

Epi weeks 9-10 (28 February -13 March)

## SITUATION IN NUMBERS (As of midnight GMT+2, 13 March 2021)



## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

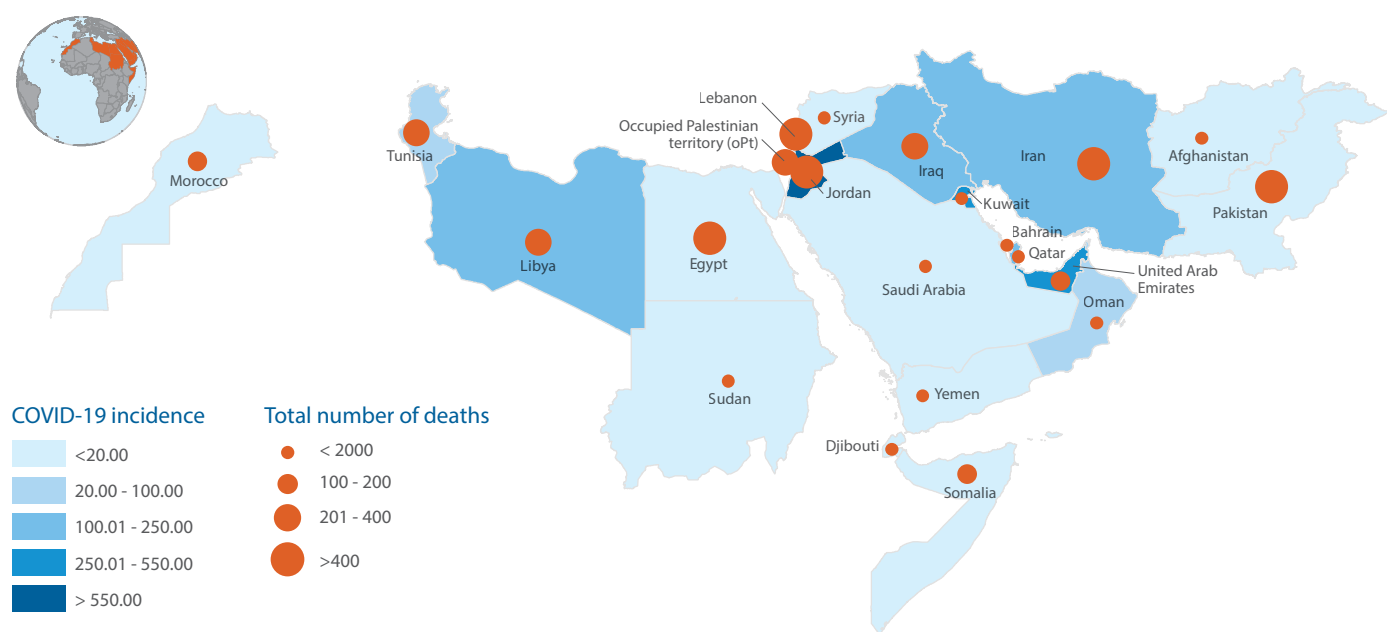


First shipment of COVID-19 vaccines delivered through the COVAX Facility arrived in Sudan on 3 Mar 2021.

- As of 13 March 2021, the Eastern Mediterranean Region has reported 6,865,085 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 150,295 deaths since the start of the pandemic. The total number of tests provided is 104,560,059; and the median cumulative positivity ratio is 10.4% (range from 1.3% to 25.3%).
- During the reporting period, cases continued to increase, with the number of reported cases 22% higher than the previous two weeks. The number of reported deaths also showed a 15% increase compared to the two previous weeks. A biweekly increase in cases was reported from 17 countries, and a biweekly increase in deaths was reported from 14 countries. A biweekly decrease in cases was reported from Bahrain, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, and the United Arab Emirates.
- To date, 14 EMR countries have reported detection of SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern (VOCs). These countries are Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the occupied Palestinian territory, Oman, Pakistan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates.
- The reporting period marked the arrival of first shipments of COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX Facility, with almost 1 million doses delivered to three countries. On 3 March, Sudan received over 800,000 doses followed by Djibouti receiving 24,000 doses on 6 March 2021, and Jordan with 144,000 doses on 13 March 2021.
- On 11 March 2021, WHO's Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean held its first ministerial meeting of 2021 with 13 out of 22 ministers of health and WHO representatives in the Region. The meeting, led by WHO Regional Director Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, focused on reviewing the COVID-19 situation, response, and achievements at country level, and addressing common challenges to strengthen WHO's support to countries. Issues related to the arrivals of vaccines through the COVAX Facility were discussed, including delays in the arrival of some shipments, as well as WHO's role in ensuring countries were prepared to receive and roll out vaccinations.

# Map 1: COVID-19 Bi-weekly attack rate per 100,000 population and number of new deaths per country in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

28 February – 13 March 2021



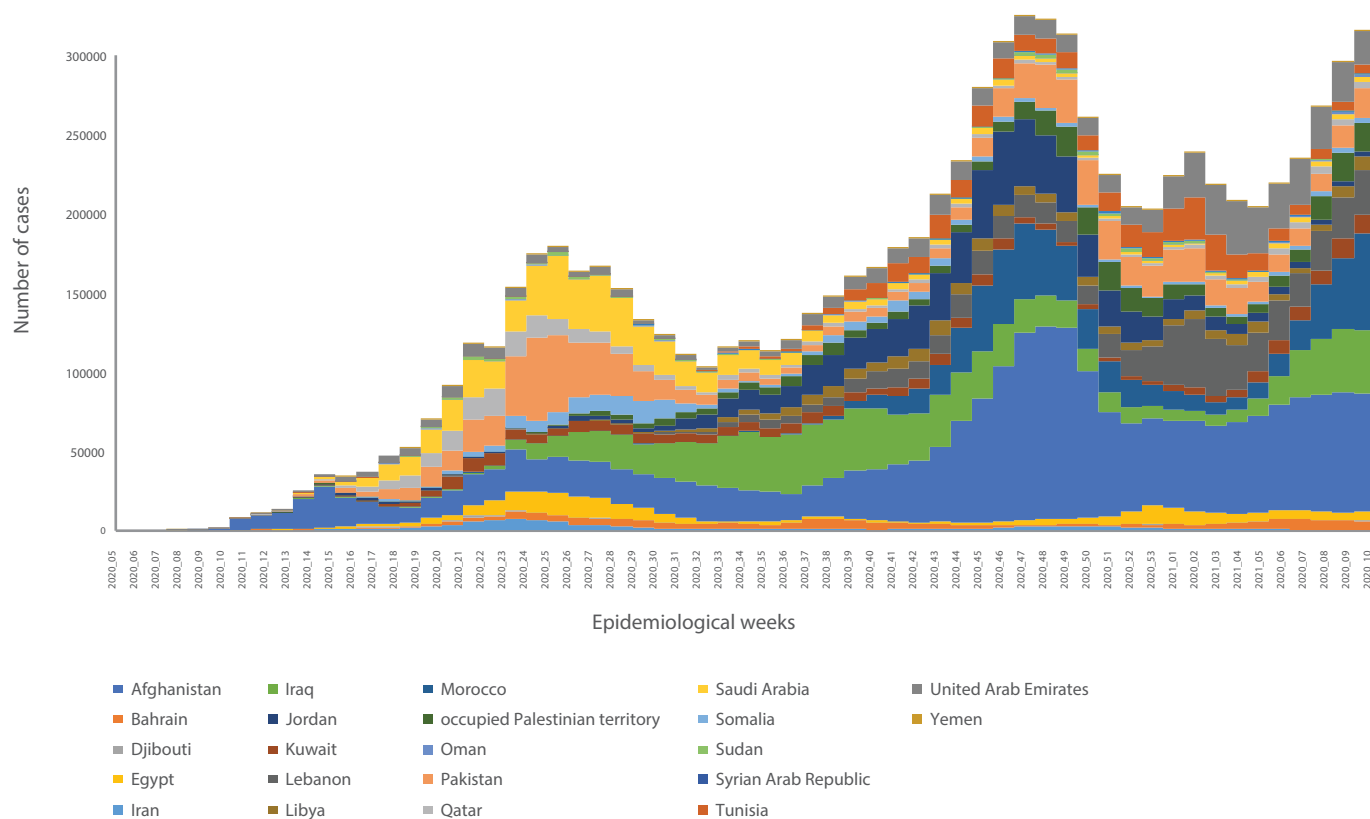
## Table 1: Regional Epidemiological Situation

28 February – 13 March 2021

Country	New Confirmed Cases	Total Confirmed Cases	New Deaths	Total Deaths	CFR	Total recovered	Total Tests
Afghanistan	252	55,985	15	2,459	4.4%	449,477	320,824
Bahrain	8,626	130,404	37	481	0.4%	123,671	3,289,371
Djibouti	187	6,252	0	63	1.0%	5,972	119,774
Egypt	8,451	190,280	617	11,256	5.9%	146,803	2,492,115
Iran	116,201	1,739,360	1,162	61,142	3.5%	1,485,179	11,651,917
Iraq	62,077	754,318	336	13,719	1.8%	681,828	7,353,052
Jordan	82,504	469,000	610	5,285	1.1%	390,127	5,131,793
Kuwait	18,570	208,460	87	1,165	0.6%	192,782	1,901,041
Lebanon	42,587	415,362	682	5,334	1.3%	325,818	3,291,733
Libya	11,655	144,993	207	2,386	1.6%	131,778	802,041
Morocco	5,222	488,632	103	8,718	1.8%	475,457	5,304,996
Oman	28,011	234,449	258	2,494	1.1%	209,163	1,286,127
Pakistan	4,669	145,257	38	1,600	1.1%	135,227	1,077,141
Palestine	25,227	605,200	648	13,508	2.2%	570,571	9,485,702
Qatar	6,570	169,767	8	265	0.2%	157,876	1,615,021
Saudi Arabia	4,998	382,059	75	6,563	1.7%	372,456	14,272,412
Somalia	1,955	8,946	118	349	3.9%	4,108	117,394
Sudan	529	30,946	63	1,953	6.3%	23,483	347,329
Syrian Arab Republic	868	16,401	71	1,094	6.7%	10,885	60,920
Tunisia	8,557	241,834	388	8,389	3.5%	207,686	1,034,981
United Arab Emirates	35,811	424,405	175	1,388	0.3%	403,478	33,592,518
Yemen	502	2,775	52	684	24.6%	1,474	11,857
<b>Total</b>	<b>474,029</b>	<b>6,865,085</b>	<b>5,750</b>	<b>150,295</b>	<b>2.2%</b>	<b>6,105,299</b>	<b>104,560,059</b>

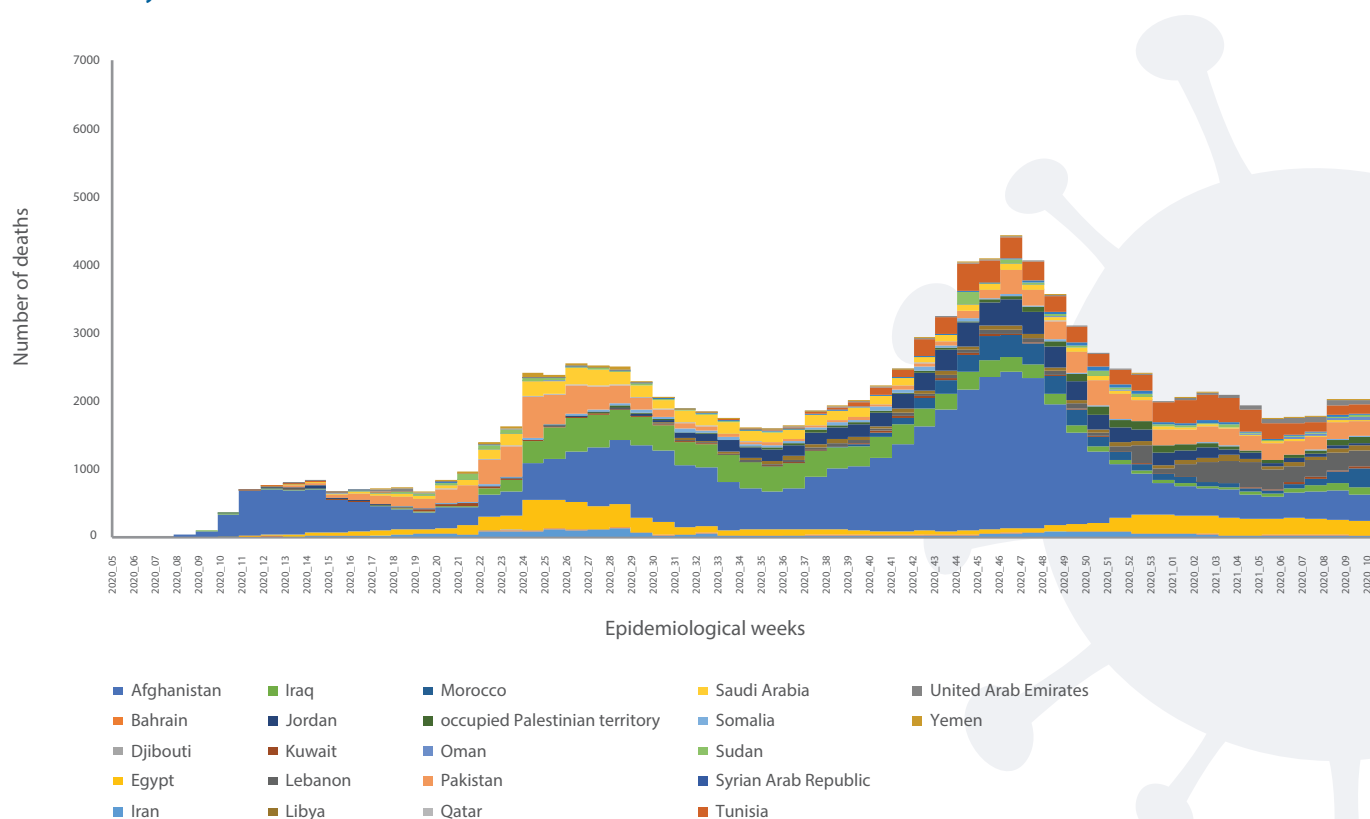
# Graph 1: Weekly distribution of COVID-19 cases in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

26 January 2020 – 13 March 2021



# Graph 2: Weekly distribution of COVID-19 deaths in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

26 January 2020 – 13 March 2021



## IN FOCUS: NEW SARS-COV-2 VARIANTS

- So far, 12 countries have reported the B.1.1.7 variant of concern (VOC): Bahrain, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, oPt, Pakistan, KSA, and UAE; UAE has also reported the B.1.351 and B.1.1.28 VOCs.
- Iraq and Libya are still pending full genome sequencing to confirm the type of strain.
- Currently, 14 countries have genome sequencing capacity in country, and the Regional Office has arranged for samples from other countries to be sequenced at regional reference laboratories (Khalifa University in UAE, Oman Central Public Health Laboratory, and AFRO-CDC).

## IN FOCUS: COVID-19 vaccines rolled out in the Eastern Mediterranean Region through the COVAX Facility

- Vaccines delivered through the COVAX Facility have arrived in Djibouti, Jordan, and Sudan with a total of around 1 million doses targeting high-risk groups, as part of efforts to cover 20% of populations by the end of this year.
- To date, 15 countries in the Region have commenced vaccination against COVID-19, administering over 13 million doses.
- WHO worked with national authorities to put a vaccination strategy in place that includes training vaccinators, ensuring vaccine safety, and surveillance for adverse effects and delivering supplementary supplies.
- Vaccination roll out in the Region is faced by several challenges, including public hesitancy against vaccines, major inequalities as vaccines are rolled out, critical shortages in supply amid high level of demand, and logistics issues related to cold chain storage of some vaccines especially when more tranches of vaccines arrive.

## REGIONAL RESPONSE HIGHLIGHTS

### Operations Support and Logistics

- Deployed logistics staff from Dubai to Sudan on charter flights and delivered 54 tons of medical supplies. The shipment includes medical supplies of dengue fever reagents, malaria medicines, as well as COVID-19 reagents to support surveillance and detection activities in Sudan.
- Coordinating with WFP and WHO/Yemen to dispatch three charter flights to Aden and three flights to Sana'a to support increased distribution of health commodities.

## Health Operations and Technical Expertise

### Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)

- Trained a total of 556 members of UNRWA staff from Lebanon, Gaza and Syria on IPC to reduce the number of COVID-19 infections.
- Trained 80 IPC members from 15 universities in Egypt on case-control study tools to explore COVID-19 infections among health care workers.
- Trained 25 hospital managers from Islamabad on IPC leadership and role of senior management in collaboration with WHO Collaborating Center in Saudi Arabia and the WHO Country Office in Pakistan.

### Clinical Management

- Conducted a gap assessment for intensive care unit (ICU) equipment and supplies in key public hospital in Hargeisa and procured required supplies to fill gaps.
- Conducted on-site ICU training for Hargeisa Group Hospital ICU staff for 1 week.
- Assessed COVID-19 treatment center and recommendation submitted to Somalia Ministry of Health.
- Trained 15 national doctors and nurses selected from different regions for ICU/critical care in Somalia.
- Worked with the Somalian MoH and local institutions to develop a long-term strategy for critical care capacity building. As a start, an ICU simulation and training centre equipped with basic ICU training tools is planned to begin operations in the next few months.

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## Health Information Management and Surveillance

- Worked to improve Pakistan's COVID-19 monitoring and evaluation database by adding new districts.
- Worked on submission of Yemen Health Resources and Services Availability Monitoring System (HeRAMS) within the COVID-19 implementation plan to the World Bank.
- Conducted mission to Afghanistan to support event-based surveillance (EBS) with focus on COVID-19.
- Conducted Epidemic Intelligence from Open Sources (EIOS) training for Tunisia's Ministry of Health.
- Distributed of contact tracing funds to 4 countries (Afghanistan, Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia).

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## International Health Regulations and Social Measures

- Conducted 135 trainings to date, for 1121 participants in case management, and 44 trainings for 406 participants in Infection Prevention & Control (IPC) in coordination with the UK-MED Emergency Medical Team (EMT) in Lebanon.
- In coordination with the UK-MED Emergency Medical Team (EMT), prepared and delivered specialist Intensive Care Unit (ICU) training for COVID-19 case management in Al-Amal Hospital in Aden-Yemen, with recommendations for further capacity building trainings in IPC, advanced cardiac life support( ACLS) and basic life support (BLS).
- Formatted an interagency sub-working group dedicated to social and behavioral data, social listening and community feedback strengthening.
- Developed a Risk Communication & Community Engagement (RCCE) training package for community health workers focusing on supporting the vaccine rollout and uptake.

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## Research and Knowledge Management

- Supported ongoing work on the potential and major drug-drug and drug-disease interactions in patients undergoing treatment for COVID-19 using common treatment protocols in the Region.
- Finalized Lebanon development of Cause of Death COD registration, showing the over-added value of the system during COVID-19 and interaction with surveillance system for daily/weekly validation for publication.
- Worked with Djibouti's Ministry of Health to approve the pilot implementation of Rapid Mortality surveillance, through the detection of burial changes over time utilizing High-Resolution Satellite Imagery (HRSI).

## Essential Health Services and Systems

- Identified essential nutrition services for saving the lives of children and mothers in the context of consequences of the economic impact of COVID-19.
- Developed training package for health workers on severe cases of malnutrition in Djibouti and Iraq.
- Reviewed supplementation of women and children with iron and folic acid in Gaza with UNRWA.
- Worked with 9 clinics on promotion of breast feeding in primary health care centers with a hotline for women unable to attend for counselling in Kuwait.
- Conducted mission to Pakistan to formulate a strategy with the focus of primary health care.

## COVID-19 Vaccine

- Facilitated COVAX vaccine deployment country by country, including troubleshooting bottlenecks on the last three criteria and communication issues between countries and GAVI regarding the estimated time of arrival of COVID-19 vaccines.
- Managed vaccine-related communications, including around the EMRO ministerial meeting (11 March 2021) and around country concerns regarding the AstraZeneca vaccine following blood clotting cases in Europe.
- Coordinated within EMRO on monitoring vaccination activities for a consolidated system.

## COUNTRY SITUATION HIGHLIGHTS

### Sudan

- Received its allocation of COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX Facility. Over 800,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine arrived, and vaccination will be launched today, 9 March 2021 targeting firstly health care workers and people above 45 with chronic medical conditions, living in areas with high transmission or anticipated high transmission. The shipment also included 4.5 metric tons of syringes and safety boxes.
- Received 2 charter planes carrying life-saving medicines and medical supplies to fill critical shortages of emergency supplies in health facilities and support the response to COVID-19 with a total of 54 metric tons of supplies for more than 700,000 beneficiaries across the country.

### Djibouti

- Received first shipment of AstraZeneca/Serum Institute of India (SII) vaccines through COVAX Facility targeting health care workers, people over 50 years of age and people with comorbidities. WHO has worked with national authorities to put a vaccination strategy in place that includes training vaccinators, ensuring vaccine safety, and surveillance for adverse effects.



First shipment of COVID-19 vaccines delivered through the COVAX Facility arrived in Djibouti on 6 March 2021.

Regional COVID-19 website: <http://www.emro.who.int/health-topics/corona-virus/index.html>

For more information, contact [emrgonCoV@who.int](mailto:emrgonCoV@who.int)