVID-19.

"The crime rate wouldn't have been as high as it was during the festive season if the curfew wasn't lifted because during the curfew people were scared to travel after hours. With the lifting of the curfew and the removal of restrictions on movement, people took advantage and this resulted in increased theft, gang shootings and rape," said Jeanette Kune, a Lawley resident.

Even though South Africa's statistics showed a decrease in COVID-19 infection cases and the decrease in hospital admission rates, many feel the government should have maintained the curfew till there was absolutely no COVID-19 cases in the country.

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