

5 March 2020, Damascus - The World Health Organization (WHO) categorically refutes the misinformation circulating on social media that has been falsely accredited to WHO related to COVID-19 in Syria.

As per a statement by the Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean published on Tuesday 3 March, 2020, "1682 cases of Covid-19 disease in 14 countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, as of 2 March, at 6 pm local time in the city of Cairo, including 66 reported deaths in Islamic Republic of Iran." Syria is not among these 14 countries.

WHO is working closely with the Syrian Ministry of Health with the aim of enhancing health preparedness and response to COVID-19, in accordance with the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005). Under this agreement, any cases of COVID-19 or other communicable diseases are directly reported to WHO.

WHO is working with the Ministry of Health on a daily basis on ensuring preparedness measures for the disease. WHO continues to provide technical guidance and support to the Ministry of Health. Public health laboratories in the Ministry of Health have been provided with laboratory kits sufficient to test a thousand people to diagnose potential COVID-19 cases.

WHO is also working with the Ministry on raising public health awareness and encouraging healthy hygiene practices such as washing hands with water and soap frequently, following correct coughing and sneezing protocols, and avoiding crowded places. All these are key to protecting people from COVID-19.

According to WHO's Director General, "our first enemy is not the virus; it is rather fear, and rumours about it." WHO recommends that only reliable sources of information such as WHO's website and Ministry of Health platforms be used when verifying any information related to COVID-19.

[Statement by the Regional Director Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari on COVID-19 in the Eastern Mediterranean Region](#)

3 March 2020

[More information and guidance from WHO regarding the current outbreak of novel coronavirus](#)

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