

Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker

Regional report - Middle East North Africa



OXFORD COVID-19
GOVERNMENT
RESPONSE TRACKER

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 February - 28 February
Reported by	Annamarie Candler and Simon Powell

Brief summary of major changes:

In some countries in the MENA region, schools remain open under restrictions while in others, classes are being delivered remotely. Gatherings remain prohibited or limited in capacity in most countries and stay at home restrictions remain in place. Daily curfews are in effect in **Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman** and **Palestine**. Travel from 20 countries was banned in **Saudi Arabia** this month and **Iran** has prohibited land entry from **Iraq**.

Israel has implemented an internal COVID-19 system called Green Pass, which allows people who have received 2 doses of vaccine or who have a certificate of recovery from COVID-19 to access venues including hotels, gyms, theatres and other leisure facilities.

There were many updates to vaccination programmes in the MENA region this month. **Iran** began vaccinating healthcare workers in early February and **Israel** began vaccinating all members of the population over 16 years of age. In **Bahrain**, the Johnson and Johnson vaccine was approved and in **Qatar** emergency approval of the Moderna vaccine was issued. In **Palestine**, vaccines are being administered primarily to healthcare workers but also to citizens over 60 years of age and those with chronic conditions as supplies allow.

C1: School Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Algeria: Schools reopened after an academic break on 16 February with precautionary measures in place.• Iran, Islamic Rep.: The Iranian city of Qom closed schools this month after a local outbreak was detected.
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Summaries are created with data from the OxCGRT, uploaded by contributors. For specific references, please see the database www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/covidtracker

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iraq: On 18 February, all in-person classes were cancelled for all students excluding senior medical students until 4 March. • Israel: On 11 February, schools began re-opening based on regional risk rankings. • Jordan: Students in grades kindergarten to third grade as well as twelfth grade students were permitted to attend in-person classes on 7 February. • Libya: Schools reopened this month with precautionary measures in place. • Palestine: It was announced on 27 February that schools in the West Bank would be closed for 12 days excluding high schools. • Qatar: From 3 February, capacity at driving schools was limited to 25%. • Syrian Arab Republic: In North Eastern Syria, some restrictions were lifted on 4 February permitting schools and universities to reopen. • United Arab Emirates: From 14 February, students can return to schools in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, with the option of remote learning for parents who do not want to send their children to school. In Sharjah, school buildings are closed with remote learning until 25 March.
C2: Workplace Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Algeria: Restrictions for hotels, cafes, restaurants and fast-food chains were lifted this month. • Iraq: From 18 February, spas, gyms, swimming pools, cinemas, cafes and malls were closed for two weeks. Wedding halls, funerals and mosques were closed until further notice. • Israel: Some businesses were permitted to reopen on 7 February. • Jordan: The tourist sector, hotels, cafes, restaurants and churches have reopened at limited capacity. • Kuwait: On 7 February, some businesses including health clubs, salons, barber shops and spas were required to close. • Lebanon: From 8 February, grocery stores and pharmacies were permitted to reopen with reduced hours. Restaurants were permitted to reopen for take-away service. • Libya: Restaurants and cafes were permitted to reopen this month. • Morocco: The nationwide curfew between the hours of 21:00 and 06:00 has been extended until 10 March. Restaurants, stores, supermarkets, and other businesses must close by 8:00 PM.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oman: From 12 February, all commercial activities in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate were closed from 19:00 to 06:00 for 14 days, with the exception of fuel stations, health institutions and private pharmacies. Similar restrictions were announced for the rest of the country, to begin on 4 March. • Palestine: On 28 February, a 12-day lockdown of the occupied West Bank went into effect. Schools, universities, non-essential shops must close and Government institutions and other establishments must limit operations to no more than 30% of capacity. • Qatar: From 3 February, workplaces are limited to 80% of staff capacity. • United Arab Emirates: Pubs and bars in Dubai continue to be closed. In Abu Dhabi from 7 February, government and semi-government organizations are limiting staff to 30% of capacity and implementing remote working for all jobs that could be delivered outside the workplace, employees with chronic diseases and weak immunity, and employees older than 60. Weekly PCR tests are compulsory for employees.
C3: Cancel Public Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bahrain: On 11 February, all in-person religious events were suspended for at least two weeks. • Israel: A policy that came into effect on 21 February indicates that events are permitted under capacity restrictions and organiser guidelines for green pass holders only. • Jordan: Public swimming pools and gyms reopened on 1 February. • Oman: On 23 February, extended the closure of all beaches, leisure spaces and public parks until further notice. The Supreme Committee also reiterated the ban on all gatherings in rest-houses, farms, winter camps or elsewhere. • Palestine: Weddings, funerals and crowds are prohibited with financial penalties in place. On 16 February, Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh called on the security authorities to "tighten procedures and intensify penalties for anyone who violates the preventive measures and procedures that were announced in the protocols of the Ministry of Health, which are represented by wearing masks, physical distancing, and preventing the holding of weddings and mourning homes."

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qatar: From 3 February, wedding parties in open or enclosed public spaces are prohibited. • Saudi Arabia: From 4 February, all cinemas, indoor entertainment centers, indoor games venues, indoor restaurants and cafes, gyms and sports centers were closed for the following ten days with the possibility of further extension. • United Arab Emirates: On 2 February, Dubai Tourism has suspended all entertainment permits issued in the emirate, after the authority detected more than 200 violations of safety guidelines and closed down around 20 establishments in three weeks.
C4: Restrictions on Gatherings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iraq: Gatherings prohibited from 18 February until 4 March. • Israel: On 19 February, the number of guests permitted at a gathering was increased to 10 indoors and 20 outdoors. • Kuwait: From 7 February until at least 7 March, social gatherings including weddings, receptions, desert camping, and public and private diwanis are prohibited. • Qatar: From 3 February, wedding parties may take place in private spaces, limited to 10 attendees in enclosed spaces and 20 in open places, with notification to the Ministry of Interior and adherence to precautionary measures. Other types of gathering are limited to 5 people in enclosed spaces, and 15 in open spaces. • Saudi Arabia: From 4 February all events and large gatherings were banned for the next 30 days, with the maximum cap for gatherings reduced to 20 people. • United Arab Emirates: On 7 February, Dubai imposed restriction on gatherings, now prohibited in the capital city. A maximum of 10 people will be allowed to attend marriage ceremonies and family gatherings.
C5: Close Public Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Algeria: Some travel between provinces is now permitted, though public transportation operations are still limited. • Israel: Public transportation capacity was increased from 50% to 75%. • Kuwait: Public transportation capacity was restricted to 30% this month. • Morocco: Public transport is operating, travelers continue to need authorization from local authorities to travel between cities.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Palestine: The ban on transit between the Governorates implemented in January for an initial period of two weeks was extended in February. • Qatar: Continued restriction on bus capacity at 50% and metro and other transport at 30%.
C6: Stay at Home requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iraq: On 18 February, the Government of Iraq implemented a full curfew from Friday through Sunday and a partial curfew from Monday through Thursday. • Israel: Stay at home restrictions lifted in early February but were reinstated for a two day period between 25 February and 27 February. • Lebanon: The curfew in place from January was extended on 8 February until 8 March. • Morocco: The nationwide curfew (21:00 to 06:00) has been extended to 10 March. • Oman: A nightly 19:00-06:00 curfew has been imposed in the Ash Sharqiyah North Governorate from 12 through 26 February. • Palestine: National curfew restrictions every Friday and Saturday, and between 19:00 and 06:00 on other days of the week, were extended in February. Additional restrictions were implemented in the occupied West Bank on 28 February for a period of 12 days.
C7: Restrictions on Internal movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iran, Islamic Rep.: Travel was restricted to and from Khuzestan, Gilan, Mazandaran and Golestan this month. • Iraq: On 25 February, the Council of Ministers announced restrictions on inter-provincial travel until further notice. • Israel: Internal movement was restricted for a two day period between 25 February and 27 February. • Morocco: Internal movement remains restricted under the extension of the "Health State of Emergency" until 20 March. • Palestine: From 15 February, all movement and transportation in all parts of Palestine between 7pm and 6am has been forbidden, for a period of two weeks. • Yemen, Rep.: Health screening requirements at the transit points between southern and northern governorates were removed.
C8: International Travel Controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bahrain: From 22 February, travellers must take an additional COVID-19 PCR test on the fifth day after arrival, in addition to the existing requirement to be tested on arrival. Travellers spending

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	<p>more than ten days in the Kingdom must take a third mandatory test on the 10th day of stay.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iran, Islamic Rep.: Iran closed several border points with Iraq this month. • Jordan: The King Hussein Bridge re-opened for a limited number of travelers on 21 February. • Kuwait: For two weeks starting 7 February, non Kuwaiti citizens are not permitted to enter. • Lebanon: Land and sea borders closed this month while Beirut International Airport remains open. • Morocco: Air travel to and from Morocco remains restricted to specific categories of travelers, negative results from a PCR test carried out less than 72 hours before boarding. Scheduled commercial flights remain suspended, but special services are operating. Ferries between Morocco and Spain remain suspended. Borders with Cueta and Metilla remain closed. • Oman: The Supreme Committee announced on 7 February that land border entry points would remain closed until further notice. On 25 February the Committee announced suspension of incoming flights from 10 countries and prohibited entry of people who had visited those countries within 10 days of applying to enter the Sultanate, to take effect in March. • Saudi Arabia: From 3 February, Saudi Arabia suspended the entry of travelers from 20 countries (Argentina, the UAE, Germany, the United States, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Pakistan, Brazil, Portugal, the United Kingdom, Turkey, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, France, Lebanon, Egypt, India and Japan), as well as travelers who have been in those countries within 14 days prior to seeking entry into Saudi Arabia. Saudi citizens, diplomats, health practitioners and their families are exempt.
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: The Johnson and Johnson vaccine was approved in Bahrain this month. Citizens and residents of Bahrain are eligible to receive vaccines. The Pfizer-BioNTech, Oxford AstraZeneca, Sputnik and Sinopharm vaccines are also available.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iran, Islamic Rep.: In early February, Iran began it's vaccination programme. Health care workers were the first group to be vaccinated and the Sputnik V vaccine was administered to them. On 23 February, Iran began vaccinating vulnerable groups as well, they are receiving China's Sinopharm vaccine. • Israel: On 4 February, Israel began vaccinating all members of the population age 16 and older. • Morocco: From 12 February, Morocco extended its vaccination campaign to all people over age 65. Sinopharm and AstraZeneca vaccines are being administered. • Oman: Vaccine eligibility expanded from frontline medical staff and those with immuno-compromised health above 65 years of age to include those who are 60 and above. Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines are being administered. • Palestine: From 4 February, the Moderna vaccine is being given to health workers in the occupied West Bank, and will be given to people over the age of 60 with chronic diseases as supplies allow. In Gaza, the Sputnik V vaccine has been delivered to health workers. • Qatar: Alongside the already-approved Pfizer-Biontech vaccine, Qatar issued emergency approval of the Moderna vaccine on 10 February. • Saudi Arabia: Saudi Arabia is administering the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID vaccine for free to all citizens and residents in the Kingdom, priority being given depending on age, profession, and chronic illnesses / health conditions. There are reports of delays in the schedule as originally announced. • United Arab Emirates: On February 7, the Ministry of Health announced that all vaccine centres were now dedicated "only to the elderly and people with chronic diseases, in the light of the spike in infections over the past weeks...But people who have not yet had their first dose are expected to wait until next month. Walk-in services will end and younger people will be seen by appointment only." Four vaccines are available in the UAE. The Sinopharm and Sputnik V drugs are available across the UAE, although the latter is only for emergency use. Pfizer-BioNTech and Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines are available in Dubai.
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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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