







Epi Weeks 5-6 (31 January-13 February 2021)

SITUATION IN NUMBERS *As of midnight GMT+2, 13 February 2021*

10/22	6,001,710	139,543	5,370,417	90,442,496	2.3%
					
Countries reporting increased cases	Total laboratory-confirmed cases	Total reported deaths	Total reported recovered cases	Total tests performed in EMR countries	Case fatality rate (CFR)

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- As of 13 February 2021, the Eastern Mediterranean Region reported 6,001,710 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 139,543 deaths since the start of the pandemic. The decreasing trend of new cases reported during the previous weeks was observed until Week 06 (07-13 Feb) when a 7.4% increase as compared to Week 05 was reported. Mortality trends have been gradually and systematically declining during Weeks 05 and 06 in line with the overall regional decreasing trend observed during the preceding 2 weeks.
- Except for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) where the number of reported cases has slightly decreased, all Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have reported a regular increase in cases. All GCC countries have also reported an increase in deaths. During the reporting period, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Sudan, and Tunisia reported a decrease in cases. After several weeks of stabilization or decrease in numbers of cases, Iran and Iraq are reporting a new increase in cases. However, the number of deaths is slightly decreasing in Iran.
- Seven countries and territory are implementing mandatory wearing of masks (Afghanistan, Egypt, Libya, OPT, Oman, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates). Bahrain and Saudi Arabia are cancelling, closing, or restricting public gatherings outside homes. Qatar is cancelling / restricting mass gatherings. Kuwait, the occupied Palestinian territory, and United Arab Emirates are implementing school closures.
- The COVAX Facility has notified health authorities in the occupied Palestinian territory and Tunisia of their allocation of COVID-19 vaccines as part of the first wave of deliveries to countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.
- Out of 15 EMR countries and territory that are reported to have conducted genome sequencing, 10 countries have reported the B.1.1.7 variants of concern: Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, occupied Palestinian Territory, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The UAE has also reported cases of the B.1.351 and B.1.1.28 variants.



Tunisia and the occupied Palestinian territory to receive first wave of COVID-19 vaccines via COVAX Facility.

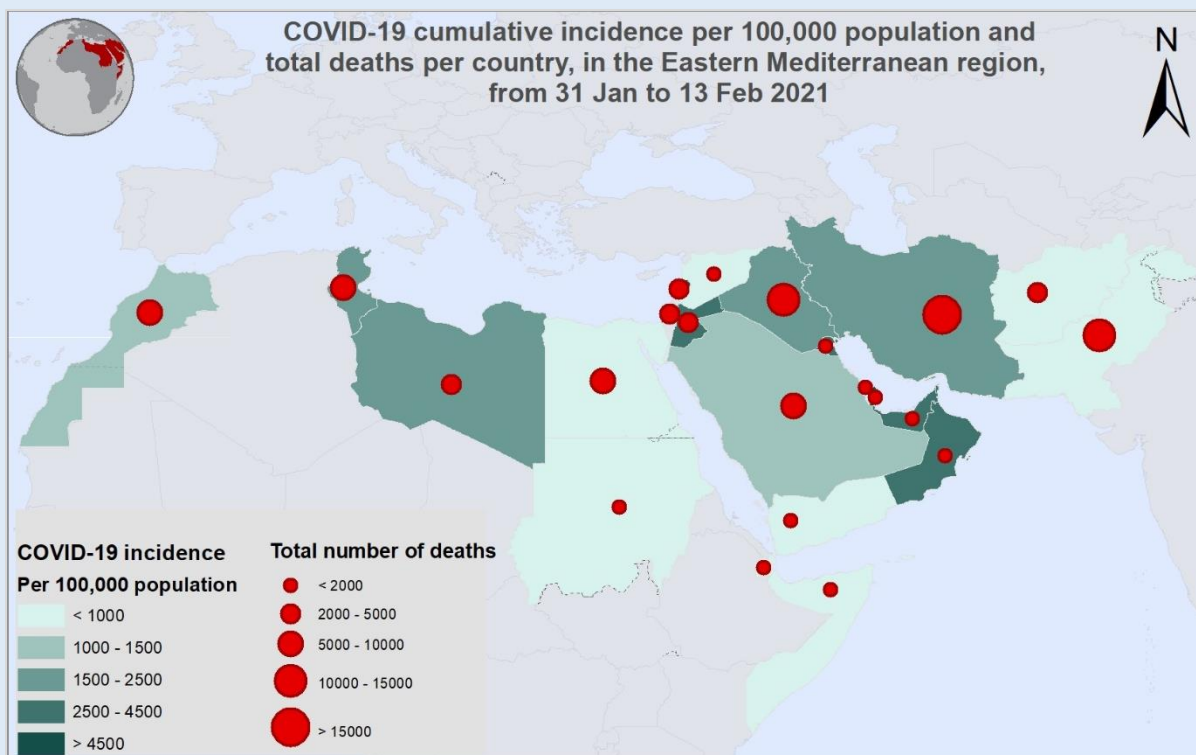
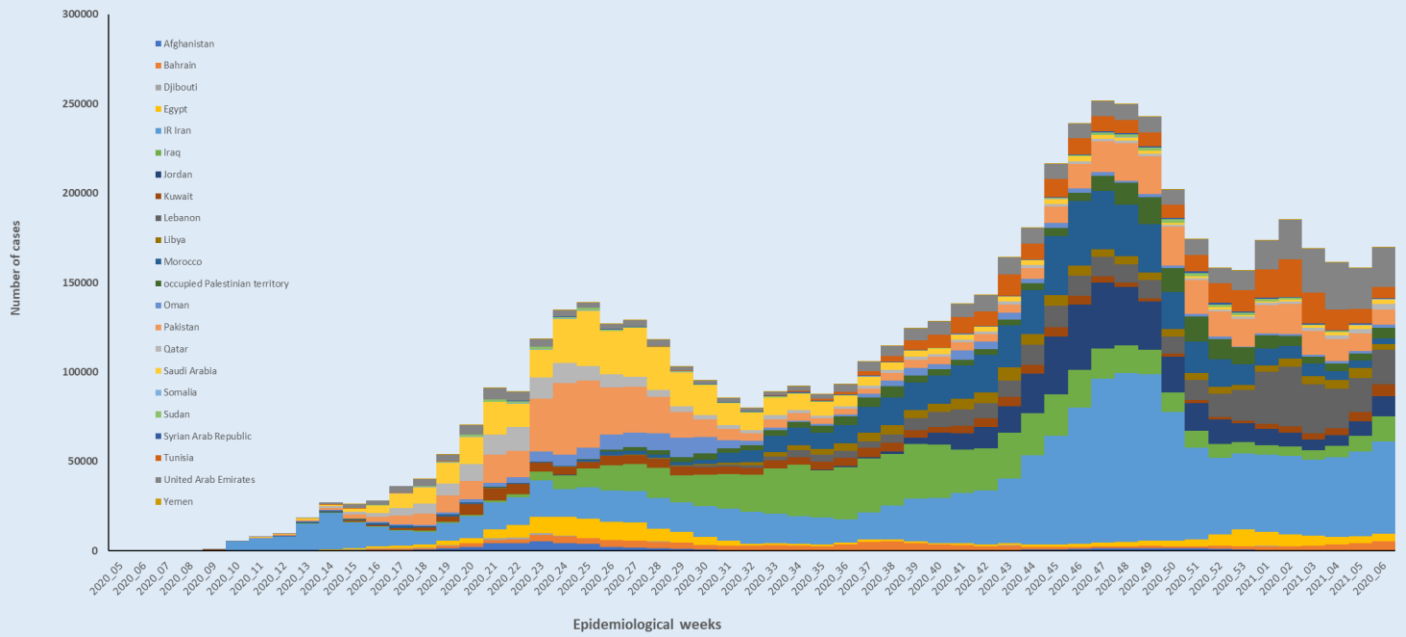


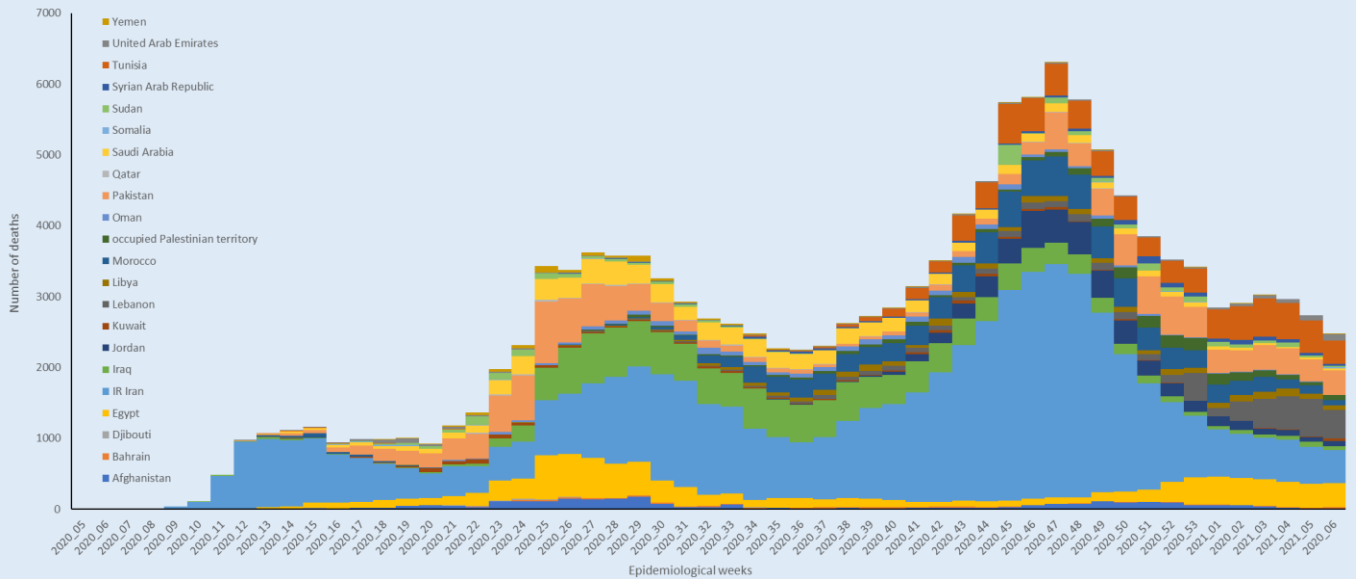
Table 1: Regional Epidemiological Situation; 31st January- 13th February 2021

Country	Confirmed Cases	Deaths	CFR	Recovered	Tests
Afghanistan	55514	2427	4.4	48395	275570
Bahrain	112102	398	0.4	104487	2886600
Djibouti	5968	63	1.1	5856	111804
Egypt	173202	9935	5.7	134638	2446354
Iran	1510873	58883	3.9	1291726	9993224
Iraq	641628	13164	2.1	605980	6192076
Jordan	344803	4444	1.3	325892	4178921
Kuwait	176903	998	0.6	165254	1660406
Lebanon	336992	3961	1.2	233171	2807012
Libya	127354	2018	1.6	110143	712989
Morocco	478135	8460	1.8	458504	5038051
Oman	136622	1539	1.1	128461	883439
Pakistan	563029	12307	2.2	525087	8434098
Palestine	188464	2125	1.1	176037	1080650
Qatar	156804	255	0.2	148137	1459551
Saudi Arabia	372410	6428	1.7	363303	12946778
Somalia	5092	148	2.9	3733	100527
Sudan	30006	1853	6.2	22380	320584
Syrian Arab Republic	14820	975	6.6	8600	59977
Tunisia	223244	7544	3.4	182421	927444
United Arab Emirates	345605	1001	0.3	326780	27907006
Yemen	2140	617	28.8	1432	19435
Total	6,001,710	139,543	2.3%	5,370,417	90,442,496

**Graph 1: Weekly distribution of COVID-19 cases in EMR countries
26 January 2020 – 13 February 2021**

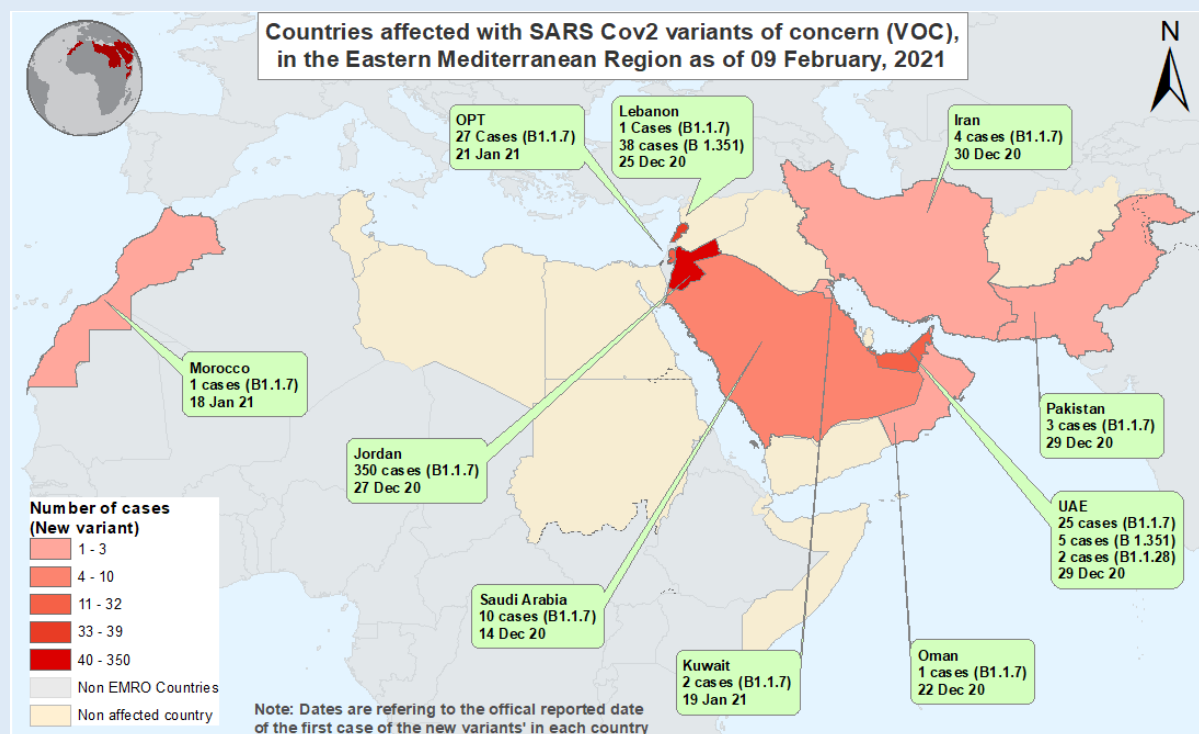


**Graph 2: Weekly distribution of COVID-19 deaths in EMR countries
26 January 2020 – 13 February 2021**



IN FOCUS: NEW SARS-COV-2 VARIANTS

- To date, 10 countries have reported the B.1.1.7 variants of concern, i.e., Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, occupied Palestinian Territory, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The UAE has also reported cases with the B.1.351 and B.1.1.28 variants of concern.
- While these variants have demonstrated higher transmissibility, an initial study seems to indicate that the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine has a decreased effectiveness when it comes to preventing more severe illness caused by the B.1.351 variant. More studies are also needed to conclude on the possible increased severity of the variants ([Reference](#)).
- 15 countries have the genome sequencing capacity in the Region. WHO EMRO has arranged for other countries to conduct the genome sequencing at regional reference laboratories, i.e., Khalifa University in the United Arab Emirates, Oman's Central Public Health Laboratory and AFRO- Center for Disease Control and Prevention).
- WHO EMRO continues to work with countries in the Region to evaluate available evidence around transmissibility, severity, antibody neutralization capabilities and potential impacts on vaccines of specific mutations, variants of interest and variants of concern.



IN FOCUS: COVID-19 VACCINES

- The COVAX Facility has notified health authorities in the occupied Palestinian territory and Tunisia of their allocation of COVID-19 vaccines as part of the first wave of deliveries to countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.
- By mid-February 2021, over 37 000 vaccine doses of the Pfizer vaccine will reach the occupied Palestinian territory and almost 94 000 doses will reach Tunisia for the most at-risk and vulnerable people living in these countries.
- 20 countries in the Region are awaiting an additional estimated 46 to 56 million doses of AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine doses via COVAX Facility during the first half of this year.

REGIONAL RESPONSE HIGHLIGHTS

- **Health Information Management and Surveillance:**
 - Shared the modelling slide pack on the impact of schools re-opening with the WHO Country Office and the Ministry of Health in Lebanon.
 - Installed Go.data on the Supreme Council of Universities' Server in Egypt for the health care workers case-control study.
 - Conducted Q&A session with 16 IT officers from WHO country offices was organized to update users on the new features of Activity Info.
- **Health Operations and Technical Expertise:**
 - Provided remote support to Bahrain to review testing protocol and results interpretation using the "L00847-ccPASS SARS CoV 2 neutralizing Ab detection kit from Genescript" to determine vaccine efficacy
 - Trained 80 infection prevention and control focal points from 15 universities in Egypt on the case-control study tools to explore health care worker infections.
 - Somalia field mission currently underway to build capacity of ministries of health in Somalia for effective management of critical care units in the context of COVID-19.
- **Essential Health Services and Systems:**
 - *Mental Health and Psychosocial Support:* Launch of Psychological First Aid (PFA) online course with the WHO Regional Office for Africa (AFRO) and Public Health England.
 - *Nutrition:* Developing regional advocacy guide for people living with noncommunicable diseases and for elderly people.
 - *Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH):* Documenting mitigation strategies used to ensure continuity of essential RMNCAH services in a two-day workshop in Pakistan, Sudan and Yemen.
- **Partnership and Coordination:**
 - Support to countries by WHO, UNICEF and IFRC to ensure delivery of COVID-19 vaccines and enhance vaccine acceptance by communities.
- **Operations Support and Logistics:**
 - Completed 17 cold-chain shipments of Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assays (ELISA) kits to support the Unity Studies across 4 WHO Regions valued at more than USD 400,000.
 - Delivered over USD 2.6 million in medical supplies through multiple charter flights to Aden and Sana'a, Yemen
 - Completed 29 shipments of medical supplies including personal protective equipment (PPE), Biomedical, and Diagnostics supplies.
 - On 14 February, the operation surpassed the total number of requests received in all of 2019 (92) and is averaging more per month than during 2020.
- **International Health Regulations and Social Measures:**
 - Over 120 Public Health Emergency Operation Centre staff trained on Incident Management Systems in Sudan.
 - Launched the social listening and community feedback project to assess current national and regional practices, conduct online trainings for country offices and national counterparts, and develop a model approach and Regional roadmap to respond to community feedback.
 - Ongoing discussion to support the development of a Regional Social Listening and Community Feedback platform managed by a Regional Youth Taskforce.
 - Collaboration with WHO Regional Office and the Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network (EMPHNET) to strengthen community health worker and volunteer capacity for Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) on contact tracing in the Region.
 - Cross border collaboration continues with the WHO Regional Office for Europe (EURO) for Afghanistan and neighboring countries.

- **Research and Knowledge Management:**

- Shared recent updates with Health Information System (HIS) and mortality focal points on ICD-10 coding of COVID-19 diagnosis, medical history, vaccination and interventions.
- Training mortality & surveillance teams in Syria on registration of weekly data for causes and COVID-19 deaths.
- Working with Tunisia, Lebanon, and Syria on the next round of national sero-epidemiological surveys.
- Sero-survey data from Aden, Yemen has been received and is being analyzed by WHO.
- A research plan has started to evaluate use of off-label drugs for COVID-19 management in countries.

COUNTRY SITUATION HIGHLIGHTS

Lebanon

- WHO works closely with the Ministry of Health provide support with delivery of health supplies and equipment, and recommendations for COVID-19 response and technical expertise.
- WHO and the Ministry of Health have trained and provided registered nurses for 19 isolation community centers.
- WHO is developing Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials to increase community awareness and correct misconceptions on COVID-19.
- WHO provided Intervention, Prevention and Control (IPC) preparedness and supported response training package for health workers in Intensive care units (ICUs) under the twinning project that brings together public and private hospitals.

Syria

- WHO and the Ministry of Health launched the first of 16 national workshops on COVID-19 surveillance, aiming to reach 400 health workers in educational settings across the country to enhance health workers' skills on early detection, as well as reduce infection among school children and academic staff.
- In coordination with UNICEF, WHO supported the government in developing the national vaccine deployment plan.
- To enhance the design of the work plan for COVID-19 serological research, WHO in collaboration with the Ministry of Health launched a workshop for health professionals on COVID-19 serological epidemiological survey.
- Recently, WHO conducted five capacity-building activities under the online modality covering Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP) and basic psycho-social skills for COVID-19 responders.

CHALLENGES

- Stigmatization of people and countries in reporting new variants.
- Countries need to revise national plans and testing strategies and link them to monitoring framework with a close eye on variants.
- Lack of adequate information shared by some countries, absence of genome sequencing capacity, and challenges regarding surveillance and detection.
- Need to increase demand for rapid antigens testing.
- Communities need to be more engaged in public health policies and measures related to travel, gatherings, home testing and treatment.

Regional COVID-19 [website](#)

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