



22 June 2021 – What human invention has caused more deaths than World War I or the Spanish flu, both among the worst killers of all time? It's the modern road transport system. Since the automobile came into being at the end of the 19th Century, more than 50 million people have died on the world's roads.

According to the World Health Organization, the road traffic fatality rate in the Eastern Mediterranean Region has decreased from 21.3 to 19.9 per 100 000 population between 2010 and 2013. Yet with this rate, the Region still ranks second in terms of the highest road traffic fatality rates in the world, after the WHO African Region (26.6 per 100 000 population).

Statistics have shown that disobedience of traffic rules have directly resulted into fatalities, and as we embark on “building back better” from the COVID-19 pandemic, the time has come to return urban streets to people and emphasize the importance of adopting essential safety measures while driving.

In Oman, data on traffic-related incidents reflects an improving trend, with a 55% decrease in crash fatalities between 2012 and 2019, despite a 70% increase in the total number of registered vehicles and a 71% increase in licensed drivers in the same time-span. However, excessive speeding was found to be a main cause of more than 50% of fatal crashes in Oman.

This year, the 6th United Nations Global Road Safety Week with its “*Streets for life: why #love30?*” calls on policy-makers to act for low-speed streets worldwide, limiting speeds to 30 km/h (20 mph) where people walk, live and play and to be the norm for cities, towns and villages worldwide.

The *WHO Global Plan for the new Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021–2030* reflects the intrinsic value of managing speed.

Dr Jean Yaacoub Jabbour, WHO Representative to Oman noted the various means through which roads could be made safer for both drivers and pedestrians, including setting and enforcing 30 km/h speed limits in cities, modifying roads with features that calm traffic, and raising awareness among the public of the danger of speeding. “Road Safety Week gives us an opportunity to collectively work towards having safe roads, knowing that each crash is a tragedy, each death, and serious injury is preventable”.

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