

This report was produced by OCHA Iraq in collaboration with humanitarian partners.

KEY MESSAGES

- 382 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Iraq as of 26 March 2020
- 36 fatalities confirmed due to COVID-19 as of 26 March 2020
- 105 patients who have recovered from the virus
- Curfews extended
- Humanitarian actors develop guidance for COVID-19 preparedness in IDP camps
- Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19 launched

SITUATION OVERVIEW

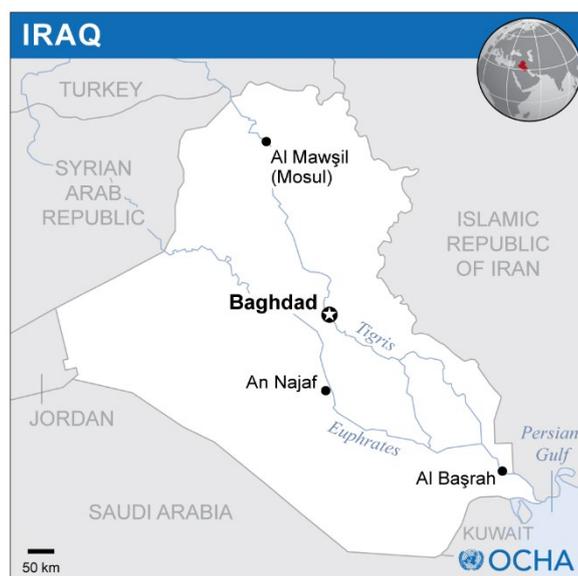
As of 26 March 2020, the Iraqi Ministry of Health has confirmed 382 cases of COVID-19 in Iraq; 36 fatalities; and 105 patients who have recovered from the virus. Approximately one quarter of the cases are in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), the remainder are in federal Iraq. According to the World Health Organization, the patient caseload is approximately 44 per cent female and 56 per cent male, and positive cases are found in all age groups, from children to the elderly, with a heavier concentration in adults who are middle-aged and older.

The Government of Iraq has extended curfews and movement restrictions in federal Iraq until 11-April. At the time of writing, no official announcement had yet been made by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), but it is expected to follow suit. There are no additional updates at the time of writing on the closures of Iraq's airports (currently closed until 28-March), but at present, all major airlines have suspended normal passenger operations to Iraq.

The Minister of Health has called upon Iraqi citizens to be proactive in coming forward if they have flu-like symptoms, stating that the majority of fatalities have occurred due to delays in seeking medical attention. A new lab has opened in Baghdad for the testing of COVID-19, adding to the country's medical capacity. UNICEF, the global cluster lead agency for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), is helping to procure personal protective equipment from the local and international market for health partners in Iraq.

On 25-March, the United Nations launched a US\$2 billion coordinated global humanitarian response plan (HRP) to fight COVID-19 in some of the world's most vulnerable countries, including Iraq. The COVID-19 Global HRP is a joint effort by members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)—including the UN, other international organizations and NGOs with a humanitarian mandate—to analyze and respond to the direct public health needs and indirect immediate humanitarian consequences of the pandemic. It aggregates relevant COVID-19 appeals and inputs from WFP, WHO, IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF and NGOs, and it complements other plans developed by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The Global HRP is designed around three strategic priorities: (1) contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and decrease morbidity and mortality; (2) decrease the deterioration of human assets and rights, social cohesion and livelihoods; and (3) protect, assist and advocate for refugees, IDPs, migrants and host communities particularly vulnerable to the pandemic. The plan will support public information campaigns; the delivery of essential laboratory equipment and medical supplies; the installation of handwashing stations in camps and settlements; and the establishment of airbridges and hubs across Africa, Asia and Latin America to move humanitarian workers and supplies to where they are needed most.

Humanitarian clusters in Iraq have developed initial consolidated guidance for COVID-19 preparedness and response planning for camps in Iraq, led by the CCCM Cluster, with inputs from Health, WASH, Protection, Child-Protection, GBV, Shelter/NFI and the Communication with Communities/Accountability to Affected Populations actors. The guidance has been widely disseminated.



Map Sources: ESRI, UNCS.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Map created in Sep 2013.

IMPACT ON HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS

Humanitarian actors continue to report that curfews and movement restrictions are impacting the delivery of assistance in Iraq—including programming related to COVID-19 prevention, preparedness and response—although the impact varies between governorates.

NCCI, the NGO coordinating body in Iraq, reports that exemptions issued by the KRG Ministry of Interior allow NGOs to operate across KRI, but that NGOs are currently not able to transport COVID-19 response supplies from KRI into federal Iraq. OCHA is continuing to advocate on this issue. In a recent survey conducted by NCCI, 93 per cent of respondents said that their operations were affected by COVID-related restrictions on movement; 39 per cent said they had suspended activities; 70 per cent cited the inability to reach out-of-camp beneficiaries as an obstacle to implementing activities, and 63 per cent indicated that their activities have been impacted by a reduction in the ability of national staff to move freely.

In Duhok governorate, 14 out of 25 partners contacted by OCHA reported that they continue to carry out critical humanitarian activities, mainly related to health, protection, food services and COVID-19 prevention. The remaining partners have put on hold activities that they do not consider critical. Some NGOs have requested and have been granted access authorization for movements within Duhok; however, other NGOs reported no challenges in terms of access.

In Sulaymaniyah governorate, the governorate-level branch of the Ministry of Migration and Development (MOMD) has started distributing food and hygiene kits to IDPs in camps, starting with Arbat IDP camp, with plans to reach all camps by the end of the week. Each family will receive two food packs and two hygiene kits. The MOMD food distribution is in response to a lockdown-related pause in cash distributions due to the bank closures.

WFP reports that cash-based food assistance distributions continue, but at a slower pace, in order to accommodate health protocols and Government regulations. A contingency plan has been developed in case people in IDP camps are unable to access market locations to purchase food, and logistics are being arranged for a contingency stock of one-month of Family Food Rations (FFRs) for 310,000 people plus Immediate Response Rations (IRRs) for 60,000 people.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON COVID-19

General information:

- <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

World Health Organization Situation Reports:

- <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/>

Global dashboard tracking COVID-19 cases:

- <https://who.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6>

Guidance on Camp-Level Preparedness and Response Planning in Iraq:

- <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/74766.pdf>

IASC Page on COVID COVID-19 Outbreak Readiness and Response

- <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/covid-19-outbreak-readiness-and-response>

Link to the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19:

- <https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/Global-Humanitarian-Response-Plan-COVID-19.pdf>