



## **National Address**

**The Most Hon. Dr. Hubert Minnis**

**Prime Minister and Minister of Finance**

**Sunday, 23 May 2021**

**5:00 P.M.**

Good afternoon.

Thank you Dr. Dahl-Regis, for your presentation, your service, and your ongoing counsel and advice.

Our nation remains grateful to you, for all you have done, and continue to do.

God bless you.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are a small island developing country.

Successive administrations over the years, have worked to provide healthcare resources, to our many communities and settlements, on our many islands.

Because some of our neighbors in the region, only have one or a few islands, they need fewer public medical facilities.

Because of our much larger archipelago, the Government of The Bahamas, operates approximately 95 clinics throughout the country.

As a small country with restraints on our resources, there is limited capacity in the Family Islands, in terms of medical professionals, equipment such as ventilators, and the more sophisticated equipment, that would be found in hospitals in larger cities.

Because of these limits, as a Government, we cannot allow Family Island outbreaks of the pandemic, to get out of control.

In these communities, there are no big hospitals or intensive care units.

There are limited numbers of healthcare professions, due to the small sizes of the populations.

Excessive spread of the virus, would be catastrophic.

Throughout this pandemic, it has been the policy of my administration, to protect our Family Islands.

Fellow Bahamians:

Earlier this week, I announced the lockdowns of Bullocks Harbour, and Great Harbour Cay, in the Berry Islands.

Once we observed noticeable viral spread in these communities, we immediately acted, to institute restrictions to protect these island residents.

As a medical doctor, and as Prime Minister, I will always act aggressively, to protect our people.

My fixed star, is the protection of life.

My healthcare team and I, have studied responses to this virus from around the world.

Some countries waited too late, to introduce restrictions at certain times.

This has allowed small spreads, to turn into tragedies.

We will not allow this deadly virus, to ravage our Family Islands.

My Government has mobilized resources and support, for these communities during this restricted period, including food and economic support.

I am pleased to confirm, that early this morning, the delivery of the Government's National Food Distribution Task Force arrived in Bullocks Harbour, for the people of Bullocks Harbour, and Great Harbour Cay, during this restricted period.



Thank you, to members of the private sector, that helped us leverage resources for these efforts.

Residents of Cat Island,  
North and Central Andros,  
Fellow Bahamians:

In order to protect and to save lives, and to slow and control the spread of the COVID-19, today, I wish to announce that Cat Island, and North and Central Andros, will be placed

under a 14-day lockdown, effective tomorrow, Monday, May 24<sup>th</sup> at 8 p.m.

The Government, is doing so on the advice of our medical experts and team.

Residents should pay particular attention, to the following provisions included in the Emergency Powers Orders.

Travel, to and from Cat Island, and North and Central Andros, is prohibited during the

lockdown, except for essential workers (Royal Bahamas Police Force, Royal Bahamas Defence Force, healthcare professionals, Bahamas Power and Light technical personnel), mailboat and Seacorp operators, and commercial bank personnel, or as, otherwise approved by the Competent Authority.

There will be no in-person activities permitted.

Most regrettably, this also means, there will be no burials held during this period.

Every agency, business or establishment, shall remain closed, except for the Royal Bahamas Police Force, the Royal Bahamas Defence Force, Government Community Clinics, and COVID-19 vaccination sites.

No individual, other than an essential worker, shall leave his or her place of residence, for any purpose other than, for

the purpose of seeking urgent medical attention, to go to a vaccination site, or on prescribed days, to purchase food, water and other essential items.

The Administrator or a designee, is permitted to distribute food and water on behalf of the Government.

The following additional provisions, will apply for both North and Central Andros, and Cat Island:

Food store owners, may be permitted to restock their stores, after the arrival of the respective mailboat, and the Seacorp.

Food stores, may be opened for two days, between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. after the mailboat has arrived.

Residents may leave their homes, to go to the food store during the two days, immediately following the arrival of the mailboat only.

Farmers are permitted to water their crops, between the hours of 5 a.m. to 9 a.m.

Subsistence fishing is permitted.

The respective commercial banks, may reload their Automated Banking Machines.

Gas stations, may open on Fridays from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. for government agencies only.

Customs and Immigration, will be able to fulfil their duties as needed.

Security guard services, will be permitted.

Hotel workers carrying identification, will be permitted to traverse, to and from their places of employment.

The following provisions, will be unique to North and Central Andros:

Harvesting of crabs during the lockdown period, is permitted from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m.

Outside of these hours, harvesting of crabs, may also be permitted by the Royal Bahamas Police Force Officer in Charge on the island, if the weather is favourable for harvesting.



Emile Knowles Construction Company, will be permitted to continue working on the Government bridge project, in Staniard Creek, between the hours of 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.

The AUTEK Navy Base, will be permitted to continue to operate.

The following provisions will be unique to Cat Island:

Water delivery, shall be permitted daily by Donald Newbold, from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.

ISD construction work on the Government's water project, may continue between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.

The full Emergency Powers Orders, will be available on [opm.gov.bs](http://opm.gov.bs).

Residents of North and Central Andros,  
and Cat Island:

The National Food Distribution Task Force, provided food shipments to both Andros and Cat Island late last week.

The Task Force, is right now preparing additional food parcels to be shipped, to both Andros and Cat Island, early this week.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Out of an abundance of caution, the Royal Bahamas Defence Force, has already dispatched officers to Cat Island, and North

and Central Andros, to ensure that residents are not leaving these areas, and risking the greater spread of the COVID-19 virus, to other communities and islands.

The Royal Bahamas Police Force, will provide additional enforcement support, on Cat Island, and North and Central Andros.

I wish to thank in advance, the residents of Bullocks Harbour, Great Harbour Cay, Cat Island, and North and Central Andros, for their cooperation and patience.

When the health team advise that it is safe to do so, members of my team and I will visit these communities, to thank the residents for their cooperation, and to also thank medical personnel, security officials, administrators, food care providers, and other officials and volunteers.

Fellow Bahamians and Residents:

As I have encouraged you before, Bahamians and eligible residents, must get

vaccinated, if we are to get out of this terrible period in our history.

I thank all of those, who have taken the vaccine, and encourage those who have taken their first dose, to also take the second dose.

My Government, has secured doses of a highly effective vaccine.

It is free.

I am fully vaccinated, as is my wife, Patricia.

The vaccine is a pathway, to ending the emergency phase of the pandemic.

The United Kingdom and Israel, are world leaders in vaccinations.

As a result, these countries are opening up.

They are moving beyond the emergency phase of certain restrictions.

This is where we want to be.

We are all tired of the pandemic.

We all want to get back to our normal lives.

We all want more business activity.

But to get there, more eligible Bahamians and residents, must come forward to be vaccinated.

Just as we pull together for a national emergency, such as hurricanes, we remain in this fight together.

The Government has its role to play, as do businesses, religious and civic institutions, and every citizen.



We need Bahamians to quickly get vaccinated, so that we can move away from the period of restrictions.

The vaccine, has been proven to protect you from severe illness and death.

It will also, reduce the likelihood of you catching, and transmitting the virus.

As the world and countries open up, the vaccinated, will have less restrictions.

For example, it will be easier to travel, if you are vaccinated.

Additionally, here in The Bahamas businesses are creating vaccine policies.

Many are urging their employees to do so, without mandating it.

Sir Ronald Saunders, a Caribbean diplomat, recently noted:

“In 2019, even before the novel coronavirus was confirmed, and began its spread around the world, the World Health Organization (WHO) revealed, that vaccine refusals, had led to a resurgence of

diseases, such as measles, in countries that were close to eliminating them.”

Indeed, the WHO has stated, that the refusal to take vaccines in general, is among the 10 major threats to global public health.

Sir Ronald concluded: “Vaccine refusal, is fast becoming as dangerous to human health and to economies, as the COVID-19 pandemic. ...

He also stated:

“Groups of persons in many parts of the world, who decline taking the COVID-19 vaccine, now pose a risk to themselves and the people, with whom they come into contact, especially their families.

“They also pose a risk, to the opening-up of the economies of their countries. ...

“Figures confirm, that the COVID-19 vaccine, prevents severe infection and deaths, at astounding rates.”

In Israel, vaccines have prevented hospitalizations by 94 percent, among adults 65 and older.

Sir Ronald also stated that; Infectious-Diseases expert Dr. Monica Gandhi noted, that “of over 115 million vaccinated Americans, only 0.0009 percent, contracted severe COVID-19 after vaccination, despite the virus continuing to circulate in their communities.”

Fellow Bahamians and Residents:

The actions we are taking to protect the people of Cat Island, and North and Central Andros, demonstrate in real time, why it was critical for the Government of The Bahamas, to extend the emergency orders, just this past week.

These measures, allow us to be on constant guard.

They allow us, to act quickly if matters worsen, and the numbers go up.

Because this is a fast-moving disease, we must have the ability to move just as fast.

Just as medical staff in Accident and Emergency need to act quickly to save lives, the Emergency Orders, give us the same ability as Emergency Room staff.

These emergency measures have saved lives, and have been recommended by health experts here at home.

Similar measures are being utilized throughout the world, recommended by scientists, and medical experts.

As I stated last week: Only the most reckless and heartless people, would recommend the removal of measures that save lives.

Only the most reckless and heartless, would ignore the medical advice, and instead play petty politics with people's lives.

If we did not have these emergency measures, more people could get sick, and more could die.

Those who opposed the emergency orders, are playing with people's lives.



It is difficult to take seriously, those who appear not to understand the necessity for certain emergency orders.

My Government, has been measured with these legal powers.

We have continued to ask Parliament for authorization, as allowed in our constitution and laws.

We have only utilized necessary rules to keep Bahamians and residents safe.

We use an approach, that takes into consideration the conditions on our various islands.

Some islands currently have few restrictions in place.

While we think it is necessary to extend the emergency measures, let me foreshadow, what our future will look like living with COVID-19.

When the time is appropriate, guided by our public health experts, we will move to a

new regime outside of the current emergency measures.

Commonsense public health, rules will remain.

However, this regime will in time be phased out.

The pandemic is not over.

If you ignore it, it will not just go away.

We as a people, can end this by getting vaccinated.

If you are vaccinated, speak with a few people who are close to you, who are not.

Do not row with them.

Tell them, how it went for you.

Urge them with love, to take the shot, so they may live and be protected.

COVID-19 is a killer.

This is the worst pandemic in 100 years.

Take the vaccine to stay alive.

We do not want to see people dying, because they refused a vaccine that can save their lives.

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

I wish to again thank the many religious leaders, who have encouraged the members of their faith communities, to take the COVID-19 vaccine.

May I also recommend to people of faith, a presentation by Rev. Dr. Colin Archer, entitled, “A Christian Scientific Approach to the COVID-19 Virus,” which may be found on YouTube.

Today, the Christian community celebrates Pentecost.

The day after, is the Whit Monday holiday.

On Pentecost, we commemorate the descent of the Holy Spirit, to the apostles of Jesus Christ.

In Chapter 5 of the Epistle to the Galatians, we are instructed as individuals, and as a community of faith, to live according to the Fruit of the Holy Spirit.

May we all seek during this ongoing pandemic, to live by the Fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,

goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Let us ask for the guidance, the blessings, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Let us continue to pray for wisdom and discernment.

Hurricane season begins June 1<sup>st</sup>, and lasts until November 30<sup>th</sup>. I encourage you to begin your annual hurricane preparations.

May God bless and keep us.

Please have a safe holiday, and please abide by the health care measures.

Thank you and good afternoon.

---