

UNHCR Jordan COVID-19 response

COVID-19 cases in Jordan double in November, first deaths reported among refugees

The spread of COVID-19 in Jordan continues, with cases more than doubling in the month of November and the number of deaths tripling. The end of November and early December though have seen a bit of stabilisation in numbers, with total cases reaching 250,219 and 3,206 deaths. The government continues efforts to increase the capacity of the health system, by designating additional hospitals, wards, and ICU beds to treat COVID-19 patients, while also investing in building field hospitals to better handle the outbreak. Some restrictions, including Friday lockdowns and extended curfew hours, remain in place.

COVID-19 cases in refugee camps also increased, with a total of 1,360 persons of concern (PoC) having tested positive, of which 1,059 (78%) have recovered. The first deaths -three elderly refugees with underlying medical conditions- were recorded in Zaatari (2) and Azraq (1) in addition to three refugees who passed away in urban areas. While the number of PoC cases has increased, it remains below the national average, with 1.2% of the refugee camp population having tested positive, compared to 2.4% of the total Jordanian population. Aligned with national policy so far, of including refugees in the National Health Response Plan, the government will also include refugees in the national COVID-19 vaccination plan. Additionally, following direct advocacy from UNHCR, MoH will issue a number of temporary licenses to refugee medical professionals to support the national COVID-19 response.

UNHCR response: stay, deliver, adapt

UNHCR continues to respond to limit the spread of COVID-19 in **camps**, working closely with the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate to carry out surveillance and contact tracing exercises, while confirmed cases are being quarantined either in their own shelters or at isolation sites and transferred to hospital as needed as per the established protocol. 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 of those who have tested positive and have never received any form of cash assistance. In addition to a number of health preventative measures, UNHCR continues its key activities through remote modalities:

- remote protection hotlines and newly launched [Help website](#) platform
- emergency [cash assistance](#) to over 50,000 newly identified vulnerable families
- support refugee access to [e-learning](#) platforms
- regular [communications](#) via SMS and WhatsApp to refugee populations
- upgrade of [quarantine facilities](#) in camps
- health screening [procedures](#)
- PPE provision for frontline workers/refugees

In focus: Remote resettlement

In March 2020, in compliance with GoJ regulations, UNHCR halted face to face interactions with PoCs and shifted services to remote modalities, with the aim to protect the health of PoCs and UNHCR staff. Resettlement (RST) services too were shifted to remote processing, starting with telephone counselling and information sharing with refugees whose RST travel had been postponed. The RST team worked to identify and pre-screen cases by telephone, using a one-time password as a new integrity measure allowing refugees to verify the identity of UNHCR callers.

UNHCR conducted a refugee feedback survey to inform the development of remote processes which indicated refugee preference for RST interviews on UNHCR premises. As a result, a combination telephone and video interviews were piloted, depending on the complexity of the case and level of previous UNHCR engagement. More complex cases are invited to the premises for a video interview in a confidential interview environment, with verification and integrity measures in place, while a caseworker conducts the interview remotely. [Read more here.](#)



Teams work each day to disinfect and sterilize the interview rooms and waiting areas at the UNHCR branch office in Amman.