

UNHCR Regional Bureau for Middle East and North Africa

COVID-19 Emergency Response Update #8

17 June 2020

 Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Western Sahara, Yemen, and Turkey¹

Key Figures


20

out of 20 UNHCR countries / operations are reporting COVID-19 cases in the region


16 million

2020 planning figure for people of concern in the Middle East and North Africa


21

 COVID-19 cases reported among persons of concern in MENA²

Regional Developments

Operational Context

Across the region, mobility restrictions and preventative measures have been relaxed in many countries. However, in **Iraq** and **Mauritania**, a notable increase in the rate of confirmed COVID-19 infections has been observed. The number of confirmed cases in Iraq doubled over the period of a week in early June, and is since averaging at around 1,100 new positive cases per day. Over in Mauritania, similar rates of infection emerged in early June, although at a much lesser scale.

In **Iraq**, a total of 13 COVID-19 cases have been detected among refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, out of whom one has recovered and one has sadly passed away. UNHCR is in contact with the Directorate of Health of the affected areas and is monitoring the situation closely. All individuals have received assistance from UNHCR and the respective authorities, and contact tracing and testing have been conducted. In addition, Camp Coordination and Camp Management COVID-19 preparedness and response plans have been activated and implemented in all affected camps.

Country	Confirmed Cases	Country	Confirmed Cases
Algeria	11,147	Morocco	8,885
Bahrain	19,013	Oman	24,524
Egypt	46,289	Qatar	80,876
Israel	19,121	Saudi Arabia	132,048
Iraq	21,315	Syrian Arab Republic	177
Jordan	979	Tunisia	1,110
Kuwait	36,431	Turkey	179,831
Libya	467	United Arab Emirates	42,636
Lebanon	1,464	Western Sahara	---
Mauritania	1,887	Yemen	848

Table: The number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 across MENA (WHO, 17 June 2020)

¹ UNHCR Turkey reports to the UNHCR Europe Bureau, although operations in Turkey related to the Syria & Iraq Situations are included in the MENA update

² Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, Israel and Mauritania

³ It includes the additional 2020 financial requirements published in the UNHCR Global COVID-19 Appeal and COVID-19 activities for which UNHCR MENA reprioritized from its regular 2020 budget (still not funded)

Main Lines of Response



Continuing, adapting and delivering protection and assistance to the most vulnerable



Strengthening communication with communities



Prioritizing immediate interventions to prevent infections and supporting access to services and materials



Advocating for the inclusion of refugees, IDPs and other marginalized groups into national public health and other responses, and supporting national systems to deliver assistance



Empowering individuals and families to make the best decisions for themselves, through cash-based assistance

Highlights from the field

The second round of data collection through the [Iraq National Protection Cluster \(NPC\) Remote Protection Monitoring Tool](#) was published, where an additional 1,442 key informant interviews were conducted. Similar to the April/May 2020 data collection, some 67 per cent of respondents reported that the severity of general protection issues affecting IDP communities had either significantly or very significantly increased since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The most common protection risks reported include: restrictions on freedom of movement (70 per cent), psychological trauma, stress and anxiety (42 per cent), lack of civil documentation (29 per cent) and lack of access to health care (22 per cent). For women and girls, psychological trauma, stress and anxiety (68 per cent), lack of specialized services for women (45 per cent), lack of safe spaces and privacy (36 per cent), and violence or abuse within the household (23 per cent) were reported as the most common protection risks. Overall, the perception among camp populations that measures and regulations imposed due to COVID-19 were applied either more strictly or only to IDPs compared to the general population decreased from 24 per cent to 14 per cent when compared to the May data collection results.

As restrictions begin to ease in **Jordan**, UNHCR's operations are gradually scaling up. UNHCR's partner Caritas has been able to reopen its primary healthcare clinics in urban areas across Jordan, including Irbid and Amman. As of early June, refugees have been able to visit clinics to collect medications and for consultations providing they have a pre-arranged appointment. Clinics are following the Government's guidance on a phased return to work, which includes limited staffing and the application of social distancing and other measures. The camps of Zaatar, Azraq and King Abdullah Park remain under tighter mobility restrictions, with movement controls still in place

for refugees and Agencies. UNHCR's field offices inside the camps are slowly increasing staffing levels, to approximately 30 per cent of normal levels, and registration centres are preparing to open at reduced capacity.

In **Lebanon**, the General Security resumed its services for receiving applications for renewal of residencies. Those whose residencies expired between 11 March and 30 June will be exempted from overstay fees and renewed from the date of expiration. Meanwhile, the Syrian Embassy in Lebanon announced that Syrians may obtain any civil status documentation through the Embassy. Meanwhile, as part of the expanded national testing campaign, UNHCR Lebanon is supporting the Ministry of Public Health to conduct testing for COVID-19 (PCR testing) in selected informal settlements and collective shelters hosting refugees. Testing began on 28 May and 75 sites have been reached with more than 1,800 samples have been collected. So far, all test results have been negative.

In **Syria**, at the end of May, the Syrian Cabinet announced that all public sector bodies would resume services as of 1 June, with full adherence to COVID-19 prevention measures. Despite services in UNHCR's 130 community centres being suspended as of 15 March, nearly 3,000 outreach volunteers, including 250 health volunteers have been active in COVID-19 awareness-raising campaigns as well as sterilization and sanitization campaigns of public spaces.

In **Turkey**, UNHCR has been working with its government counterpart, the Directorate General for Migration Management (DGMM), on a COVID-19 emergency cash assistance scheme to provide one-off payments for some of the most vulnerable refugees, who have been adversely affected by COVID-19 and related national preventative measures. On 29 May,

UNHCR started the distribution of cards for the COVID-19 cash assistance, with the first transfers involving some 7,000 families (35,000 individuals) country-wide. The value of the one-off COVID-19 emergency cash assistance scheme of 1,000 Turkish Lira corresponds to the one-off assistance scheme by Turkey to vulnerable citizens. A second round of cash distributions is planned during the second half of June.

Since the start of the COVID-19 situation, UNHCR's cross-border operation for **north-west Syria** has increased, prioritized and expedited trans-shipments and distributions. To date, 77,500 non-food item kits have been delivered; 86 per cent of the total target. For shelter, 24,800 tents have been transhipped; representing 56 per cent of the target.

As fears the COVID-19 pandemic is gaining force in **Yemen**, UNHCR is fundraising to support its COVID-19 response plan. Across the country, the Operation has been procuring personal protective equipment (PPE) or partnering up with displaced communities to produce PPE. In Sana'a, UNHCR will work with 14 refugee and IDP tailors to produce 30,000 face masks. UNHCR will distribute 9,000 of these masks to displaced communities and UNHCR/partner frontline workers. The tailors will be able to sell the remaining masks at a lower price than that of the market, so that they are more affordable to those with lower incomes. At a time when the socio-economic situation is so fragile, the production of facemasks represents an important livelihood opportunity.

UNHCR in **Israel** is continuing its online outreach to strengthen communication between refugee and asylum-seeker parents and municipality officials. In addition, UNHCR's Partner hosted an online panel, composed of Israeli students, graduates, professionals and people of concern, to increase motivation among young persons of concern, offering guidance on opportunities for further studies and work in Israel.

In **Libya**, UNHCR continues to support the national health system in its COVID-19 response. Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis in March, UNHCR has provided six ambulances, three generators, six prefabricated containers, one hospital tent, as well as several other tents for triage of cases. Furthermore, UNHCR has distributed some 5,140 blankets and over 1,700 mattresses to health facilities as well as 11,900 soap bars and 7,370 hygiene kits to displaced persons in need. In recognition of the severe socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the effects of ongoing conflict, [UNHCR and the World Food Programme have launched a joint initiative](#) to reach up to 10,000 food insecure refugees and asylum-seekers with emergency food this year. This innovative partnership will

also go beyond emergency food support, with the WFP-led Emergency Telecommunications Sector providing connectivity services to the UNHCR Community Day Centre in Tripoli to help refugees connect to their loved ones and communities.

In **Mauritania**, the general food distribution for May and June took place for refugees in Mbera Camp in early June, in coordination with WFP and partners. A full-scale distribution was provided to the most vulnerable groups of refugees. On an exceptional basis, a partial food package was also provided to less vulnerable refugee groups who have suffered the impacts of COVID-19, due to closure of the weekly camp market, general price escalations and overall economic downturn.

As part of ongoing remote protection activities, over 1,450 cases have been addressed through UNHCR's protection hotlines in **Morocco** since the start of the COVID-19 crisis. These have included protection interviews, counselling and psychosocial counselling among others. In **Egypt**, call attendants have responded to over 26,600 calls from refugees and asylum-seekers, who have expressed concern about their socio-economic circumstances due to loss of income as a direct result of restrictions related to COVID-19 preventative measures. In **Algeria**, cash assistance has been a lifeline for many vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers who have suffered the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. Since end March, UNHCR has provided cash assistance to 550 people of concern, either through home delivery or mobile distribution teams.



*Algeria - Sahrawi refugees in protective gear carry out cleaning and disinfection at Laayoune camp in Algeria, with support from UNHCR and Triangle Génération Humanitaire.
Photo by UNHCR / Houari Sid Ahmed*

Global Financial Requirements

UNHCR's [revised prioritized requirements to support the COVID-19 preparedness and response](#) in situation of forced displacement, including those for UNHCR MENA, has increased from USD 255 million to USD 745 million. **So far, a total of USD 252 million (34 per cent) has been contributed or pledged to the UNHCR Global Appeal out of USD 745 million required.**

MENA Financial Information

Earmarked contributions for the Coronavirus Emergency Situation in MENA amount to some USD 41 million, including:

[United States of America 22.6M](#) | [Japan 9M](#) | [CERF 2.4M](#) | [United Nations Foundation 2M](#) | [Austria 1.8M](#) | [Qatar Charity 1.5M](#)

Special thanks to the major donors of softly earmarked contributions and pledges at the global level to the Coronavirus Emergency Situation:

[Germany 40M](#) | [United Kingdom 25M](#) | [Denmark 15M](#) | [United States of America 8M](#) | [Canada 6.4M](#) | [United Nations Foundation 4.8M](#) | [Ireland 3.3M](#) | [Sweden 3M](#) | [Sony Corporation 2.9M](#) | [Norway 1.4M](#) | [Private donors in the UK 1.2M](#) | [USA for UNHCR 1M](#)

Special thanks to the major donors of unearmarked contributions to UNHCR's 2020 programme:

[Sweden 76.4M](#) | [Norway 41.4M](#) | [Netherlands 36.1M](#) | [Denmark 34.6M](#) | [Private donors Spain 33.1M](#) | [United Kingdom 31.7M](#) | [Germany 25.9M](#) | [Private donors Republic of Korea 17.3M](#) | [Switzerland 16.4M](#)

Contributed without restrictions on its use, unearmarked funding allows UNHCR critical flexibility in how best to reach refugees and other populations of concern who are in the greatest need and at the greatest risk.

Resources:

- [UNHCR MENA Mental Health and Psychosocial Response during the COVID-19 Outbreak \(June 2020\)](#)
- [UNHCR's Coronavirus Emergency Appeal \(Revision\)](#)
- [UNHCR MENA's comprehensive funding needs for the COVID-19 response](#)
- For MENA regional and country reports on COVID-19 response, please visit – [UNHCR Global Focus](#); [UNHCR Operational Portal \(Syria Regional Refugee Response\)](#); and [Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan website](#)
- Support UNHCR's COVID-19 preparedness and response plans: <https://giving.unhcr.org/en/coronavirus/>



Lebanon - "The situation here is terrible for work and studying. It was bad before the coronavirus and now it's gotten worse. We are suffering like most families are."

Thirty-two-year-old Syrian refugee Wafaa at home in Barja, Lebanon.

Photo by UNHCR / Diego Ibarra Sánchez



Jordan - "They marked our house to signal there were Christians living there and gave us three days to leave."

Iraqi refugee Jalal collects 140 dinar (US\$205) in UNHCR cash assistance from an ATM in Amman. Because his colon cancer and diabetes put him in the coronavirus high-risk category, he has been self-isolating at home.

Photo by UNHCR / Mohammad Hawari

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