

Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker Regional report – Middle East & North Africa



This report summarises the major changes in the region for the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker's [Containment and Health Index](#), providing a high level overview of shifts in government policies.

OxCGRT is created by the Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford. For more information visit www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/covidtracker.

REGION	Middle East and North Africa
Date range	01 – 31 May, 2021
Reported by	Simon Powell and Annamarie Candler

Brief summary of major changes:

Students returned to education either full-time or in combined online/in-person modes in **Bahrain**, **Iran**, and **Lebanon**, while **Syria** brought forward examinations to late April to end the school year a month earlier than originally planned. As part of an extensive nationwide lockdown implemented between 9 and 16 May, **Tunisia** closed all educational institutions for a week, which also saw the closure of all non-essential businesses, nightly curfews and restrictions on day-time movements, a ban on regional travel, and mandatory quarantine for all travelers arriving from overseas.

Workplaces began to re-open in **Algeria**, **Jordan**, **Kuwait**, **Malta**, and **Qatar**, although **Oman** implemented night-time closures for shops from 13 May. Public events and gatherings generally remain tightly controlled, but **Bahrain** allows entry to a variety of venues and events for people who have been fully vaccinated, **Qatar** permits only vaccinated people to attend outdoor sports events, and **Israel** continues to implement its Green Pass program allowing holders of the pass to attend outdoor events.

Curfew restrictions remain in force in many countries and regions - **Iran**, **Iraq**, **Jordan**, **Lebanon** and **Tunisia** all implemented night-time curfews at various times during the month, many of which remain in force. Internal travel restrictions in **Algeria** and **Malta** were lifted, and **Tunisia** imposed a temporary ban on inter-city and inter-regional travel between 9 and 14 May. For international travelers, **Algeria** announced that its land borders would remain closed past the planned opening date of June 1, and **Iraq**, **Tunisia** and the **United Arab Emirates** all announced a ban on travelers from certain countries and regions.

The Government of **Israel** is preparing to begin vaccinations for children aged 12 to 15, in **Bahrain** and **Qatar** children aged 12 and over are now eligible for vaccination. The **United Arab Emirates** extended availability to people from the age of 16. **Lebanon** is now vaccinating people aged 40 and over, and in an "AstraZeneca Marathon" in late May made vaccines available to anyone aged between 30 and 65 without appointment. **Syria** began its vaccination campaign with Sinopharm and AstraZeneca vaccines, **Jordan** began a campaign for refugees, and **Yemen** is encouraging vaccination for all.

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Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker Regional report – Middle East & North Africa

C1: School Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bahrain: In person classes are now permitted in private schools and kindergartens. If cases of COVID-19 are detected, schools may adopt remote learning instead. • Iran: Schools in Iran partially reopened this month. In some districts, university exams are being conducted in person. No practical classes are permitted across the country. • Lebanon: Pupils returned to classes in Lebanon on April 21 under a blended learning approach, with a mix of in-person and online learning. • Syria: Following 3 April's announcement of school closures for kindergarten through Grade 8 students in Government-controlled areas of Syria, final examinations for older students were brought forward a month and began on 24 April in order that the school year could be ended a month earlier than normal. • Tunisia: All educational institutions were closed during the national lockdown implemented from 9 – 16 May, with schools re-opening on 17 May and Universities from 19 May.
C2: Workplace Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Algeria: Most businesses such as bakeries, markets and government offices have reopened with safety protocols in place. • Jordan: Some workplaces permitted to reopen from 15 May. • Kuwait: From 23 May, restaurants and cafes are permitted to reopen seating areas, with adherence to health regulations. Commercial businesses are now permitted to operate between 5:00 am and 8:00 pm. • Lebanon: A loosening of restrictions as the Ministry of Health adjusted guidelines allowing cinemas and theaters to operate until 11pm at 50% capacity, and indoor and outdoor restaurants to open until 11pm and 12.30 am respectively as of 21 May. • Malta: Restrictions on business receiving the public began to relax with the re-opening of non-essential shops allowed from 26 April. Restaurants began welcoming customers back from 10 May, albeit with restricted hours. Other sectors including swimming pools, gyms, and bars remain closed. • Oman: Shops and commercial activities were ordered to close between the hours of 8pm and 4am from 13 May. • Qatar: The Qatari government began the first of four phased re-openings on 28 May, maintaining requirements for offices to operate at 50% capacity but increasing allowed meeting size to 15 vaccinated people. Restaurants, cafes, shopping centers, gyms, parks and cultural venues can open at 30% capacity. • Tunisia: All non-essential businesses were closed during the national lockdown implemented from 9 – 16 May, with some restrictions remaining (e.g., limitations on capacity in restaurants and cafes) following re-opening on 17 May.
C3: Cancel Public Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Algeria: Large events such as marriages or funerals prohibited in districts with a curfew. • Bahrain: From 18 May, use of or attendance at indoor dining, gyms, swimming pools, cinemas, and at indoor and outdoor sporting events, events, exhibitions, and conferences, indoor and outdoor entertainment and game centers, and spas is permitted for people who have been fully vaccinated (14 days after the second dose). • Iran: Outdoor rallies in preparation of the upcoming election are permitted with safety protocols in place.

Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker Regional report – Middle East & North Africa



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GOVERNMENT
RESPONSE TRACKER**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Israel: Limitations on the number of people attending sporting events were removed on 5 May for holders of the Green Pass, a document available to those who are vaccinated or who have recovered from Covid-19. Outdoor events can be held without Green Pass requirements for a maximum of 500 people. • Oman: Restrictions on public Ramadan gatherings such as group Iftars were enforced, along with a suspension of entertainment, sports and cultural activities. These restrictions remained in place after the end of Ramadan. • Qatar: The Qatari government began the first of four phased re-openings on 28 May, allowing the resumption of professional sports events with no spectators in indoor venues, and a limit of 30% capacity and only vaccinated spectators at outdoor venues. • United Arab Emirates: Dubai lifted many restrictions on 17 May, including restrictions on live entertainment and hotel occupancy and permitted concerts for vaccinated people. Other Emirates continue to ban or limit public events.
C4: Restrictions on Gatherings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bahrain: From 21 May until 3 June, all private gatherings are limited to 6 people. • Iraq: From 10 May, tourist and public gatherings were banned. • Lebanon: The ban on gatherings such as weddings, conferences and exhibitions held in open spaces was lifted on 21 May, with a maximum of 100 people or 50% of venue capacity permitted to attend.
C5: Close Public Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Algeria: Public transport is now operating in all 58 of the nation's provinces. Taxis and app-based ride-sharing services have also begun running again, albeit under certain capacity limitations. • Egypt: Restrictions on public transportation operating between midnight and 4:00 am were in place throughout May. • Israel: On 6 May, the capacity limitations in taxis and seating requirements on public transportation were lifted.
C6: Stay at Home requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iran: Curfew hours were amended to 10 pm to 5 am through 20 May. • Iraq: With a full curfew on Fridays and Saturdays and a modified curfew from 8pm through 5am during the rest of the week already in place, the Government of Iraq imposed further restrictions with a full curfew implemented between 12 – 22 May. • Jordan: From 13 May, a curfew is in place from 10 pm until 6 am for businesses and 11 pm until 6 am for citizens. The comprehensive Friday curfew previously in place ended on 30 April. • Kuwait: The curfew was lifted at 1:00 am on the first night of Eid. • Lebanon: Originally scheduled to end at the end of Ramadan, the national curfew between 9.30 pm and 5:00 am remains in place, with complete 24-hour curfews implemented between 1 – 4 May and again from 13 – 15 May. • Oman: The nightly curfew between 7pm and 6am imposed in March, was lifted on May 13, although authorities continue to recommend that people stay at home where possible. Limitations on day-time movements were lifted on 17 May, and the night curfew adjusted to 10pm to 5am. • Tunisia: The existing night-time curfew between 7pm and 5am was augmented with a ban on leaving home except for emergencies, vaccination appointments and grocery shopping during the

Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker Regional report – Middle East & North Africa



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GOVERNMENT
RESPONSE TRACKER

	national lockdown between 9 – 16 May.
C7: Restrictions on Internal movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Algeria: Travel between provinces is now permitted but public transportation remains limited. • Iran: From 8 May until 11 May, travel to cities was prohibited. • Malta: Restrictions on travel to Gozo that were imposed in March were lifted on 10 May. • Oman: The ban on movement of people and vehicles between 9pm and 4am ended on 15 May. • Tunisia: Inter-city and inter-governate travel were banned during the national lockdown from 9 May, and lifted in advance of other restrictions on 14 May.
C8: International Travel Controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Algeria: It was announced this month that land borders will not reopen as scheduled for 1 June. • Bahrain: Passengers who are fully vaccinated are no longer required to complete a PCR test on arrival. • Iraq: Banned entry to travelers from Pakistan and India by air or land from late May. • Israel: New guidelines for self-isolation were developed for incoming travelers this month. Additionally, from 31 May, Russia and Argentina have been added to the list of countries from which entry is prohibited from. Ukraine, Ethiopia, Brazil, South Africa, India, Mexico and Turkey remain on the list. • Kuwait: From 22 May, Kuwaiti citizens, first-degree relatives of Kuwaiti citizens, and domestic employees traveling with them are not permitted to travel from Kuwait unless they are fully vaccinated. • Tunisia: From 3 May, all arriving passengers are required to presents results of a negative PCR test on arrival, spend 7 days in mandatory quarantine and a government-designated hotel at their own expense, and complete a new PCR test taken during that quarantine with negative results to leave quarantine. Flights from Australia, Brazil, Denmark, South Africa and the U.K. are suspended. • United Arab Emirates: Barred entry to travelers from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka from 12 May, joining India on the list of countries from which entry is prohibited.
H2: Testing Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No major changes recorded.
H3: Contact Tracing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No major changes recorded
H6: Facial Coverings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No major changes recorded.
H7: Vaccination Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bahrain: Citizens aged 12 to 17 are now eligible for vaccination with permission from a legal guardian. • Egypt: On 30 May, Egypt completed vaccinations for healthcare workers. • Iran: Iran launched an online platform to register for COVID-19 vaccination this month. Healthcare workers, those with comorbidities and those over age 80 are currently eligible for vaccination. • Iraq: The second tranche of AstraZeneca vaccines were delivered under the COVAX initiative on 9 May, allowing continuation of the vaccination campaign underway in Iraq. Limitations of vaccine supply are hampering efforts, but registration for vaccination

Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker Regional report – Middle East & North Africa



OXFORD COVID-19
GOVERNMENT
RESPONSE TRACKER

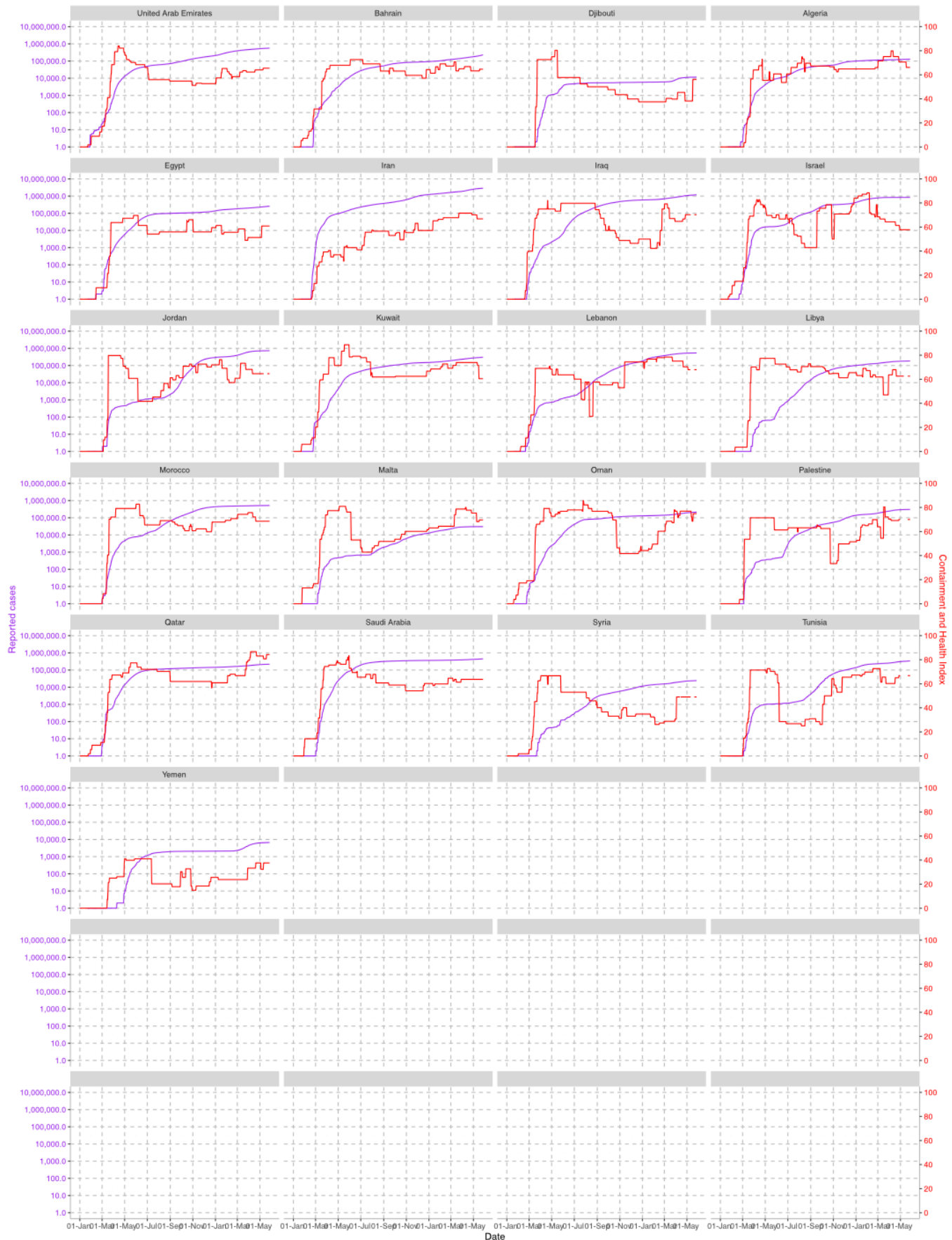
	<p>appointments is available to all.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Israel: The Government of Israel is preparing to begin vaccination for the 12 to 15 age group. Vaccinations for this age group are scheduled to begin in the first week of June. • Jordan: Jordan is now vaccinating refugees. Approximately 1500 refugees were vaccinated on 25 May. The Sinopharm and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines are being administered. • Kuwait: From 9 May, citizens who work at commercial complexes are eligible for vaccination. The Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines are being administered. • Lebanon: Availability of vaccination appointments was extended to people aged over 40 with chronic or incurable disease from 30 May. An "AstraZeneca Marathon" was conducted on 29 May, where people aged between 30 and 65 could be vaccinated at various regional centers without appointment. • Malta: From 17 May, vaccination availability was extended from people aged 50+ to everyone over 16. • Qatar: From 12 May, children aged 12 years and up may register for vaccination with the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. • Syria: The first phase of vaccinations targeting health personnel and aid workers began from 11 May, using Sinopharm vaccines donated by China and AstraZeneca vaccines supplied by the United Nations. • United Arab Emirates: From 21 March, anyone aged 16 or over is eligible for vaccination with the Sinopharm vaccine. • Yemen: Although prioritized for the healthcare workers, the elderly, and those with comorbidities, vaccination is being encouraged for all adults as of 25 May.
H8: Protection of elderly people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No major changes recorded.

Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker Regional report – Middle East & North Africa



OXFORD COVID-19
GOVERNMENT
RESPONSE TRACKER

Cases vs Containment and Health Index:



Source: Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker. More at <https://github.com/OxCGRT/covid-policy-tracker> or bsg.ox.ac.uk/covidtracker

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