



WHO delivered protective equipment for COVID-19 to the Djibouti Ministry of Health including goggles, surgical gowns, gloves, face masks and hand sprayers. The distribution of personal protective equipment to health facilities is one of WHO's recommended measures to protect against spread of the virus.

Djibouti City, 18 March 2020 - The Ministry of Health of Djibouti has confirmed the country's first case of COVID-19. Health authorities reported the patient as a Spanish national who arrived on a military flight and was directly put in quarantine with no contact with the Djiboutian population. Other Spanish military passengers are being quarantined with support from the French military base.

"The first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Djibouti reaffirms the message that no country is immune to this disease and that surveillance, prevention and hygiene promotion are the best preparedness actions a country can take. We must continue to ramp up vigilance and promote best practices for prevention and control: wash your hands often with soap or sanitizer; avoid close contact with anyone who has a fever or cough; and when coughing and sneezing cover your mouth and nose with your flexed elbow or tissue," said Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative in Djibouti.

Between 17 and 18 March 2020, 10 suspect cases have been quarantined at Hôpital Bouffard in Djibouti City where they tested negative for COVID-19.

"While identifying cases was to be expected, we are glad that the Ministry of Health and its partners have increased their vigilance and surveillance capacities to deal with imported cases as soon as they arrive in the country," said Dr Zouiten.

“Our challenge now is to fight misinformation and help the Djiboutian population adopt healthy practices to avoid possible spread of the disease as well as to ramp up preparedness by building surveillance, testing, quarantine and health worker capacity.”

COVID-19 preparedness in Djibouti

As distributing personal protective equipment to health facilities is one of the WHO recommended measures to prevent spread of the virus, WHO has delivered protective equipment for COVID-19 to the Ministry of Health including goggles, surgical gowns, gloves, face masks and hand sprayers. WHO has also ordered 500 tests and 80 respirators for COVID-19 preparedness in the country.

WHO has worked closely with the Ministry of Health of Djibouti on a preparedness and response plan to reduce the risk of a coronavirus epidemic and is collaborating with the ministry to continue adapting and updating it according to the evolving situation.

The objectives are to provide intersectoral coordination; strengthen surveillance, laboratory confirmation and reporting; take preventive and precautionary measures; correctly detect and treat suspect, probable and confirmed cases; limit the transmission of COVID-19 in the event of cases or epidemic clusters at country level, in particular by reducing secondary infections; and communicate the necessary information on the risks of the disease to the community as well as fight against misinformation.

Travel advice

The Government has closed commercial flights and stopped trains to prevent importing the disease.

“It is good news that the current confirmed case has not had contact with the population but we must continue to work with the Ministry of Health to increase vigilance to test any suspected cases as well as to set up emergency response teams for contact tracing and increasing surveillance activities,” said Dr Zouiten.

“Preparedness for a first scenario in which there is no transmission is adequate however we are doing everything in our power to cover all possible scenarios including a scenario where local transmission is occurring.”

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Saturday 23rd of August 2025 06:32:50 AM