

Africa was expected to be a coronavirus graveyard. Could COVID be rapidly receding instead?

Prof Francesco Checchi, a specialist in epidemiology at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, told MPs it was “broadly” true that coronavirus had not behaved in expected ways in African countries, including Kenya, [Tanzania](#), Sudan and Somalia.

“We are certainly observing a pattern that confounds us a little,” he told the international development committee’s inquiry into the impact of Covid on humanitarian crises.

“In a few important case studies – [Kenya](#), for example – what seems to be happening is the epidemic may be peaking earlier than our naive models predicted.”

He said a similar pattern has emerged in [Yemen](#), which is in the middle of the worst humanitarian crisis in the world.

“Yemen is one of the few countries where to my knowledge there is almost no prevention of Covid transmission,” Checchi said.

“The anecdotal reports we’re getting inside Yemen are pretty consistent that the epidemic has, quote unquote, passed.”

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While that was “very good news”, Checchi said he was unable to say whether it had been less lethal or less severe on a per capita basis. In many developing countries, where testing is poor and deaths are not notified to the authorities, the rate of reported deaths is very low.

A study [published on \[September 15\]](#) from Imperial College London estimated that in Damascus, Syria, reported deaths from coronavirus were as low as 1.25% of the true figure.

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