

Epi weeks 15-16 (11-24 April 2021)

SITUATION IN NUMBERS (As of midnight GMT+2, 24 April 2021)



The COVAX Facility delivered its first shipments of COVID-19 vaccines to Syria on 22 April 2021: 203,000 doses to Damascus and 53,800 doses to the North West of the country.

Epidemiological Highlights

- COVID-19 cases and deaths:** As of 24 April 2021, the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) has reported 8,831,153 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 177,235 deaths since the start of the pandemic. The total number of tests in the Region has reached 128,604,177, with a median cumulative positivity ratio of 10.6% (range from 1.2% to 30.3%).
- Epidemiological trend:** The trend in new cases has continued to increase: the number of reported cases was 15% higher than during the two previous weeks. Also, the number of reported deaths showed a 43% increase compared to the two previous weeks. A biweekly increase in cases and deaths was reported by 11 and 14 countries respectively.
- COVID-19 testing:** In comparison to the previous two weeks, the number of tests conducted in the Region has decreased by 4%: 13 countries have reported a decrease in numbers of tests performed.
- SARS-CoV-2 variants:** To date, 16 countries in the Region have reported the detection of SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern (VOCs).

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

11-24 April 2021

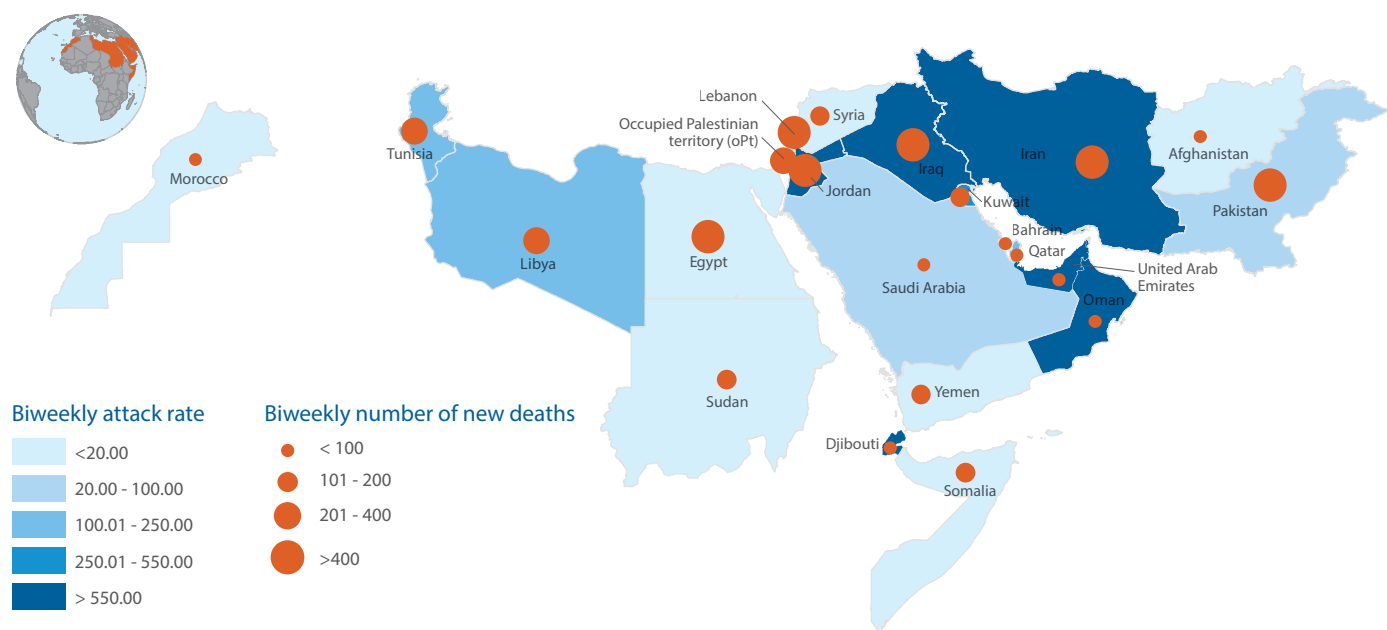


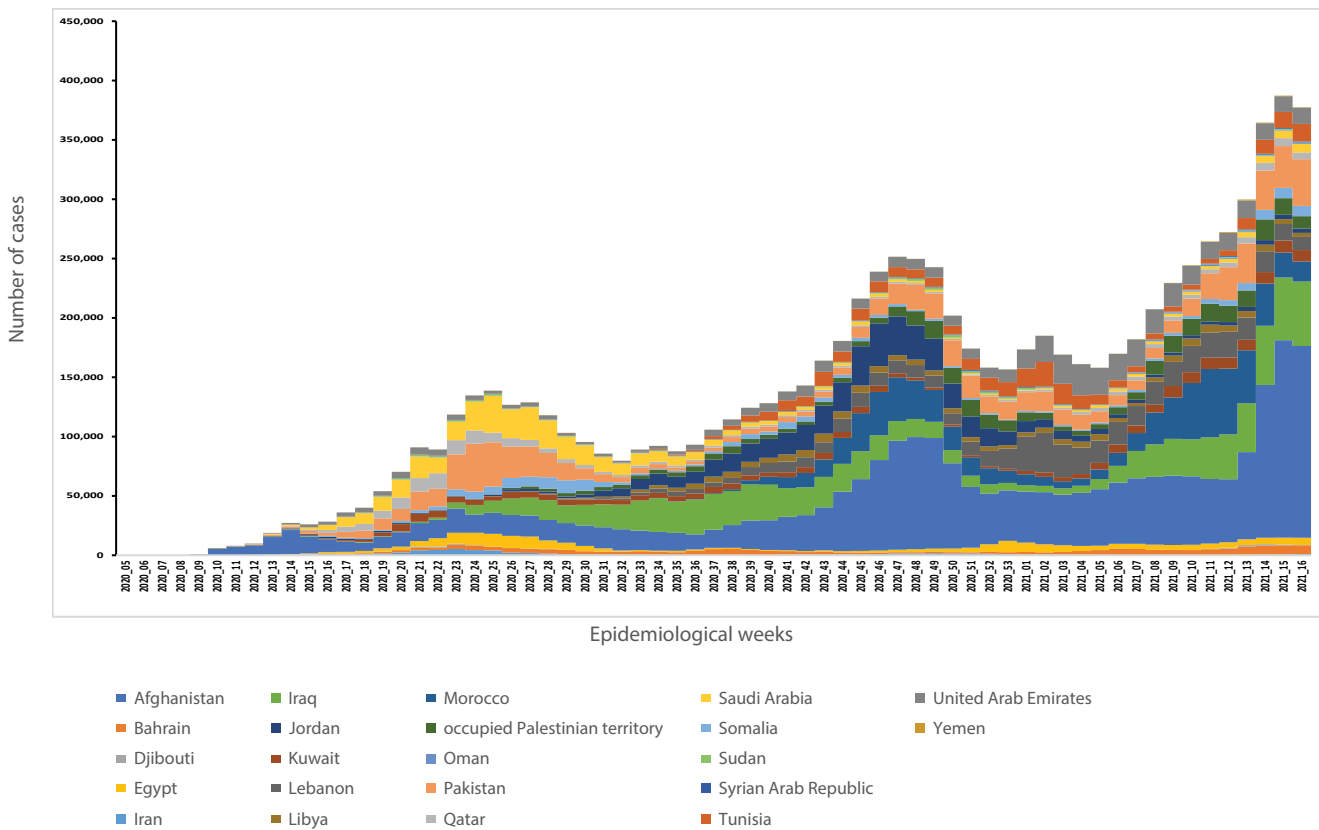
Table 1: Epidemiological situation in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

11-24 April 2021

Country	New Confirmed Cases	Total Confirmed Cases	New Deaths	Total Deaths	CFR	Total recovered	Total Tests
Afghanistan	1,773	59,015	63	2,592	4.4%	52,489	395,395
Bahrain	14,933	170,335	66	620	0.4%	159,198	3,997,605
Djibouti	1,024	10,746	39	132	1.2%	10,261	146,903
Egypt	11,893	221,570	593	12,998	5.9%	166,457	2,715,273
Iran	327,961	2,377,039	4,888	69,120	2.9%	1,863,405	15,078,540
Iraq	107,133	1,025,288	539	15,217	1.5%	897,966	9,076,934
Jordan	38,028	700,423	855	8,563	1.2%	664,772	6,593,672
Kuwait	19,700	265,404	108	1,511	0.6%	248,633	2,272,818
Lebanon	24,982	519,615	488	7,118	1.4%	445,163	4,067,351
Libya	7,461	175,286	173	2,996	1.7%	160,643	964,446
Morocco	7,349	509,037	97	8,988	1.8%	494,872	5,705,734
Oman	24,461	319,100	317	3,419	1.1%	289,059	1,714,206
Pakistan	17,273	185,278	195	1,942	1.0%	165,051	1,077,141
Palestine	74,609	795,627	1,674	17,117	2.2%	689,812	11,538,771
Qatar	12,432	201,496	87	418	0.2%	179,974	1,875,805
Saudi Arabia	13,627	411,263	140	6,887	1.7%	394,529	16,536,092
Somalia	1,188	13,459	84	689	5.1%	5,593	151,637
Sudan	940	33,797	148	2,333	6.9%	26,635	366,654
Syrian Arab Republic	1,881	21,999	158	1,526	6.9%	15,731	71,286
Tunisia	28,481	300,342	1,011	10,304	3.4%	249,146	1,279,495
United Arab Emirates	26,988	508,925	40	1,569	0.3%	490,457	42,911,245
Yemen	829	6,109	144	1,176	19.3%	2,488	67,174
Total	764,946	8,831,153	11,907	177,235	2.0%	7,672,334	128,604,177

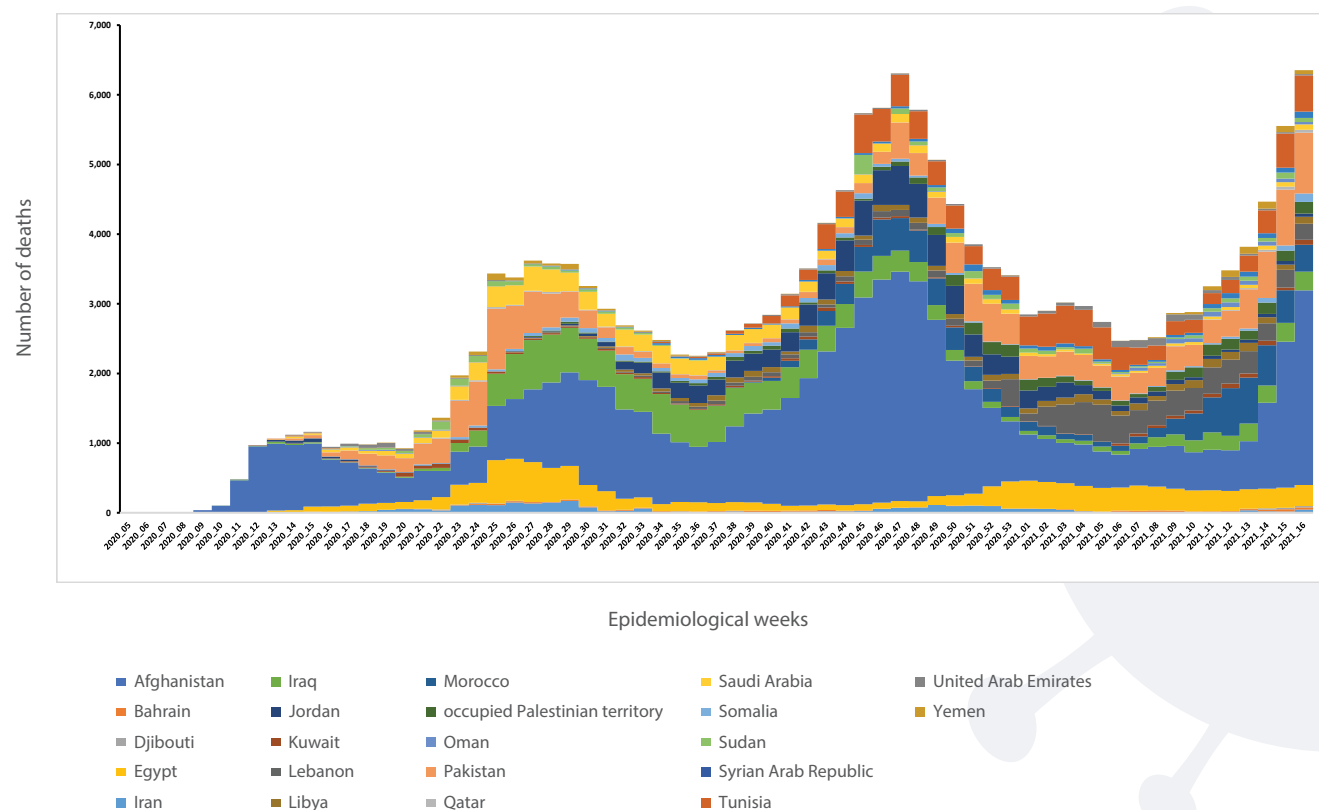
Graph 1: Weekly distribution of COVID-19 cases in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

26 January 2020 – 24 April 2021



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

26 January 2020 – 24 April 2021



IN FOCUS: COVID-19 vaccine rollout in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

- So far, 15 countries in the Region have received first shipments of COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX Facility. Syria was the latest recipient, with 203,000 doses delivered to Damascus and 53,800 doses to the northwest of the country.
- The COVAX Facility is coordinating additional shipments of COVID-19 vaccines to 13 countries in the Region. Jordan has already received an additional 146,400 doses, and the occupied Palestinian territory has received 43,200 doses for the Nablus central cold room in the West Bank, and 28,800 doses go to the Gaza Strip. More countries are expected to receive new shipments in the coming weeks and months.
- To date, all countries have started vaccination against COVID-19, with more than 35 million doses have been administered.

REGIONAL RESPONSE HIGHLIGHTS

Operations Support and Logistics

- Operated over 150 pending shipments, of which 91 (60%) are COVID-19-related, consisting primarily of biomedical supplies such as oxygen concentrators and patient monitors.
- Dispatched over 30 metric tons of biomedical supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE), worth USD 1.6 million, to Sana'a, Yemen.
- Established a monthly rotation of charter flights to Aden and Sana'a, Yemen, with the WHO Country Office in Yemen and the World Food Programme.

Health Operations and Technical Expertise

Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)

- Trained 45 master trainers from the Ministry of Health of Yemen in a 3-day IPC workshop.
- Reviewed and updated the national policy on detection and management of COVID-19 among infected healthcare workers in Jordan.

Health Information Management and Surveillance

- Developed a standard COVID-19 monitoring and evaluation training package/toolkit in collaboration with "SPHERE" and the Global Health Cluster, to be piloted in selected EMR countries.
- Conducted a workshop to develop the Regional integrated surveillance strategy with representatives from all relevant EMRO departments.
- Conducted training on Sprinklr (social media scanning tool) to enhance detection capacity.
- Provided support related to the "Go.data" outbreak investigation tool for a study on healthcare workers in Jordan.

International Health Regulations and Social Measures

- Supported the development, facilitation of sessions, and review of final student projects for the joint course between New York University, UNICEF, and WHO on "Behavioral Communication Strategies for Global Epidemics: Social Behavior Change for Vaccinations" which took place between February and mid-April 2021. Finalized the development of a holistic training package for Points of Entry staff, encompassing topics and capacities essential to detecting and responding to all-hazards public health threats that may arise in relation to the international movement of people and goods.

Research and Knowledge Management

- Held a coordination meeting with mortality registration focal points for Afghanistan, Pakistan, Djibouti, Sudan, and North-West Syria on facility mortality registration systems and reporting of data to WHO.
- Reviewed the research protocol for a vaccine effectiveness study in the occupied Palestinian territory.
- Continued the expansion of vaccine effectiveness studies by informing WHO Representatives of the protocol options, finalizing the plans for webinars with interested countries, and discussing interest with Tunisia.
- Met with principal investigators of COVID-19 sero-epidemiological surveys: to prepare the research protocol in Tobruk and Derna in Libya, and to discuss preliminary results of the national survey in Tunisia (78% of target completed; initial results suggest 28% prevalence).

Essential Health Services and Systems

- Disseminated the results of the second Pulse survey with a media release on 23 April. Developed guidance jointly with the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on “Reducing public health risks associated with the sale of live wild animals of mammalian species in traditional food markets”.
- Conducted a Regional webinar on “Hospitals’ experiences combatting COVID-19 in the EMR” with panelists from Oman, Iran, Pakistan, the occupied Palestinian territory, and Sudan, and attended by 177 participants.
- Released Somalia’s Essential Package of Health Services, endorsed by His Excellency the Federal Minister of Health.
- Supported WHO Country Offices and counterparts on assessments of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) services in healthcare facilities.

COVID-19 Vaccine

- Disseminated programme updates on current priority topics, such as on options for Advanced Market Commitment (AMC) countries to purchase additional doses of vaccines, on evaluating vaccine effectiveness and post-introduction evaluation tools, on upcoming COVAX deliveries, and on SAGE/Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety (GACVS) updates.
- Continued developing the national Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) survey package with IFRC, UNICEF and the World Bank.
- Published and translated questions and answers on vaccine safety to address common questions related to public hesitancy.
- Conducted country reflection reviews to identify WHO and UNICEF priorities on Risk Communication and Community Engagement for the COVID-19 vaccine rollout in Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Libya, Djibouti, Morocco, and Tunisia.

COUNTRY SITUATION HIGHLIGHTS

Occupied Palestinian territory

- On 21 March, the occupied Palestinian territory kickstarted its mass vaccination rollout campaign, prioritizing medical staff working in government and private hospitals, patients with cancer or kidney conditions, and the elderly. On 19 April, the occupied Palestinian territory received the second shipment of vaccines through the COVAX Facility. As of 20 April, 166,849 people had been vaccinated across the territory: 131,759 in the West Bank and 35,090 in Gaza, which represents 3.3% of the total Palestinian population.
- WHO supported the training of over 2,036 Ministry of Health and frontline healthcare workers to manage COVID-19. In collaboration with partners, WHO continues its dedicated risk communication campaign with fortnightly messages to respond to the surge in COVID-19 cases.

Morocco

- Morocco began its COVID-19 vaccine rollout in early March 2021. WHO is providing technical support to the government of Morocco in this regard. On 8 April, Morocco received its first doses of vaccine through the COVAX Facility.
- To date, Morocco's Ministry of Health has vaccinated a total of 4,672,326 people with the first dose and 4,188,336 with the second dose. High-risk groups, such as healthcare workers, teachers, security forces, and those aged over 75, are prioritized, in addition to those living in areas with high COVID-19 rates.



The occupied Palestinian territory received the second shipment of COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX Facility: 43,200 doses of AstraZeneca vaccines for the Nablus central cold room in the West Bank, and 28,800 doses for the Gaza Strip.



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

For more information, contact emrgonCoV@who.int