

SITUATION IN NUMBERS (As of midnight GMT+2, 27 March 2021)



The first shipment of COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX Facility arrived in Tunisia on 17 March 2021.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- As of 27 March 2021, the Eastern Mediterranean Region has reported 7,401,780 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 157,028 deaths since the start of the pandemic. The total number of tests performed in the Region has reached 112,216,096, with a median cumulative positivity ratio of 10.4% (range from 1.3% to 25.3%). Both cases and deaths are on an upward trajectory, with the numbers of new cases and deaths increasing over the past weeks. The number of reported cases was 13% higher than during the previous two weeks. The number of reported deaths also increased by 17% compared to the two previous weeks. 15 and 14 countries reported a biweekly increase in cases and deaths, respectively. A biweekly decrease in cases was reported by Iran (-7%), Somalia (-3%), and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (-20%).
- On 24 March 2021, Qatar announced the identification of the B.1.351 variant of concern (VOC) bringing the total number of countries reporting SARS-CoV-2 VOCs in the EMR to 15 countries: Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, oPt, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and the UAE.
- In the reporting period, COVID-19 vaccines were delivered to Afghanistan, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, the occupied Palestinian territory, and Tunisia, through the COVAX Facility in the reporting period. To date, 10 countries in total have received vaccines through the COVAX Facility.

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

14 – 27 March 2021

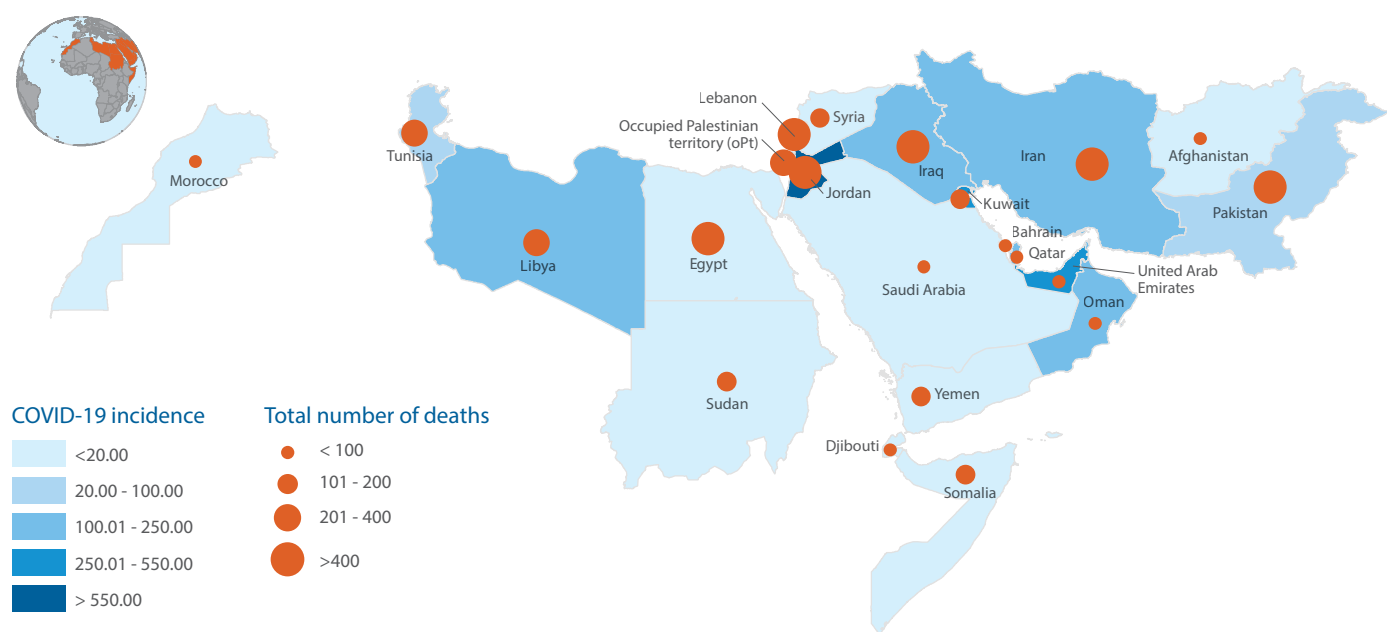


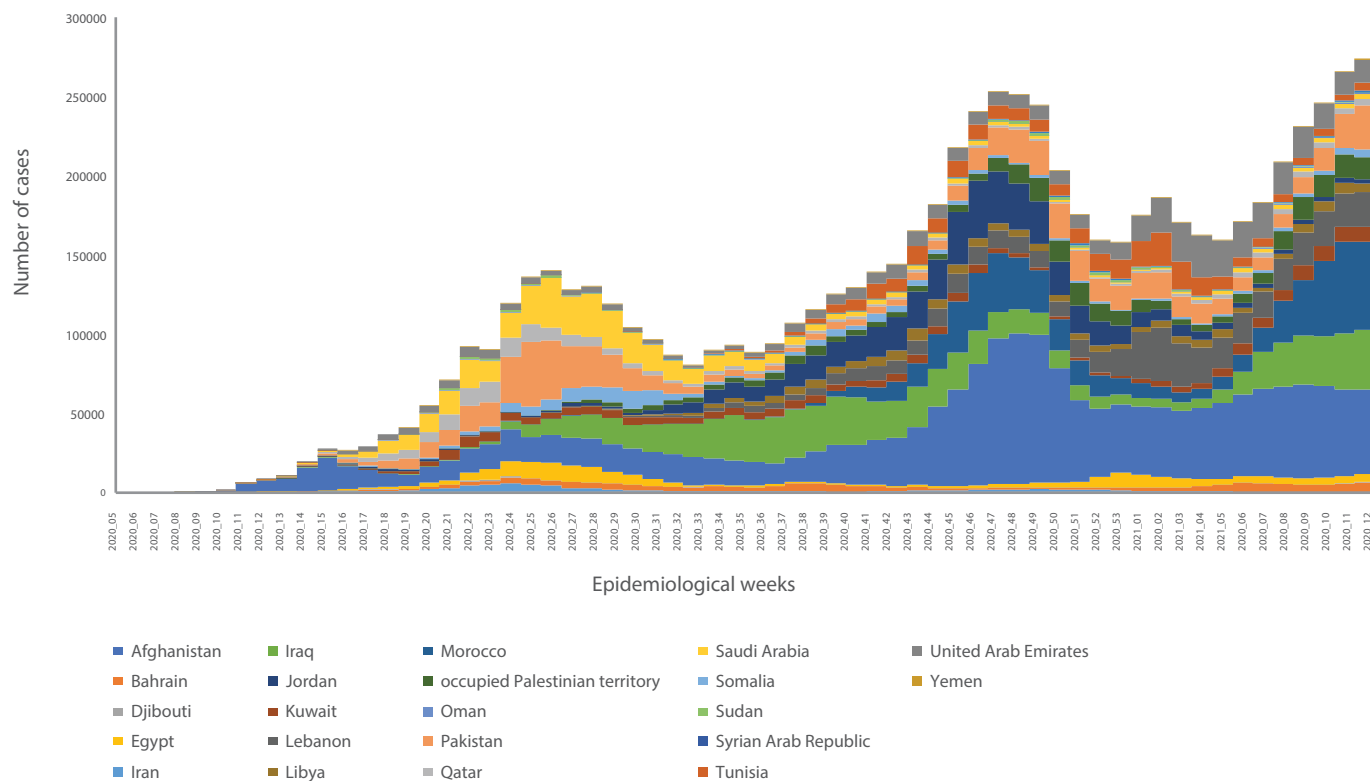
Table 1: Regional Epidemiological Situation

14 – 27 March 2021

Country	New Confirmed Cases	Total Confirmed Cases	New Deaths	Total Deaths	CFR	Total recovered	Total Tests
Afghanistan	337	56,322	13	2,472	4.4%	50,013	342,341
Bahrain	10,414	140,818	32	513	0.4%	132,455	3,514,202
Djibouti	997	7,249	3	66	0.9%	6,250	126,763
Egypt	9,084	199,364	589	11,845	5.9%	152,642	2,515,046
Iran	107,563	1,846,923	1,166	62,308	3.4%	1,585,114	12,550,008
Iraq	72,839	827,157	458	14,177	1.7%	741,115	7,871,105
Jordan	113,133	582,133	1,187	6,472	1.1%	476,090	5,733,071
Kuwait	18,718	227,178	114	1,279	0.6%	211,360	2,022,843
Lebanon	42,976	458,338	724	6,058	1.3%	360,244	3,564,695
Libya	11,856	156,849	232	2,618	1.7%	144,964	865,592
Morocco	5,726	494,358	80	8,798	1.8%	482,084	5,436,000
Occupied Palestinian territory	28,771	263,220	316	2,810	1.1%	235,889	1,515,267
Oman	8,581	153,838	50	1,650	1.1%	140,766	1,077,141
Pakistan	49,391	654,591	707	14,215	2.2%	595,929	10,066,726
Qatar	7,368	177,135	19	284	0.2%	162,555	1,706,760
Saudi Arabia	5,735	387,794	80	6,643	1.7%	376,558	14,915,565
Somalia	1,892	10,838	139	488	4.5%	4,678	131,947
Sudan	766	31,712	107	2,060	6.5%	24,159	354,115
Syrian Arab Republic	1,955	18,356	133	1,227	6.7%	12,257	65,552
Tunisia	8,731	250,565	346	8,735	3.5%	215,365	1,093,326
United Arab Emirates	28,664	453,069	89	1,477	0.3%	436,463	36,732,784
Yemen	1,198	3,973	149	833	21.0%	1,592	15,247
Total	536,695	7,401,780	6,733	157,028	2.1%	6,548,542	112,216,096

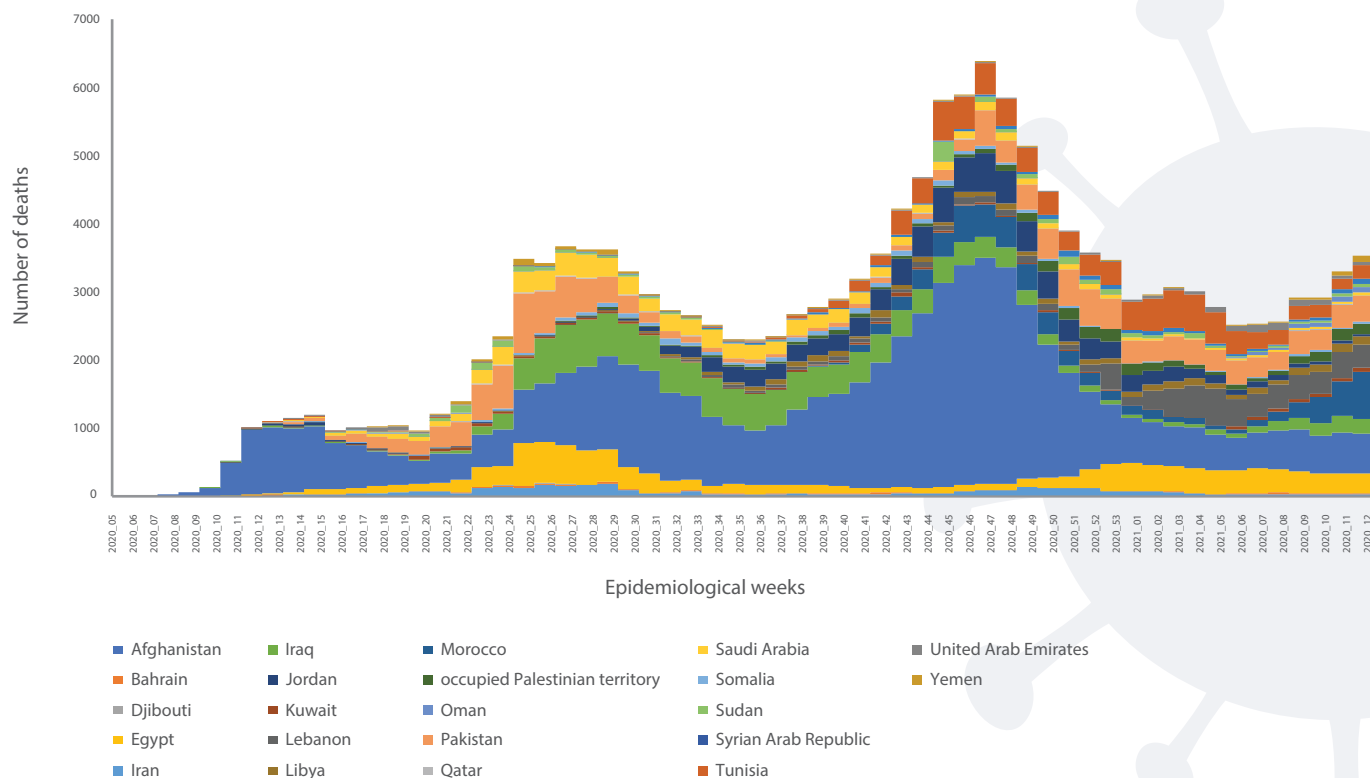
Graph 1: Weekly distribution of COVID-19 cases in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

26 January 2020 – 27 March 2021



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

26 January 2020 – 27 March 2021



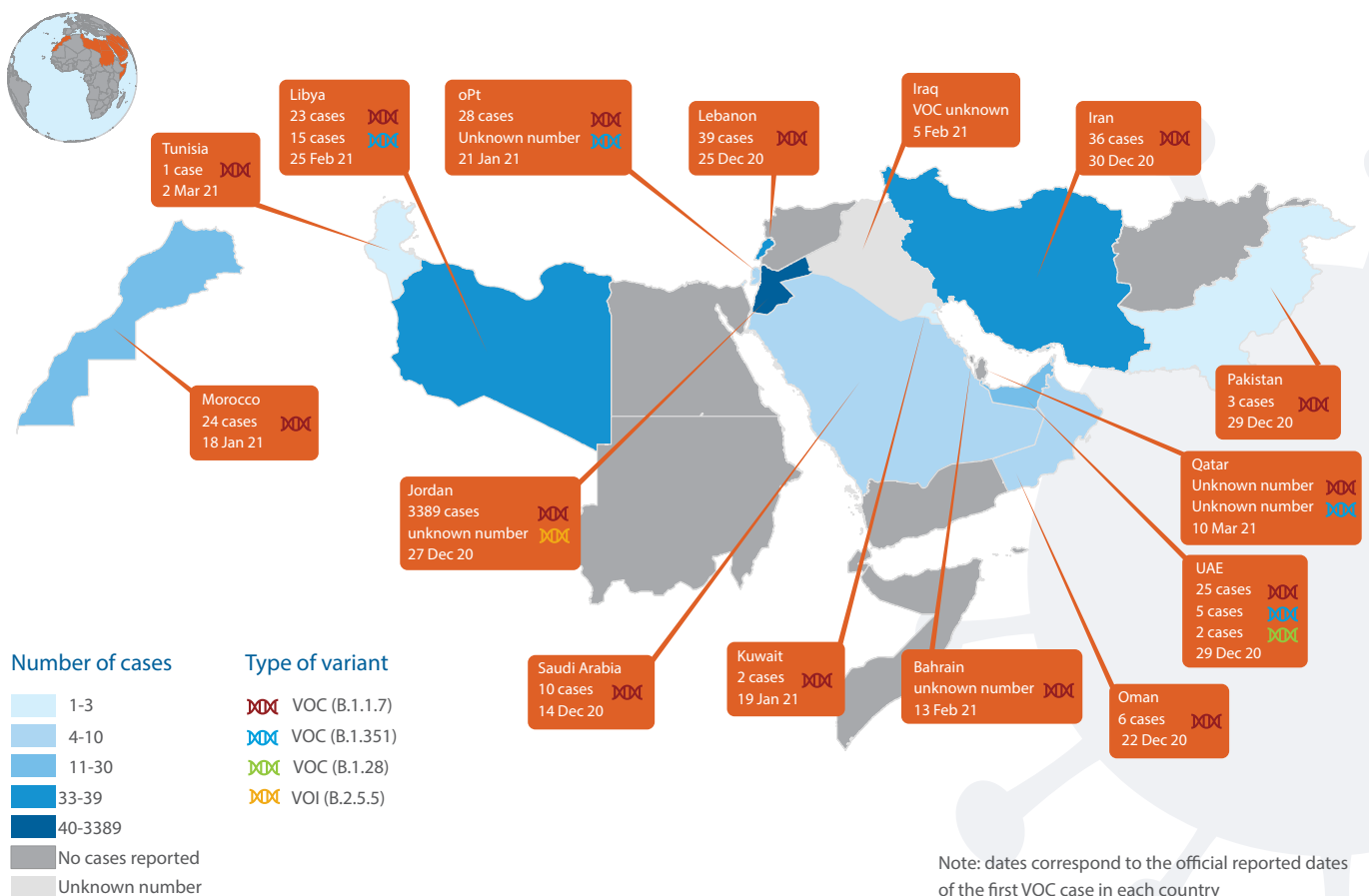
IN FOCUS: COVID-19 vaccines rollout in the Eastern Mediterranean Region through the COVAX Facility

- Overall, 20 countries in the Region have commenced vaccinations, administering over 20 million doses. In Djibouti, Somalia, and Sudan, the COVAX Facility is the only source of COVID-19 vaccines.
- So far, 2.2 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines delivered through the COVAX Facility have arrived in nine countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, namely, Afghanistan, Djibouti, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, the occupied Palestinian territory, Tunisia, Somalia, and Sudan, prioritizing high-risk groups such as frontline healthcare workers and the elderly. More vaccine shipments are scheduled throughout the year to cover 20% of these countries' populations.

IN FOCUS: NEW SARS-COV-2 VARIANTS

- To date, 15 countries have officially reported the detection of variants of concern: Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, oPt, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and the UAE.
- On 24 March, Qatar announced the identification of the B.1.351 variant among arriving travelers.

Map 2: Countries reporting SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern (VOCs) and variants of interest (VOIs) in the Eastern Mediterranean Region as of 24 March 2021



REGIONAL RESPONSE HIGHLIGHTS

Partnership and Coordination

- Planning ongoing for the Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Working Groups biweekly meeting.

Operations Support and Logistics

- Continued to provide medical supplies for the COVID-19 response, as well as for other disease outbreaks such as malaria, meningitis, and Ebola.
- Maintained all aspects of a global health supply chain, including capacity building, innovative technology, rapid response, and emergency preparedness.

Health Operations and Technical Expertise

- Participated in several COVID-19 missions in the Region to improve intensive care unit (ICU) and critical care capacities. During the recent mission to Jordan, reviewed laboratory diagnostics, infection prevention and control (IPC), and clinical management components of the response.

Health Information Management and Surveillance

- Finalized the fifth round of COVID-19 modelling in Jordan.
- Deployed the WHO-developed media scanning tool (Epidemic Intelligence from Open Sources: EIOS) in Sudan and Tunisia to enhance COVID-19 surveillance.
- Created new COVID-19 vaccination dashboards on Sprinklr (a platform that captures legally available, public data on social media and combines all sources) to monitor COVID-19 vaccination and the spread of SARS-CoV-2 variants.
- Created a new set of maps to represent the change between the first and second wave/upsurge of cases in Jordan and Iraq.

International Health Regulations and Social Measures

- Finalized the Hospital Emergency Preparedness and Response for Outbreak Emergencies training package jointly with the Health Systems Development teams.
- Worked collaboratively with WHO Headquarters, the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to establish a “One Health” center in the United Arab Emirates.
- Developed a Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) training package for community health workers on the vaccine rollout and uptake, jointly with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and UNICEF for online and face-to-face delivery.
- Updating the guidance on safe Ramadan practices, with ongoing discussions with mobile companies for shared advertisements on Ramadan safety measures.

Research and Knowledge Management

- Shared reviews on the national protocols for COVID-19 treatment, revealing that many protocols lack important safety and drug interaction messages.
- Developed a detailed plan for countries to demonstrate excess mortality.
- Discussed ways to enhance the national capacities of ten countries for COVID-19 mortality reporting.
- Conducted a national research priority-setting exercise in Pakistan targeting 60 to 70 participants.

Essential Health Services and Systems

- Conducted a situation analysis on adolescent sexual and reproductive health in Afghanistan.
- Completed eight modules of the Regional training on adolescent sexual and reproductive health.
- Provided technical support for early essential newborn care in the occupied Palestinian territory, Pakistan, and Sudan.
- Conducted reproductive and maternal health virtual workshops on the best practices of Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, and the occupied Palestinian territory in maintaining sexual and reproductive health services.
- The Risk Benefit Analysis conducted in six countries showed that the “benefits of maintaining essential health services” far exceeded the “risks associated with additional COVID-19 infections and deaths”.

COVID-19 Vaccine

- Managed communication on the safety signal associated with the AstraZeneca vaccine, shortages of AstraZeneca vaccine doses, and on the reduction of vaccine doses allocated through the COVAX Facility.

COUNTRY SITUATION HIGHLIGHTS

Tunisia

- Tunisia received the first batch of 93,600 doses of Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX Facility. In March and April, Tunisia will receive 412,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines as part of this initiative, and deliveries will continue throughout the year, aiming to vaccinate 20% of the population.
- As part of the COVAX initiative, WHO Tunisia provided the Ministry of Health with a set of 506,400 syringes and 1,100 safety boxes prior to the delivery of the vaccines.

Somalia

- Somalia received 300,000 doses of AstraZeneca vaccines through the COVAX Facility for frontline healthcare workers, the elderly, and people with chronic health conditions.
- In preparation for the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines across the country, WHO collaborated with the federal and state ministries of health and UNICEF to conduct trainings to scale up capacities of technical teams and healthcare workers on COVID-19 vaccination and IPC measures.



Somalia has secured enough vaccines from the COVAX Facility to vaccinate at least 20% of its population in phases.

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

For more information, contact emrgonCoV@who.int