

Greek PM Mitsotakis: “Christmas holidays this year will be very different”



“Christmas holidays this year will be very different – much more limited, with our families, those we love, possibly joined by just another family,” Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said on Saturday, after a visit in Thessaloniki to the Papageorgiou hospital.

Mitsotakis, on tour in Thessaloniki, had earlier paid a visit to the Ippokratio General Hospital in the city and the emergency ambulance EKAV operation center in Pylea, a suburb.

In an interview to Status FM, the premier had said that “the viral load is starting to drop noticeably,” and the number of hospitalizations during off hours have started to drop, but he asked the public for “some more patience ahead of Christmas.”

The PM warned that “we will still have one or two very difficult weeks ahead, but we also know that when we start coming out of the lockdown, we will need to be doubly careful – what we honestly didn’t do during the summer.” He said that “everyone is responsible for that, starting with me, and I’ve recognized the role the state has played in this – but we must not forget that it’s the individual behaviors

that determine the rate of the pandemic's spread."

Papageorgiou Hospital president of the board Michalis Karaviotis said that "despite the unprecedented and very difficult conditions we are experiencing right now, we have the support of the entire staff – doctors, nurses and administrators have done their best to ensure the best medical coverage of all those people coming to us for help."

He said that during the first phase of the pandemic the hospital had only 6 ICUs, and now has 44, the best that could be done right now. Recent hirings have also helped, he said, noting 84 nursing staff and 42 medical staff, "without whom we could not have managed," Karaviotis said.

Regional Health District chief Panagiotis Bogiatzidis said that the entire region had 975 staff that was hired in recent months to support the system: 190 assistant doctors and 384 nursing staff, along with 400 staff for supporting health services. So far, the hospital has been able to cover needs even in patients who need to be intubated, he said.

"What we are seeing now is something you truly see once in a century," Mitsotakis said. "But during the influenza epidemic, when we didn't have enough ICUs every year and there was a waiting list and other interventions had to be done for a person to find an ICU bed – that's something we saw every year, but it was under the radar for the public, despite the health sector's complaints." It took an epidemic of an unprecedented extent, he said, to do things that had to be done for the national health system, "and this should have been done decades ago."