

# Dentons Flashpoint

## Daily Global Situation Report

August 20, 2021

# Global Situation Update: August 20, 2021

---

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

The US FTC renews its antitrust case against Facebook, accusing the social media group of using its monopoly power to “*buy or bury*” competitors.

EU countries accuse Belarus of conducting a “*direct attack*” by pushing asylum seekers across its borders into Lithuania, Latvia and Poland.

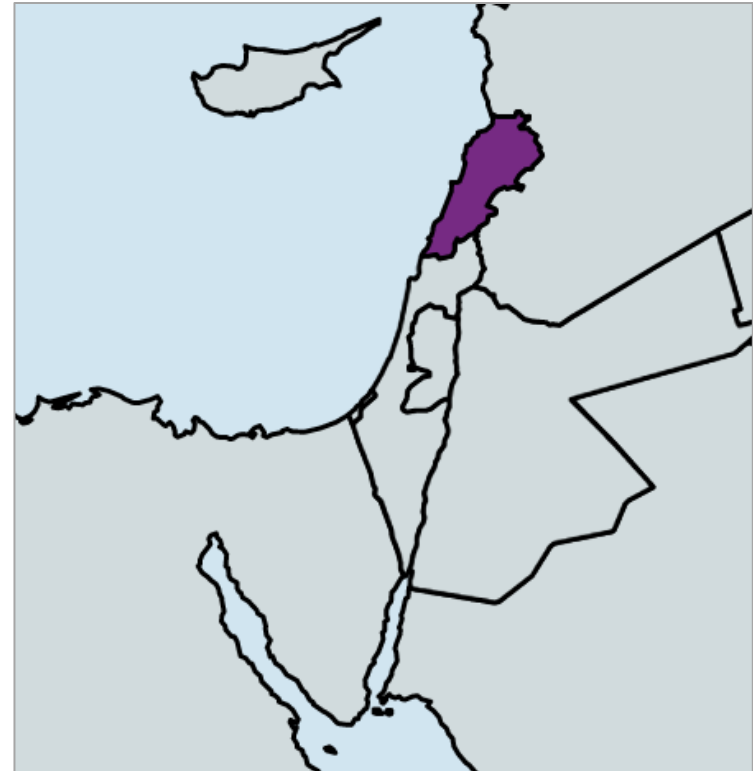
Ivory Coast and Guinea scramble to isolate people who came in contact with Ebola.

# Global Situation Update: August 20, 2021

## WHAT WE'RE WATCHING

Today, a shipment of Iranian oil is on the high seas and bound for Beirut to help alleviate fuel shortages facing Lebanon. Hezbollah coordinated the deal with Tehran and has warned the US and Israel that any attacks on the tanker will be met with retaliation. UK-based Coral Oil Company and France's Total are both expected to close down all operations in Lebanon because of the threat of US sanctions on whoever purchases or facilitates sales of oil from Iran.

Former Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri criticized the oil shipment and said Hezbollah has made his country a province of Iran. However, for weeks, people in Lebanon have been waiting in long lines at petrol stations to fill their car tanks. There is widespread anger in Lebanon over fuel smuggling, the end of subsidies for basic goods like bread, and a lack of justice for victims of the 2020 Beirut port explosion.



*Note: This report is based on sources and information deemed to be true and reliable, but Dentons makes no representations to same.*

# Global

---

**Globally, confirmed coronavirus cases topped 209.2 million with 4.3 million deaths; more than 4.5 billion vaccine doses have been administered.**

- **AstraZeneca** announced its **antibody therapy** met the main goal of preventing COVID-19 disease in a late-stage study, potentially offering an alternative to vaccines for people with weakened immune systems.
- The UK's health regulator has approved Ronapreve, an **antibody cocktail**, for use in the prevention and treatment of acute Covid-19 infection.
- Israeli doctors find that severe **COVID-19 breakthrough cases** occur mostly in older patients with chronic illnesses, such as diabetes, heart disease and lung ailments, as well as cancers and inflammatory diseases that are treated with immune-system suppressing drugs.

*Note: This report is based on sources and information deemed to be true and reliable, but Dentons makes no representations to same.*

# COVID-19 Vaccine

---

**Johnson & Johnson has sought approval from Indian drug regulators to conduct a study of its COVID-19 vaccine among 12- to 17-year-olds.**

- The head of the **US** CDC said that Americans may not require an annual COVID-19 booster shot. President Biden and the first lady will be getting **booster shots** next month.
- The WHO's regional director for **Africa** sharply criticized rich nations for pursuing **booster shots** while poorer nations lack vaccine access.
- Despite Pope Francis calling receiving a vaccine "*an act of love*," American Catholic leaders remain divided over **religious exemptions** to coronavirus vaccination mandates.

# Markets & Business

---

## President Xi's comments on wealth redistribution earlier this week have prompted a selloff of luxury brand stocks in China.

- **OnlyFans** will ban sexually explicit content on its platform due to requests from banking partners and payout providers.
- **Amazon** is planning to open several large physical retail stores in the US that will look like department stores.
- The US FTC renewed its antitrust case against **Facebook**, accusing the social media group of using its monopoly power to “*buy or bury*” competitors.
- **Huarong Asset Management Co.**, a top manager of bad debt in China, said it will post huge losses and is expecting a state-backed bailout.

# Africa

---

- **South Africa's** Jacob Zuma claimed that the ANC benefited from a controversial arms deal, drawing the party further into the corruption scandal surrounding the former president.
- **Ivory Coast and Guinea** are scrambling to isolate people who came in contact with Ebola; 49 contacts have been identified so far.
- The **Gambia** declared a public health emergency after two cases of poliovirus were discovered in sewage samples.
- **Nigeria** reported its highest daily COVID-19 case rise since the beginning of the pandemic.
- **Kenya** decided to extend COVID-19 restrictions due to rising cases, despite major protests against the lockdown measures.

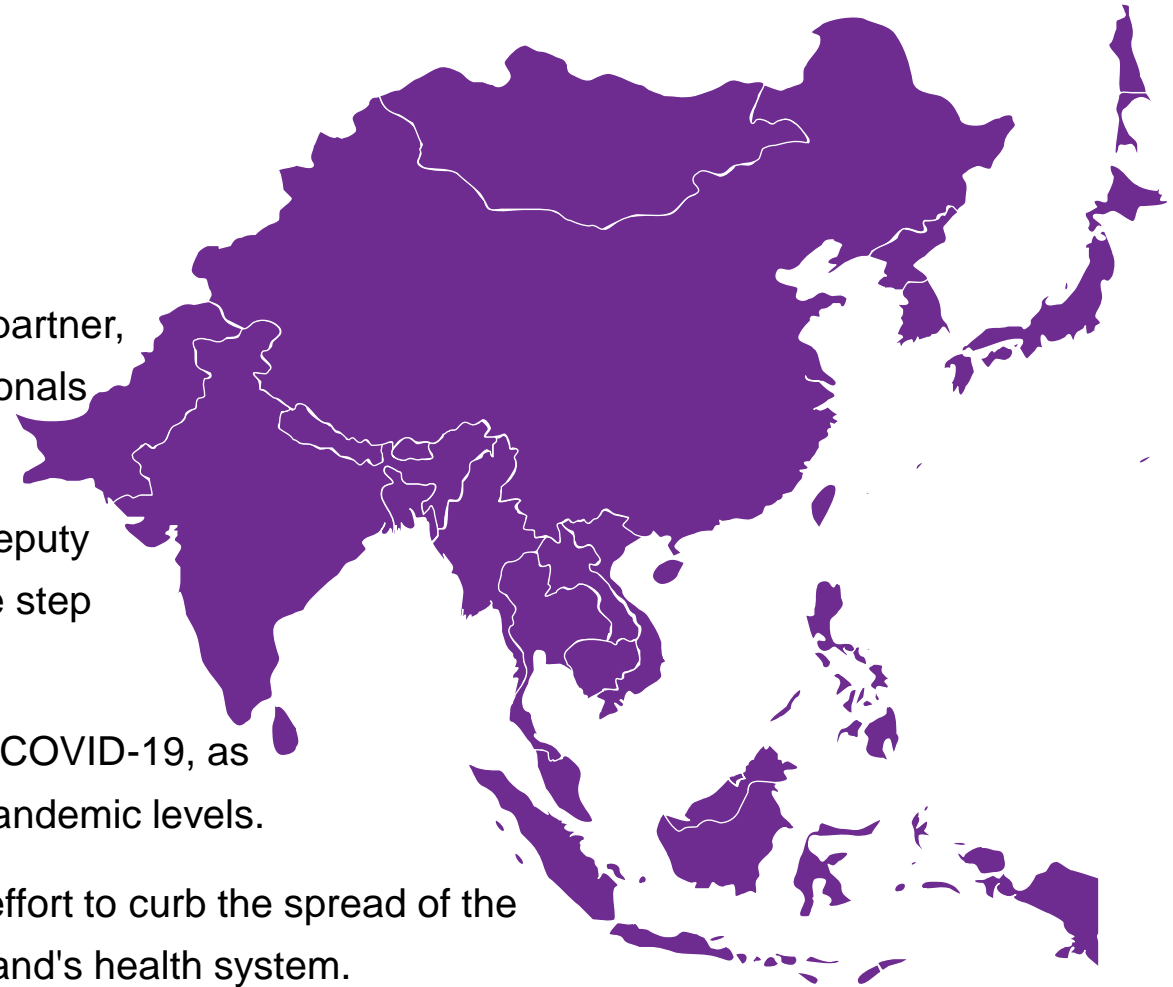


*Note: This report is based on sources and information deemed to be true and reliable, but Dentons makes no representations to same.*

# Asia

---

- **Chinese** authorities have closed US labor auditor Verite's local partner, Shenzhen Verite, a move that may complicate efforts by multinationals to audit supply chains in the country.
- A majority of **Malaysia's** MPs affirmed their support for former deputy premier Ismail Sabri Yaakob in front of the King, moving him one step closer to prime minister.
- The WHO urged **Indonesia** to take action to stem the spread of COVID-19, as new data showed that mobility in the country has reached pre-pandemic levels.
- **Sri Lanka** announced a 10-day lockdown starting tonight in an effort to curb the spread of the coronavirus, as surging infections and deaths overwhelm the island's health system.
- **Vietnam** will deploy troops in Ho Chi Minh City and prohibit residents from leaving their homes, adopting drastic measures to slow a spiraling rate of coronavirus deaths.



*Note: This report is based on sources and information deemed to be true and reliable, but Dentons makes no representations to same.*



# How do You Manage Incident Response?

---

*2021 has already seen business disrupted by extreme weather, ransomware attack, the ongoing pandemic and more. The common refrain “It’s not if, but when” rings truer than ever for disruptive incidents that will impact business as usual.*

*Working with Dentons, you can effectively develop an organizational incident-behavior adopted by all your team members. Dentons will help you build muscle memory through tabletop exercises, which are crafted to fit the business strategy of every client.*

*Our team plays events and incidents of different severities and complexities and accounts for real-world factors such as inconclusive evidence, mistakes by responders, and the business impact of eradication steps. Our tech-savvy lawyers continuously revise the playbooks per the evolving sector-specific threat landscape.*

*Dentons tabletop sessions are fluid, and designed to enhance preparedness with services, including:*

- ❖ Ransomware tabletop exercises
- ❖ Post-tabletop action reports
- ❖ Maturity assessments for preparedness
- ❖ Supply-chain attack simulation
- ❖ Comprehensive incident response plan
- ❖ Threat analysis and monitoring

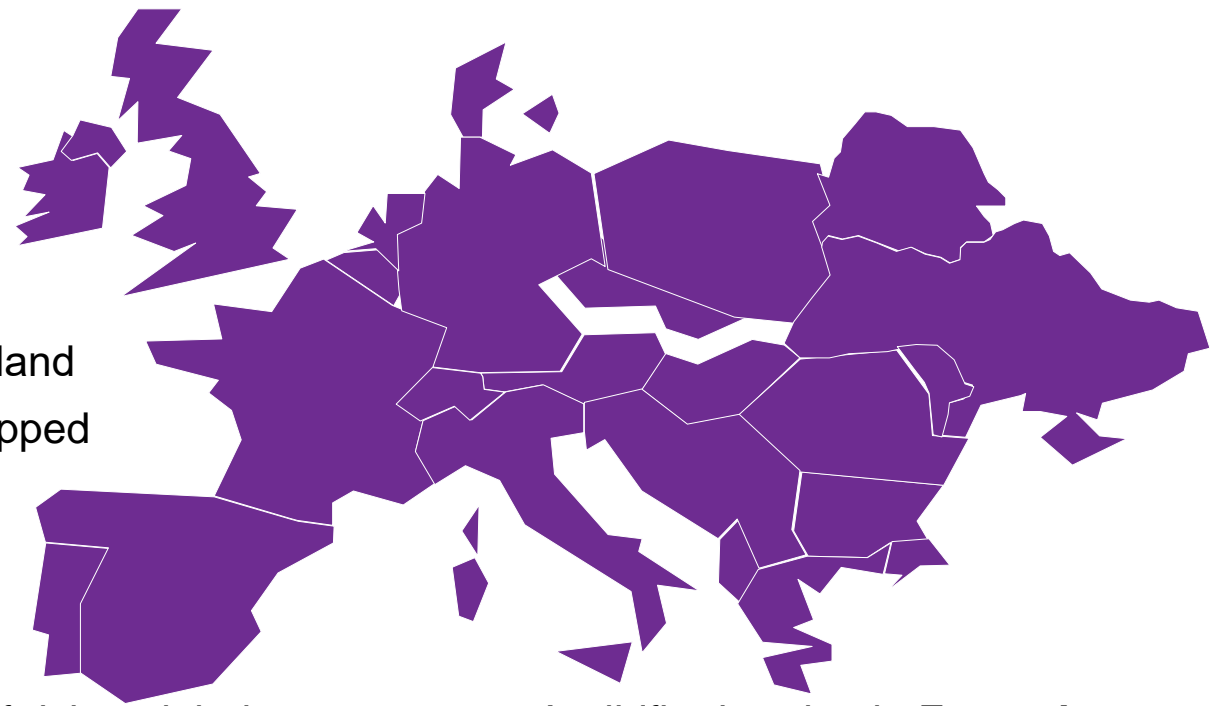
*All interaction with Dentons is attorney-client privileged*

*To learn more about the bespoke intelligence and risk services from Dentons, contact [Karl Hopkins](#).*

# Europe

---

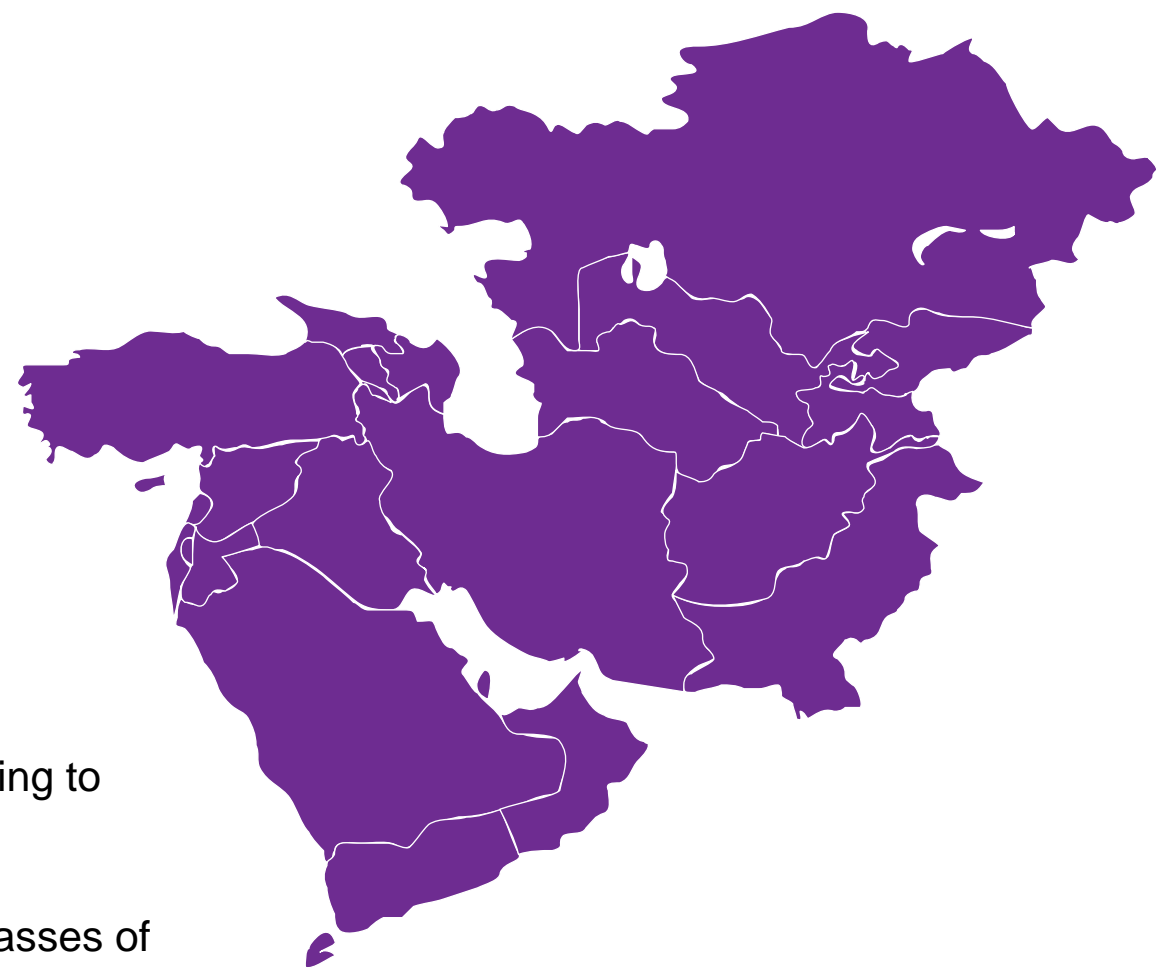
- In the **UK**, the number of “pings” sent by the NHS in England and Wales to notify people of exposure to COVID-19 dropped nearly 20 percent last week, hitting its lowest level since mid-June.
- In **Greece**, the chief heat officer of Athens criticized the unpreparedness of global political leaders for the effect of rising global temperatures. A wildfire burning in **France’s** Saint-Tropez since Monday has now killed two people.
- **EU** countries accused **Belarus** of conducting a “*direct attack*” by pushing asylum seekers across its borders into **Lithuania, Latvia and Poland**.
- More than 18,000 people have been flown out of Kabul since the Taliban took over **Afghanistan's** capital, a **NATO** official reported while pledging to redouble evacuation efforts.



# Middle East

---

- **Germany, France and Britain** expressed concern over the latest IAEA report on Iran's continued production of uranium metal.
- **Israel and Qatar** reached an agreement for Qatar to resume payments to families in **Gaza**.
- **Lebanese** President Aoun accused unnamed parties of seeking to prevent the formation of a new government.
- In **Afghanistan**, video showed that the Taliban has seized masses of **American** weapons, including Humvees, planes, helicopters and drones; Biden Administration officials told media that they have not rolled out airstrikes to take out the larger equipment. The Taliban called for Afghanistan's imams to urge unity at their first Friday prayers since the Taliban takeover; protests continued to spread to more cities across the country Thursday.



*Note: This report is based on sources and information deemed to be true and reliable, but Dentons makes no representations to same.*

# Americas

---

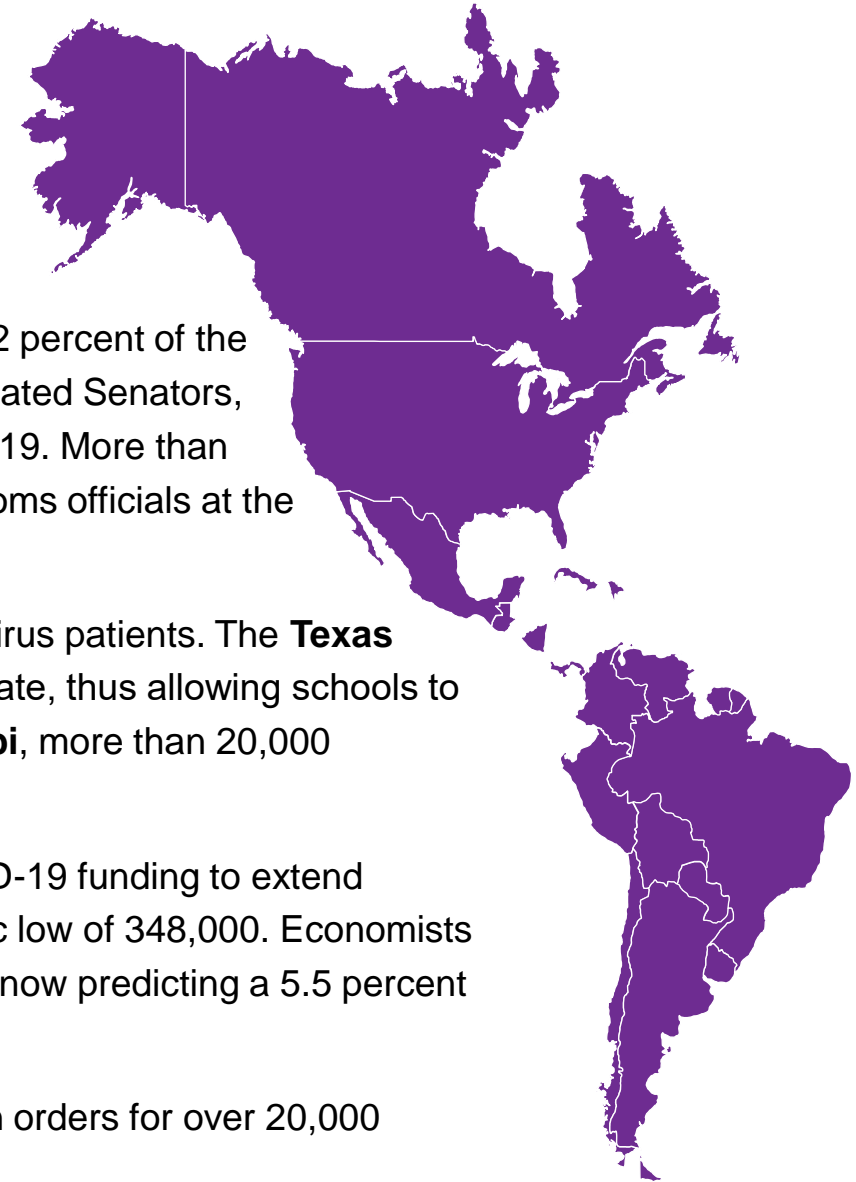
- **Venezuela's** President Maduro appointed the country's former envoy to China as the new foreign minister amid a broader cabinet shakeup.
- Hurricane Grace struck **Mexico's** Caribbean coast south of Tulum on Thursday, cutting power to thousands of Mexicans.
- Slowly rising sea levels and a diverted river are causing buildings in the seaside district Atafona, of **Brazil's** Rio de Janeiro state, to slip into the ocean.
- The **US** Treasury Department issued new sanctions on three **Cuban** officials over the suppression of July protests.



*Note: This report is based on sources and information deemed to be true and reliable, but Dentons makes no representations to same.*

# Americas: US

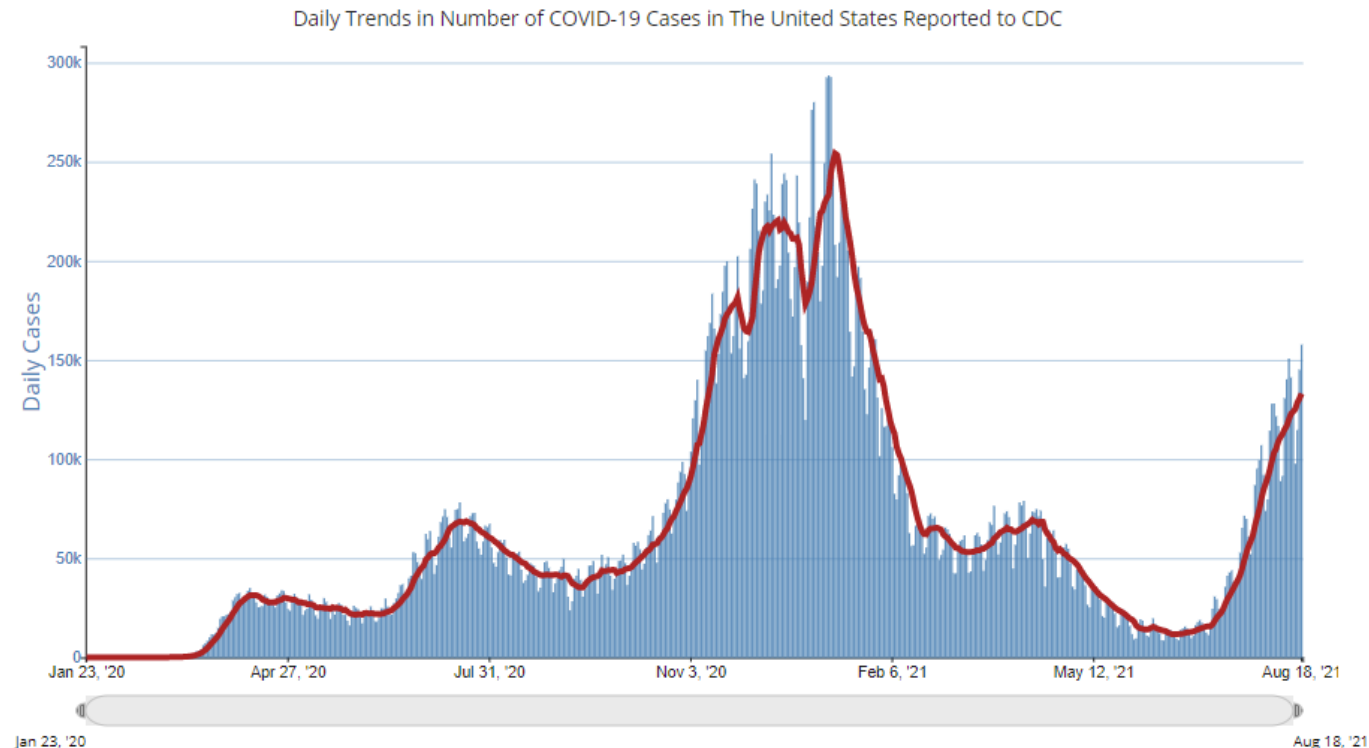
- Across the nation, 199.9 million have received at least one dose of the **vaccine**, or 60.2 percent of the total population; 72.5 percent of adults have at least one vaccination. Three fully vaccinated Senators, King (I-ME), John Hickenlooper (D-CO) and Wicker (R-MS), tested positive for COVID-19. More than 3,000 **counterfeit vaccine cards** arriving from China were recently seized by US customs officials at the port of Anchorage, Alaska.
- Every hospital in **Tennessee** is experiencing capacity issues due to a surge in coronavirus patients. The **Texas** Supreme Court rejected Governor Greg Abbott's intervention to suspend a mask mandate, thus allowing schools to require students to wear masks as per the mandates by local authorities. In **Mississippi**, more than 20,000 students have been quarantined for exposure to the coronavirus.
- Treasury Secretary Yellen said that US states can tap their allocations of federal COVID-19 funding to extend additional **unemployment assistance**. Weekly **jobless claims** fell to a fresh pandemic low of 348,000. Economists at Goldman Sachs cut by almost half their forecast for US growth in the third quarter, now predicting a 5.5 percent expansion in **GDP** between July and September.
- The **Caldor Fire** in Northern California rose overnight and is now prompting evacuation orders for over 20,000 residents.
- The Biden Administration is erasing \$5.8 billion in **student debt** for over 300,000 permanently disabled Americans.



*Note: This report is based on sources and information deemed to be true and reliable, but Dentons makes no representations to same.*

# Americas: US

The US is now reporting more than 150,000 new COVID-19 cases a day, a level last seen in late January. Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, Tennessee and Florida have the highest rates of new infections.



*Note: This report is based on sources and information deemed to be true and reliable, but Dentons makes no representations to same.*

# Understanding Risks to the Vaccinated: Breakthrough Cases and “Long COVID”

*Easy access to COVID-19 vaccines may be a privilege reserved for a handful of wealthy countries, but even the countries with vaccines or effective policies to limit spread are facing new challenges as the Delta variant rewrites the rules of the pandemic.*

The reappearance of cases, outbreaks, and restrictions in the US, Israel, Australia, UK, and China deflated hopes that herd immunity or “zero COVID” strategies could turn back the clock to a COVID-free world. As companies examine the path forward, high rates of vaccination among professionals and growing normalization of private sector vaccine mandates provide protection against many risks that drove early crisis planning. Nonetheless, the resurgence raises new questions about long term adaptation to the virus in light of the chorus of ominous headlines asserting that COVID-19 is here to stay.

It is clear that vaccines are quite effective in protecting against hospitalization or death, but breakthrough infections among the vaccinated are a growing concern. Repeated reassurance that vaccines prevent serious illness and the remarkable success of the vaccine at preventing transmission of earlier variants has only deepened confusion and suspicion as anecdotal evidence convinces

many that breakthrough infections are widespread. In reality, statistics that were true for earlier variants may be out of date. Delta’s rapid spread from approximately 3 percent of US cases at the end of May to 93 percent of cases by the end of July outpaced the rate of new, large-scale, peer-reviewed studies that would allow officials to provide clear guidance on the risks. The inevitable delay necessary to conduct quality research and answer new urgent questions has been exacerbated by the lack of data after the US stopped tracking breakthrough infections that did not result in hospitalization on May 1st. The appearance of recent data - including international data from highly vaccinated countries like Israel - suggesting that the risks are much higher than originally believed, does not undermine the credibility of previous studies, but it does suggest that a reactive approach that waits for scientific consensus or clear guidance may not be sufficient. As CDC director Rochelle Walensky noted “The Delta variant is showing every day its

# Understanding Risks to the Vaccinated: Breakthrough Cases and “Long COVID”

willingness to outsmart us.” With confusing and contradictory information circulating, understanding the data used to generate shocking headlines or reassurances is critical to ensure it accounts for Delta’s spread.

Scientific and government guidance is evolving rapidly, and the lack of solid data has opened the door to speculation on the risks of Delta for vaccinated individuals. Decision makers likely recognize the need to proceed with caution in the absence of definitive data, but over the horizon threats can be considered even without perfect data. The most mysterious and concerning known unknown for many is the fear of “long COVID,” a poorly understood and diverse set of possible symptoms that range from uncomfortable to debilitating. The CDC defines it as “a range of new or ongoing symptoms that can last weeks or months after they are infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 and that can worsen with physical or mental activity.” According to the CDC, symptoms could include fatigue, brain fog, multiple organ damage, depression, as well as numerous others. Estimates for how common the disease is also vary dramatically, with credible studies concluding that anywhere from 1 to 67 percent of

cases will result in lasting symptoms. Knowing whether vaccinated individuals are at risk of long-term symptoms, even if the vaccine prevents hospitalization, is essential for gauging risk and is still being studied. These statistics raise more questions than answers, but a key takeaway is that their source of information will have a large impact on how employees and consumers view decisions made by leadership. While some can point to studies showing that the risk of returning to the office is minimal, others will cite worst case scenarios and potentially view returning as grossly irresponsible.

The latest phase of the pandemic has added yet another layer of uncertainty in an already complex environment, but businesses should still prepare for the practical consequences of this ambiguity. In July, the US Department of Health & Human Services released guidance clarifying that long COVID can qualify as a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act. While the exact implications of this guidance will likely be clarified in future legal cases, the potential scale of long COVID cases makes the implementation of this guidance an important issue to follow. Amid the confusion, communication strategies to both employees and consumers can

*Note: This report is based on sources and information deemed to be true and reliable, but Dentons makes no representations to same.*



# Understanding Risks to the Vaccinated: Breakthrough Cases and “Long COVID”

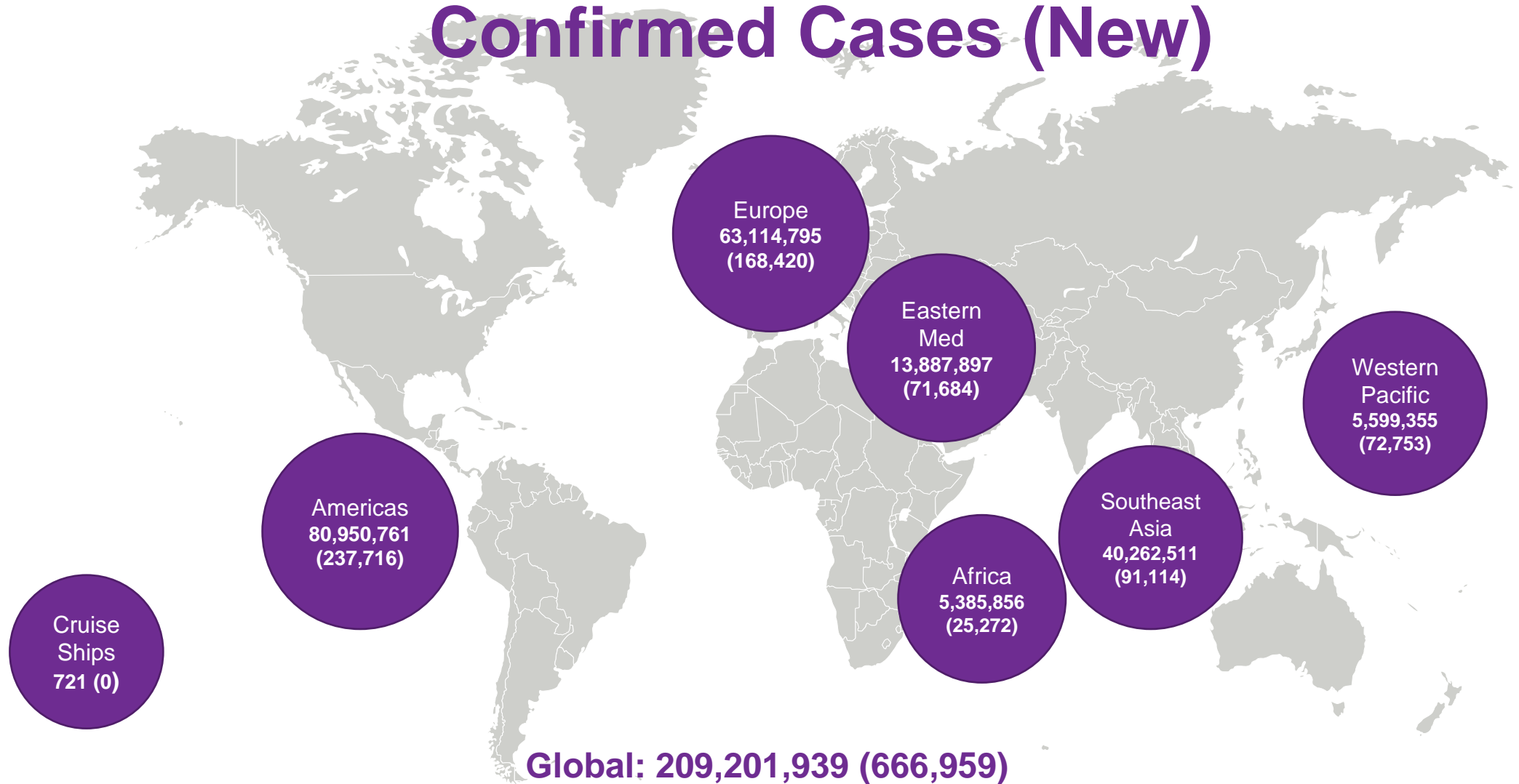
learn from the missteps of the US government. Feeding uncertainty with dramatic shifts in guidance or requirements has the potential to undermine confidence even if those shifts are justified by the current situation. Flexibility will be key to business resilience and as the scientific community continues to study the Delta variant, breakthrough infections, and long COVID.

*Note: This report is based on sources and information deemed to be true and reliable, but Dentons makes no representations to same.*

# Coronavirus Condition Updates

As of 6:00 pm CEST on August 19, 2021

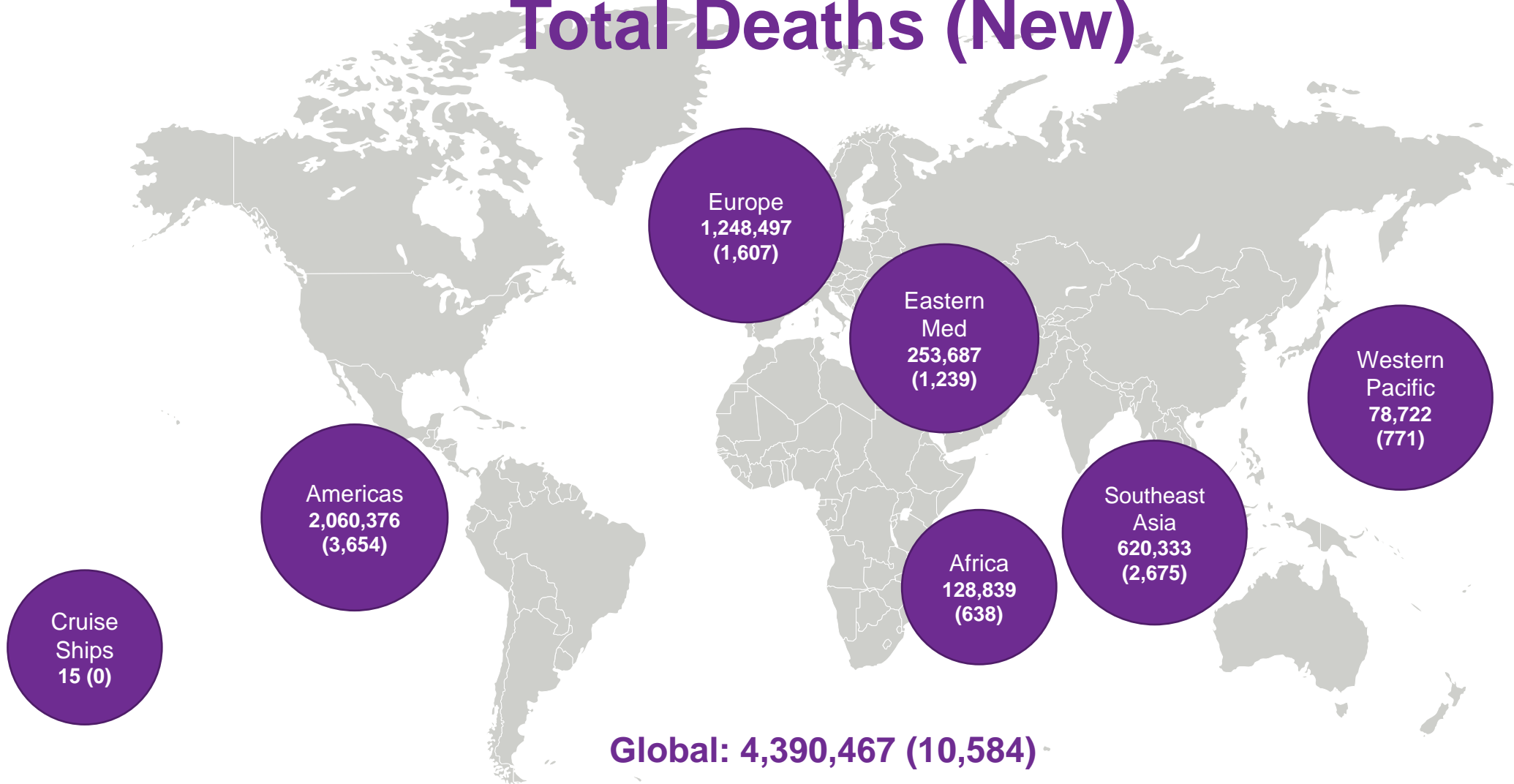
# Confirmed Cases (New)



Reflects data as of 6:00 pm CEST on August 19, 2021.  
Data Source: World Health Organization

*Note: This report is based on sources and information deemed to be true and reliable, but Dentons makes no representations to same.*

# Total Deaths (New)



Reflects data as of 6:00 pm CEST on August 19, 2021  
Data Source: World Health Organization

*Note: This report is based on sources and information deemed to be true and reliable, but Dentons makes no representations to same.*

# Contacts

---

*This summary is based on reports sourced from among the 75 countries in which Dentons currently serves clients as well as from firms in other locations, some of which will formally join Dentons later in 2020. We are pleased to share this complimentary summary and contemporaneous assessment, with the caveat that developments are changing rapidly. This is not legal advice, and you should not act or refrain from acting based solely on its contents. We urge you to consult with counsel regarding your particular circumstances.*

*To read additional analysis, visit the [Dentons Flashpoint portal](#) for insights into geopolitics and governance; industry and markets; cyber and security; science, health and culture; and economic and regulatory issues.*

## **Karl Hopkins**

Partner and Global Chief Security Officer  
Dentons  
Washington, DC

D +1 202 408 9225  
[karl.hopkins@dentons.com](mailto:karl.hopkins@dentons.com)

## **Melissa Mahle**

Senior Analyst  
Dentons  
Washington, DC

D +1 202 408 6383  
[melissa.mahle@dentons.com](mailto:melissa.mahle@dentons.com)