

## **Address by the President of the Republic, Mr Nicos Anastasiades**

My intervention today was deemed necessary, following the deterioration of the epidemiological situation, with the recent mutation of the virus spreading rapidly, both in our country and throughout the world.

What concerns myself and the Government, and I am certain also the vast majority of you, is the protection of health, civil liberties and the economy.

All three are at risk, since, with the increased hospitalizations, the strength of the health system is being tested, while in order to avoid the collapse of the system, we are led to decisions with which the treatment of a large portion of our suffering fellow citizens is being suspended.

Based on data from the Medical Services, 9 in 10 people who are severely symptomatic and hospitalised have not been vaccinated or have not completed their vaccination scheme, and the majority of them are under 40 years of age.

The severity of the situation is also demonstrated by the fact that in the week of July 8-15 there were 6,853 cases, while yesterday hospitalizations reached 181.

The above data confirm the scientific findings that the new dangerous virus mutation is spreading rapidly, with the spread becoming uncontrollable.

It is no coincidence that states, one after the other, are reintroducing strict restrictive measures, similar to those experienced in our country, and in other countries, of course, in March 2020.

Nevertheless, the measures taken in the past were deemed necessary because there was no option at the time to protect health and life, other than isolation.

Unlike the first waves of the pandemic, for a few months now, thanks to science, the population is protected through the vaccination programs.

The government, in its desire to shield each citizen and to avoid measures similar to those in the past, secured a number of vaccines more than double the population.

We had two options before us for a successful vaccination programme:

Either compulsory vaccination or, through other measures, the encouragement of the entire population to make the decision to be vaccinated.

Respecting the right of citizens to choose, we did not follow what a number of countries did, making vaccination compulsory.

We have chosen measures aimed at protecting the many from the indifference or the choices of the few, which will be announced at 6 p.m. by the Minister of Health and the Commissioner for the Citizen.

I want to be clear:

The Government's intention is not to divide citizens into vaccinated and unvaccinated. I want to repeat this: Our respect of every citizen's right to choose is granted.

At the same time, however, as a State, we have a duty to protect the right of life and of work of all citizens.

This is why the decision regarding the SafePass is intensified, aiming to:

Not jeopardise the country's health system, ensuring citizens' health.

Not jeopardise the viability of enterprises, which is associated with jobs.

Not jeopardise the right of unhindered enjoyment of the freedoms of those who have been vaccinated.

It is for this reason that it is not acceptable for the many to be at risk through fault of the few.

The few shall not deprive the freedom of the many.

The few shall not threaten social cohesion and restrict the right of the many to return to conditions of full normality.

I am sure you share my findings, concerns and worries, even if the measures we have announced or will announce this afternoon are not desirable.

I wish we had other choices, but we should be aware that, as are the scientists' findings, the virus will continue to be a part of our lives, for an unknown period of time.

That is why they believe that it is only through vaccination that the immunity of the population will be strengthened, the soonest possible.

That is why they believe that only through vaccination the population's wall of immunity will be strengthened as soon as possible.

I am hopeful that the goals set and the entire effort are shared by all, and will be supported by the entire society, the political parties, the Church, the media, the organised groups, the scientific community, but also by the workers and entrepreneurs.

The decisions that we are obliged to follow out of necessity, do not constitute our arbitrary view.

It is the documented position of the scientific community that either we get vaccinated or we will become ill, with all the subsequent consequences.

Now is the time, for each one of us, to take the matter of everyone's life and health into our own hands, with seriousness, a sense of responsibility and solidarity.

This time, let us become the ones to continue the chain of vaccination, and not the ones to break it; a chain that will lead to the definitive end of the pandemic.

I have trust in you, because we have been tested at worse crises than today's and together we have managed to overcome them.

I am sure that together we will succeed, again and I thank you for this.

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