

Baghdad, Iraq, 30 March 2020 – Iraq today reported over 630 cases with 46 deaths since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak in the country on 24 February 2020. This makes Iraq the country with the second highest number of COVID-19-related deaths across WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Region after Islamic Republic of Iran.

The World Health Organization (WHO) expects a spike in the number of infected individuals within the coming 10 days due to an increase in laboratory testing capacity. Three laboratories became operational for COVID-19 testing in Najaf, Basrah, and Baghdad Medical City in Baghdad. This has increased the number of tests to more than 4500 a day compared to a maximum of 100 per day a few weeks ago.

The Federal and Kurdistan region Ministries of Health, WHO and other partners are working together to disseminate facts and preventive measures against the disease, as recommended by WHO.

“WHO is in constant communication with the Federal Ministry of Health and regularly shares information, guidelines, recommendations, protocols and risk communication materials,” said Dr Adham Ismail, WHO Representative in Iraq. “WHO technical teams are putting every effort to support health authorities in their respective efforts,” he added.

As of 30 March, Iraq reported more than 630 confirmed cases, 42 deaths, and 152 patients who had recovered. The first confirmed case was reported in Najaf governorate on 24 February followed by 4 confirmed cases in one family in Kirkuk governorate one day later. Initially, cases in Iraq were traced to recent travel to a pandemic-affected country, such as Islamic Republic of Iran, or some areas in Europe.

WHO continues to monitor the situation very closely and intensify communication and coordination with the Central and Federal Ministries of Health to maintain a technical and logistic support.

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