



A WHO technical mission is in Islamic Republic of Iran to support the ongoing response to the coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) outbreak in the country. *Photo: WHO/Islamic Republic of Iran*

Highlights

- 15 countries in the Region have reported laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19. These countries are Afghanistan, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Most of the cases reported history of travel to Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy and China.
- As of 5 March 2020, at 11:00 Cairo local time, 3150 laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 94 associated deaths (case-fatality rate 3.02%) were reported in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region. Most of these cases (2922 cases) and deaths (92 deaths) were reported from Islamic Republic of Iran.
- Respective ministries of health report that 12 cases in Iraq, 5 cases in United Arab Emirates, 552 cases in Islamic Republic of Iran, 4 cases in Bahrain, 2 cases in Oman and 1 case in Egypt have recovered.
- As the epidemic is still in the containment phase, efforts are geared towards limiting onward transmission and exportation of cases.
- A team from the WHO Regional Office has been deployed to Islamic Republic of Iran to support ongoing response efforts and preparedness for areas not yet affected.
- Concern continues around silent transmission occurring in Egypt due to reports of cases in other regions with history of travel to Egypt. Extensive investigations are ongoing.

Key figures in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

15

Countries reporting cases

3150

Total laboratory-confirmed cases reported

94

Total deaths reported

607

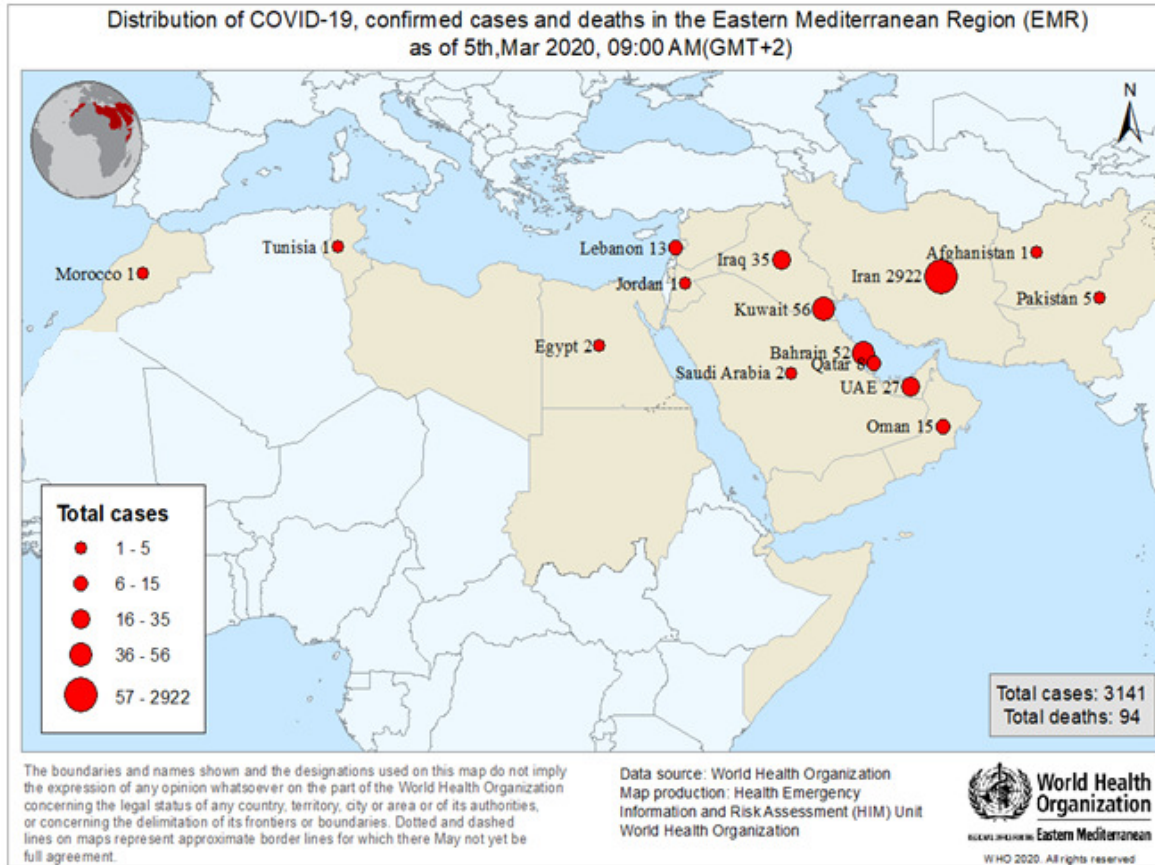
Cases reported in past 24 hours (11am March 4 – 11am March 5)

High

Regional risk assessment level

77

countries globally provided with laboratory supplies and personal protective equipment from the regional



Dubai hub, including 13 countries in the Region

Map 1. Distribution of COVID-19 confirmed cases reported in the Region, 04 March 2020 (11am Cairo local time)

Surveillance

Table 1. Laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 and associated deaths reported by countries in the Region as of 5 March 2020 (11:00 Cairo local time)

Country	Cases in past 24 hrs*	Deaths in past 24 hrs*	Cumulative cases (incl. Deaths)	Cumulative deaths	Local / Unknown	Linked Country
Afghanistan			1	0		Islamic Republic of Iran
Bahrain	3		52	0		Islamic Republic



						of Iran (52)
Egypt			2	0	Unknown	China (1)
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	586	15	2922	92	Local	China (1)
Iraq	5	2	35	2		Islamic Republic of Iran (35)
Jordan			1	0		Italy (1)
Kuwait	2		58	0		Islamic Republic of Iran (58)
Lebanon	2		15	0	Contacts (4)	Islamic Republic of Iran (10), Egypt (1)
Morocco			1			Italy (1)
Oman	3		15	0		Islamic Republic of Iran (15)
Palestine (West Bank)	4	0	4	0	Unknown	
Pakistan			5	0	2	Islamic Republic of Iran (3)
Qatar			8	0		Islamic Republic of Iran (8)
Tunisia			1	0		Italy (1)
Saudi Arabia	1		2	0		Islamic Republic of Iran
United Arab Emirates	1		28	0	Local (11)	China (9) Islamic Republic of Iran (8)
TOTAL	607	17	3150	94		

*11:00 March 4 – 11:00 am March 5



WHO strategic objectives

- Interrupt human-to-human transmission, including reducing secondary infections among close contacts and health care workers, prevent transmission amplification events, and prevent further international spread.
- Identify, isolate and care for patients early, including providing optimized care for infected patients.
- Address crucial unknowns regarding clinical severity, extent of transmission and infection, and treatment options.
- Communicate critical risk and event information to all communities and counter misinformation.
- Minimize social and economic impact through multisectoral partnerships.

Preparedness and response

Regional highlights

- The Regional Office has published the [Coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Regional preparedness and response plan](#). The plan was developed for the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office as a regional plan of action to support countries of the region to scale up preparedness and response capacities in countries of the Region for prevention, early detection, and rapid response to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) as required under the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005). Using the WHO global 2019 Novel Coronavirus Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan as the foundation, this plan was developed for the region as a complement to the global plan.
- A regional Incident Management Support Team (IMST) was activated in January 2020 under the leadership of Regional Director with the aim coordinating the overall preparedness and response in region. The IMST has different functions, including: partnership and coordination; health information management; operations support and logistics; finance and administration; points of entry and IHR (2005); disease surveillance; risk communication and community engagement; external communications; Case management; Laboratory diagnostics; and infection prevention and control. The IMST is in regular communication with headquarters and country office counterparts to coordinate preparedness and response activities. The IMST is also monitoring signals and events related to COVID-19 in the Region 24/7.
- Technical support is being provided in the areas of surveillance, rapid response, laboratory diagnosis, mass gathering preparedness, points of entry, IHR (2005), infection prevention and control, isolation and case management, rapid response teams, risk communication and logistics and supplies.
- Guidance is being provided on early investigations, which are critical to carry out early in an outbreak of a new virus.
- A COVID-19 module on the regional influenza reporting platform, EMFLU, has been developed to facilitate reporting of cases.
- Countries have been provided with guidance on considerations for upscaling operational readiness, considerations for quarantine and repatriation of nationals from affected countries, capacity review assessment tools, infection prevention and control training materials.
- Most countries have been equipped with diagnostic kits for the detection and confirmation of cases. To date, 20 countries have the Rt-PCR capacity to test COVID-19 virus and the other two are connected to international referral networks.



- Sample shipments of specimens has been sent to international reference laboratories to early detect any cases prior to establishment of national testing capacities.
- The logistics hub in Dubai provided laboratory testing kits and PPE supplies to 77 countries globally, including 13 countries in the Region.
- Technical support missions are ongoing in Islamic Republic of Iran and Bahrain.
- Resources have been mobilized to support the implementation of priority activities in high-risk countries.

Country Level Highlights

- Countries in the Region have scaled up their IHR capacities with a focus on coordination, points of entry, case management, surveillance, laboratory diagnosis, rapid response, risk communication and supplies and logistics.
- Some countries in the Region have developed a COVID-19 specific response plan.
- Most countries have adapted their case definition of suspected cases to include cases coming from other countries with community transmission.
- Surveillance and screening activities have been enhanced at the points of entry among the travellers from Islamic Republic of Iran in some countries of the Region.
- Egypt deployed rapid response teams after reports of cases internationally with history of travel to Egypt.
- Lebanon has enrolled in the early investigation studies and is implementing the protocols accordingly. Schools and universities have been closed for one week.
- Pakistan has utilized the Polio Eradication Teams and FELTP network to train health professions in surveillance, case management and reporting across different districts.
- Jordan has printed and disseminated WHO risk communication materials (advocacy and awareness materials) targeting general public, travellers and health care workers to health facilities and points of entry.
- Afghanistan scaled up the points of entry capacities to detect any cases coming from Islamic Republic of Iran.
- Tunisia has conducted meetings with EU member states and UN agencies for situation analysis and coordination of response activities.
- Saudi to suspend umrah temporarily for citizens and residents in the kingdom temporarily.
- Iraq has extended religious school/institutes holidays for two weeks, suspended mass gathering for few days. Discussion is ongoing to re-evaluate preparedness for such events, which will inform decisions for further hosting events.
- The occupied Palestinian territory has enhanced capacities at points of entry and at referral facilities.
- Islamic Republic of Iran has implemented mandatory health screening at the borders, cancelled upcoming mass gatherings and events (including Friday prayers and other religious ceremonies), closed schools and universities until after the Nowruz holiday, and activated all clinics with respiratory disease management capabilities to accept COVID-19 cases and to provide services 24-7.

Recommendations and advice to countries

- Reinforce information sharing with WHO regarding identified suspect, probable and laboratory confirmed cases through IHR channels.
- Recognize the criticality of timely sharing of fully completed case forms via NFPs to improve global understanding of COVID-19.



- Enhance surveillance at points of entry and health facilities to identify suspected cases as early as possible.
- Conduct risk assessments for all mass gatherings planned in the Region.
- Conduct rapid mapping exercise for the existing preparedness and response capacities and identify key gaps to be prioritized.
- Establish proper coordination mechanism to coordinate the preparedness and response activities with government institutions and partners and assign roles and responsibilities to address key gaps to be addressed.
- Invest more in preparedness and response to this outbreak, and prioritize improvement of infection prevention and control practices, protection of health workers, individuals at risk, and communicating better the risks of transmission to the public.
- Augment the knowledge and skills among frontline health workers on investigation and management of COVID-19 outbreaks.

Recommendations and advice for the public

Standard recommendations to reduce exposure to and transmission of a range of illnesses include:

- maintaining basic hand and respiratory hygiene, including proper cough and sneezing protocol;
- maintaining safe food practices, including avoiding eating or drinking uncooked animal products;
- avoiding close contact, when possible, with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing.

[More information here](#)

Useful links

- [Technical guidance](#)
- [Protect yourself and others](#)
- [Myth busters](#)
- [Travel health](#)
- [Videos](#)
- [Questions and answers](#)

For further information, contact emrgonCoV@who.int