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Citing Coronavirus, China Locks Down Wenzhou and Its 9 Million People

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In an ominous new development, the Chinese government has locked down the city of Wenzhou, China's 15th largest, a growing sign that the coronavirus outbreak is defying efforts of the Chinese government to contain it. Wenzhou is a very important industrial, technological, cultural, and academic center on the coast of southern Zhejiang Province, across from Taiwan. Wenzhou has become the first Chinese city outside of the Wuhan area to be locked down.



Wenzhou's nine million inhabitants are known for their strong business aptitude, and are nicknamed the "Jews of China." Wenzhou is also known for producing hundreds of world-class mathematicians, and for forging close ties with Taiwan's tech sector. The city also has one of China's largest concentrations of Christians, who have sporadically come under severe persecution since the Chinese communists came to power in 1949.

Zhejiang Province has the highest incidence of coronavirus outside central Hubei Province, where Wuhan is located, with more than 660 confirmed infections, at least 265 of them in Wenzhou.

As of now, the total number of confirmed coronavirus cases has risen above 17,000, while the death toll has surpassed 360 — significant numbers, to be sure, but still far from constituting an apocalyptic pandemic.

What has been apocalyptic has been the Chinese government's response to the Wuhan virus. With its lockdown of a major city more than 800 kilometers (497 miles) from Wuhan, it has signaled its willingness to go to any lengths to maintain the appearance of control. Whether such appearances, and the fears that have triggered them, are warranted, remains to be seen.

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