**Current major event**

Over one million COVID-19 cases reported in WHO’s Eastern Mediterranean Region

COVID-19 continues to spread across the Region and is getting worse as the Region becomes the third-hardest hit among the six WHO Regions. As of 27 June 2020, cases crossed the one million mark with a total of 1,024,222 cases and 23,449 deaths (CFR 2.3%) reported from its 22 countries.

**Editorial note**

The first cases of COVID-19 in the Region were reported on 29 January 2020 by the IHR focal point of the Ministry of Health and Prevention of the United Arab Emirates. The occurrence was in a family who had traveled two weeks earlier from Wuhan City in China. This report was followed by one case in Egypt on 15 February 2020, and two cases in the Islamic Republic of Iran on 19 February 2020, both reports being linked to travelers from China. The pandemic then rapidly took off in the Region when Iran experienced an exponential country-wide rise in the number of cases and deaths in the subsequent two weeks. Travelers from Iran seeded the SARS-CoV-2 infection in neighboring countries, which initially experienced a low case count. Within a short period, however, all 22 countries in the Region got affected with clusters or local transmissions of the disease taking place.

Currently, the EM Region is the third most affected of WHO (see table). Most of the countries showed a slow start of the outbreak, except Iran, and then the number of cases increased rapidly in many parts of the Region and now crossed the million mark (1,024,222 cases). The Region is at risk due to fragile health systems in emergency affected countries, limited compliance of public health measures in some countries and the easing of travel restrictions and other measures. Following Iran and Pakistan, the number of cases in the gulf countries are also on the rise and needs special attention as well.

The numbers and spread of cases in countries of the Region reveal a pattern of community transmission, with 21% being reported from Iran (220,180 cases), 20% from Pakistan (202,955) and 17% from Saudi Arabia (178,504) being the highest three countries of the Region (see graph).

Moreover, in order to limit the further spread of the virus, WHO advises countries to continue testing, isolating and tracing contacts. Disease surveillance is an important component of the response, which evaluates the effectiveness of public health measures intended to reduce further transmission. Similarly, the isolation of mild cases, the hospitalization of the severe cases and the implementation of other efforts that reduce physical interaction (through school closures and prohibition of mass gatherings) are showing their effectiveness in slowing down the transmission and will buy time to strengthen the overall capacities of health system.

Countries should increase health care capacities to meet the demand for pandemic response and allocate additional resources to maintain essential health services. Similarly, effective risk communication is critical to reduce the spread of the infection and mitigate the impact of the outbreak among the public. Infection prevention and control measures should be implemented to protect health care workers and patients from hospital-acquired infections. Lastly, it is important to prioritize and accelerate the development of vaccines in collaboration with the relevant partners, and to accelerate priority research and innovation that will contribute to the implementation of public health measures to control the pandemic.

---

**Weekly Epidemiological Monitor**

**Weekly distribution of COVID-19 cases, EMR, week 5/2020 to 26/2020**

**Distribution of COVID-19 cases and deaths by WHO regions till 27 June 2020**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHO Regions</th>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
<th>CFR%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Region of the Americas</td>
<td>4,933,972</td>
<td>241,931</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Region</td>
<td>2,638,903</td>
<td>196,169</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Mediterranean Region</td>
<td>1,024,222</td>
<td>23,449</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-East Asia Region</td>
<td>735,854</td>
<td>20,621</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Region</td>
<td>278,815</td>
<td>57,854</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Pacific Region</td>
<td>213,032</td>
<td>74,200</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Update on outbreaks in the Eastern Mediterranean Region**

**COVID-19 in 22 EMR countries**

**Current public health events of concern**


- Afghanistan: [30,967 (729), 2.4%]
- Bahrain: [25,267 (78), 0.3%]
- Djibouti: [4643 (52), 1.1%]
- Egypt: [63,923 (2708), 4.2%]
- Iran (Islamic Republic of): [220,180 (10364), 4.7%]
- Iraq: [43,262 (1660), 3.8%]
- Jordan: [1111 (9), 0.8%]
- Kuwait: [44,391 (344), 0.8%]
- Lebanon: [1719 (53), 1.9%]
- Libya: [727 (18), 2.5%]
- Morocco: [11877 (220), 1.9%]
- occupied Palestinian territory (oPt): [2053 (7), 0.3%]
- Oman: [36,953 (159), 0.4%]
- Pakistan: [202,955 (4118), 2%]
- Qatar: [93,663 (110), 0.1%]
- Saudi Arabia: [178,504 (1511), 0.8%]
- Somalia: [2878 (90), 3.1%]
- Sudan: [9258 (572), 6.2%]
- Syrian Arab Republic: [256 (9), 3.5%]
- Tunisia: [1168 (50), 4.3%]
- United Arab Emirates: [47,360 (311), 0.7%]
- Yemen: [1107 (298), 26.8%]