

UNHCR Jordan COVID-19 response

Increasing restrictions looming as COVID-19 cases are on the rise across the Kingdom

Through February and March so far, COVID-19 cases are spiking across the country, with the significant majority concentrated in Amman. Many hospitals and ICUs treating COVID-19 patients are slowly reaching capacity, while the total case count currently stands at 495,380, with 5,497 deaths. Additional measures have been reintroduced by the Government of Jordan to respond to the continued increase, including Friday lockdowns and extended curfew hours. With newly received batches of COVID-19 vaccines, Jordan has accelerated the vaccination programme, having inoculated some 200,000 people, with over 570,000 people registered on the government platform.

In refugee camps, COVID-19 cases currently stand at a total of 2,482 of which 2,370 (95.5%) have recovered, while 20 persons of concern (PoCs), all of whom had underlying conditions, have passed away because of COVID-19. The number of PoC cases remains below the national average, with 2% of the refugee camp population having tested positive since the onset of the pandemic, compared to 4.8% of the total Jordanian population. It is worth noting that while cases have been increasing across the country since the end of January, this trend has not been reflected in refugee camps.

In focus: Over 1,200 refugees in camps inoculated

As part of Jordan's COVID-19 vaccination program, over 1,200 refugees have received at least the first dose of the vaccine as of 16 March. Vaccinations of refugees residing in camps were originally taking place in local health centres in the respective governorates but have shifted to in-camp vaccination centres in the past month. The [Zaatari vaccination centre](#) opened on 15 February, while the [Azraq one](#) started receiving camp residents as of 15 March. The Ministry of Health (MoH) also has teams visiting the shelters of elderly or disabled refugees, who are unable to go to the vaccination centres, to administer the vaccines.



Refugees wait in the waiting area of Zaatari Vaccination Centre before receiving their COVID-19 vaccine.

To facilitate registration of refugees in urban areas, the government registration platform has been modified to allow refugees to use their UNHCR asylum certificate numbers to register for the vaccine. They then receive their appointment according to the government prioritisation criteria.

While the increase in refugees' vaccination is a significant step in fighting the virus, more sensitization campaigns are taking place to encourage more individuals to register. The focus is mostly on fighting misinformation spreading on social media about potential side effects of the vaccine.

Additionally, from a socio-economic perspective, the pandemic's impact on refugees and their livelihoods remains devastating. While there was indication in early February, with sectors gradually starting to reopen across Jordan, that leave and work permits for camp-based refugees would be issued again, albeit with a shorter duration than prior to the COVID-19 restrictions, this has once again halted. With the increase in cases, permits are once again only issued for emergency cases, hindering refugee access to work opportunities outside the camps, and thus risking to a further drop in household incomes.

UNHCR response: stay, deliver, adapt

In parallel to supporting the COVID-19 vaccination of refugees, UNHCR continues to respond to limit the spread in **camp**s, working closely with the Ministry of Health and the Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate to carry out surveillance and contact tracing exercises, while confirmed cases follow the established quarantine or isolation protocols. In **urban areas**, UNHCR community-based protection teams are following-up on individual cases through phone counselling, to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on urban refugee populations and assess the needs and existing gaps in assistance. In addition to a number of health preventative measures, UNHCR continues its key activities through remote modalities:

- remote [services](#), protection hotlines and newly launched [Help website](#) platform
- support refugee access to [e-learning](#) platforms
- [awareness raising](#) on the COVID-19 vaccination programme
- regular [communications](#) via SMS text, social media and WhatsApp to refugee populations
- upgrade of [quarantine facilities](#) in camps
- health screening [procedures](#)
- PPE provision for frontline workers/refugee

