Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker
Regional report - Middle East and 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 January - 31 January
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Brief summary of major changes:

Throughout January, severe restrictions and public health protocols remained in place throughout the MENA region. Schools were closed for some time in Bahrain, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates. Notably, in Oman, schools reopened but only 25% of students have returned to classes. Parents have indicated concerns about the risk of COVID-19 infection in schools.

Social gatherings and public events were prohibited or limited in attendance in many countries. Daily curfews were in place in Algeria, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia and Yemen. Contact tracing was conducted via mobile phone applications in many countries in this region. Laws surrounding masks were also in place in many countries. Egypt, Jordan and Morocco began their vaccination programs this month.

Travel restrictions vary across regions as governments react to changing infection rates: in the Islamic Republic of Iran, restrictions on public transport may be implemented on a city-by-city basis in response to infection risk, Israel mandated 50% maximum capacity on public transport from 7 January, and Palestine banned travel between governorates on 14 January. Internal movement controls have been extended in many countries and regions.

Curfews in regions or nationally were enacted in many countries, with Algeria, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Libya, Tunisia and the Marib governorate of Yemen all implementing partial curfews. Israel and Lebanon both implemented strict stay-at-home orders on 7 January, and Palestine enforced a complete lockdown from 3 January every Friday and Saturday with nightly curfew the rest of the week. Jordan revoked their all-day Friday curfew on 13 January, but nightly restrictions remain.

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

International travel controls were maintained or strengthened in almost all countries. The Islamic Republic of Iran on 12 January extended a ban on direct flights from the United Kingdom until the end of Bahman (February 18), and requires all travelers to present negative PCR test results on arrival. Iraq expanded the list of countries restricted from entry on 14 January. Israel enacted strict controls on 7 January, restricting flights out of the country to people who had purchased tickets before lockdown was implemented, and on 25 January suspended almost all public and private flights. Jordan extended a ban on flights to the United Kingdom indefinitely, and Kuwait followed suit on 6 January. Malta revised the list of countries between which travel is permitted on 8 January, and Oman closed land borders on 18 January until at least 1 February. Qatar extended quarantine requirements for all arrivals until 31 May. Tunisia suspended entry for all passengers arriving via or from the United Kingdom in late December, and on 25 January announced all direct flights from the United Kingdom would be suspended. In one relaxation of travel controls, The King Fahd Causeway between Bahrain and Saudi Arabia re-opened on 3 January.

C1: School Closing	
	● **Bahrain:** On 31 January, all in-person classes at public and private schools were suspended.
	● **Iran:** School closure status was dependent on the regional risk ranking. Schools were closed in regions with more than 10 COVID-19 cases per 100 000 people.
	● **Israel:** A stringent lockdown was in place from 7 January for two weeks. During this lockdown, schools remained closed with exception to special education and those determined by the law. As of 31 January, nation-wide lockdown measures have been extended and schools remain closed.
	● **Lebanon:** On 7 January, all schools and universities were required to close until 1 February.
	● **Libya:** Schools have reopened with precautionary measures in place.
	● **Oman:** Although schools have reopened, only approximately 25% of students have returned to the classroom with parents citing safety concerns.
	● **Palestine:** Universities and institutes were ordered by the government to switch to remote learning, whereas students in grades 7 through 11 resumed in-person classes. Restrictions such as social distancing and mask-wearing are in place in schools.
	● **Tunisia:** Schools and universities were closed between 14 and 24 January, and returned to in-person classes partially thereafter.
	● **United Arab Emirates:** The second semester began with distance learning for all students, initially for a period of two weeks. On 17 January, the Ministry of Education determined that students in

	Grades 9 to 12 would continue with remote learning until further notice and students in Abu Dhabi would continue with remote learning for an additional three weeks.
C2: Workplace Closing	● **Egypt, Arab Rep.:** On 3 January, restaurants and cafes were ordered to reduce the number of patrons by 50%. ● **Iraq:** On 23 January, businesses opened with strict adherence to health protocols. Restaurants, bars, sports facilities and nightclubs were ordered to shut down by midnight. ● **Lebanon:** Following the declaration of a nationwide state of emergency from 14 to 25 January (later extended to 8 February), all hospitality businesses and public institutions were required to close. ● **Libya:** Although restaurants and cafes were permitted to re-open for takeaway, barbershops, non-essential businesses, public parks and meat markets remain closed until further notice. ● **Palestine:** Current lockdown restrictions were extended for two weeks, with workplaces functioning at 30% capacity and businesses open during weekdays only. ● **Tunisia:** Between 18 and 24 January, cafes and restaurants were open for takeaway service only.
C3: Cancel Public Events	● **Israel:** The country entered a stringent lockdown on 7 January for two weeks. During this time, weddings were permitted with the restriction of gatherings for 10 people indoors and 20 outdoors. ● **Jordan:** The tourist sector has opened for domestic tourism. Hotels, cafes, restaurants, mosques and churches have reopened at a limited capacity. ● **Palestine:** Weddings, funerals and crowds are prohibited with financial penalties in place. ● **Tunisia:** a ban on demonstrations initially set to last between 14 and 24 January was extended until 14 February to include all gatherings in public areas.
C4: Restrictions on Gatherings	● **Israel:** With the lockdown announced on 7 January, the restrictions on gatherings have been tightened, allowing 5 people indoors and 10 outdoors. ● **Tunisia:** Between 14 and 24 January, gatherings were restricted to 30 people. ● **United Arab Emirates:** The number of people permitted to dine together at restaurants was restricted to 7 in Dubai on 22 January.

C5: Close Public Transport	**Algeria**: Domestic air travel resumed in December. Public and private transportation is prohibited between 34 of Algeria's 48 provinces impacted by curfew, and may be suspended within those provinces on Fridays and Saturdays. **Djibouti**: Public transport is operating, aside from passenger service on the Djibouti-Addis Ababa railroad which remains suspended. **Egypt**: Continues to operate, face masks are required. **Iran, Islamic Rep.**: Targeted restrictions on public transport continue in Iranian cities and regions depending on color-coded risk ranking according to infection rate. **Iraq**: Public transport remains open. There is a fine of up to 50,000 Iraqi dinars for not wearing a mask whilst using public transport within the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. **Israel**: On 7 January, public transport was reduced by 50% of capacity, initially until 21 January but extended through the end of the month. **Jordan**: Public transportation remains operational with capacity limited to 50%. **Lebanon**: Despite a national lockdown beginning on 7 January, public transport remains operational with social distancing and capacity restrictions. **Libya**: Remains operational with capacity restrictions. **Morocco:** Public transport is operating, but permission must be obtained to travel between cities. **Palestine**: As a result of the two-week lockdown extension announced on 14 January, a full ban on transit between the Governorates was implemented, with the exception of medical and Ministry of Education staff; Israeli nationals were also barred from entering the Palestinian territories for the duration of the lockdown.
C6: Stay at Home requirements	**Algeria**: Curfew in effect between 8pm and 5am in 34 provinces. **Iran, Islamic Rep.**: Targeted curfews continue to be implemented in Iranian cities and regions depending on color-coded risk ranking according to infection rate. **Israel**: On 7 January, a national lockdown was imposed initially for two weeks but later extended through the end of the month. Existing restrictions of not being allowed to go beyond 1000 meters from one's home (with exceptions) continue to be enforced. **Jordan**: On 13 January the Government of Jordan revoked the previously mandatory Friday curfew, but the nightly curfew

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

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	between midnight and 06:00 remains in place and people must remain at home during these hours. ● **Lebanon**: On 7 January a national lockdown was announced, with a curfew imposed between 18:00 and 05:00. Measures were extended following declaration of a nationwide state of emergency from 14 to 25 January (later extended to 8 February), and a 24 hour total curfew was implemented – leaving the house was only allowed for essential purposes such as going to a pharmacy or to work in a narrowly-defined range of essential occupations. Groceries must be delivered. ● **Libya**: The Government of National Accord (GNA) continues to impose complete lockdowns of varying durations - typically four to seven days - in the capital city due to a rise in COVID-19 cases. Similar measures could be imposed in the future, depending on disease activity. When no lockdown is in effect, officials impose a nightly 2100-0600 curfew during the week, with a 24-hour curfew on Fridays and Saturdays. ● **Morocco**: a nationwide curfew, initially set to last until 20 January, was extended until 2 February. ● **Palestine**: From 3 January, full lockdown has been implemented in Palestine every Friday and Saturday, and between 19:00 and 06:00 on other days of the week. These measures were extended on 14 January. ● **Tunisia**: a national curfew from 8pm to 5am was implemented on 14 January. ● **Yemen**: A curfew remains in effect in the **Marib governorate** between 21:00 and 06:00.
C7: Restrictions on Internal movement	● **Algeria**: Public and private transportation is prohibited between 34 of Algeria's 48 provinces impacted by curfew, and may be suspended within those provinces on Fridays and Saturdays. ● **Iran, Islamic Rep.**: Targeted restrictions on internal movement continue to be implemented in Iranian cities and regions depending on color-coded risk ranking according to infection rate. Intercity traffic and use of private vehicles may be banned in some regions. ● **Iraq**: The Kurdistan Region of Iraq is subject to strict travel restrictions between provinces which are often introduced at short notice. ● **Israel**: On 7 January, a national lockdown was imposed initially for two weeks but later extended through the end of the month.

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	Existing restrictions of not being allowed to go beyond 1000 meters from one's home (with exceptions) continue to be enforced. ● **Jordan**: On 13 January the Government of Jordan revoked the previously mandatory Friday curfew, but the nightly curfew between midnight and 06:00 remains in place and travel is not generally permitted during these hours. ● **Lebanon**: On 7 January a national lockdown was announced, with a curfew imposed between 18:00 and 05:00. Measures were extended following declaration of a nationwide state of emergency from 14 to 25 January (later extended to 8 February), and a 24 hour total curfew was implemented – leaving the house was only allowed for essential purposes such as going to a pharmacy or to work in a narrowly-defined range of essential occupations. Groceries must be delivered. ● **Libya**: The Government of National Accord (GNA) continues to impose complete lockdowns of varying durations - typically four to seven days - in the capital city due to a rise in COVID-19 cases. Similar measures could be imposed in the future, depending on disease activity. When no lockdown is in effect, officials impose a nightly 2100-0600 curfew during the week, with a 24-hour curfew on Fridays and Saturdays. ● **Morocco**: Individuals entering or departing from the **Casablanca** city limits must have a letter of permission issued by Moroccan authorities. On 18 January, this restriction was extended until at least 10 February. ● **Palestine**: As of 14 January, public and private transportation between the Governorates is prohibited, with the exception of medical staff and the staff of the Ministry of Education is banned, and movement of individuals and on transportation applies from 7 pm to 6 am every day. ● **Tunisia**: travel between regions was halted on 25 January
C8: International Travel Controls	● **Algeria**: Borders are closed. Entry is permitted for Algerian nationals, foreign nationals with diplomatic status, and employees of foreign companies operating in Algeria authorised by the Algerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Travellers must quarantine for 14 days after arrival. ● **Bahrain**: The King Fahd Causeway reopened on 3 January 2021, allowing travel between Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. Travelers must provide a negative PCR test taken up to 72 hours before arrival. Travelers arriving by air must be tested for Covid-19, isolate until

results are received, and repeat testing if staying for 10 days or more.

- **Djibouti**: All travelers must present a negative COVID test certificate to enter Djibouti, and will be screened upon arrival.
- **Egypt**: International travel has been permitted since 1 July 2020, all air travelers must present a negative PCR test certificate on arrival.
- **Iran, Islamic Rep.**: As of 12 January, all travelers arriving into Iran must carry a health certificate, depicting a negative PCR test conducted 96 hours before their departure from the country they are travelling from. The ban on flights from the **United Kingdom** imposed in December 2020 has been extended until the end of Bahman (18 February).
- **Iraq**: As of 14 January 2021, the Government of Iraq expanded the original list of 9 countries subject to travel restrictions to encompass Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Denmark, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, India, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Zambia. Foreign diplomats, official delegations, and the staff of foreign missions and international organizations traveling from the above countries may enter Iraq with negative PCR test results taken less than 72 hours prior to their departure. Iraqi nationals will be able to return from the listed countries but are required to quarantine for 14 days.
- **Israel**: On 7 January, a national lockdown was imposed initially for two weeks but later extended through the end of the month. This restricted permission to fly from Israel to those who purchased flight tickets prior to introduction of the lockdown, except for reasons detailed in the regulations or with approval from the Transportation Ministry Director General. On January 25, the government introduced a ban on travel of foreign aircraft to Israel, suspended operation of Israeli airlines and private aircraft. Air travel is only allowed for medical treatment, legal proceedings, to attend the funeral of family, or if approved by the Transportation Ministry Director General.
- **Jordan**: Air travel between Jordan and the United Kingdom was suspended on 21 December 2020, initially until 3 January 2021. This restriction has since been extended indefinitely. Three land border crossings have been open only to Jordanian, Palenstinian and Saudi nationals only since October 29.
- **Kuwait**: Direct air travel between Kuwait and the United Kingdom was suspended indefinitely on 6 January. Non-Kuwaiti passengers

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

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are prohibited from directly entering Kuwait from a list of 34 countries, but may quarantine for 2 weeks in a non-prohibited country prior to entry. Land and sea borders are open between the hours of 09:00 to 15:00 daily. Kuwait airport is operating at 30% capacity. All arriving passengers must travel with a negative PCR test certificate, will be tested on arrival, and must home quarantine for 14 days.

- **Lebanon**: All travelers to Lebanon must show a negative PCR test taken within 96 hours of travel to be allowed to enter the country. COVID tests will be given to all arriving travelers at a cost of USD 50 per test, to be paid by the traveler and collected by the airline. Travellers will also be required to download and activate the "Covid Leb Track" mobile application on arrival to Lebanon, and to present the application to the authorities at Beirut International Airport at the time of the PCR test. Starting 11 January, all travelers will also be required to quarantine at a designated hotel for which they have made a pre-paid booking, for up to 72 hours until receiving a negative result on the airport PCR test. After leaving hotel quarantine, travelers are required to self-isolate until a week has elapsed from arrival, and then undergo a new PCR test. If a traveler tests positive, the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health will provide guidance. For travelers arriving from Baghdad, Istanbul, Adana, Cairo and Addis Ababa, the required hotel stay will be for one week, with the second PCR test on the sixth day after their arrival.

- **Libya**: Land and sea borders are closed to all except essential traffic. Limited flights have resumed, and Tunisia and Libya announced an "air travel bubble" between the two countries from November 15.

- **Malta**: On 8 January, the Minister for Public Health published a revised list of "corridor countries" from which travel is permitted to Malta. All travelers are required to present a negative PCR COVID-19 test performed no longer than seventy-two (72) hours prior to arrival. Those who fail to produce test results may be submitted to testing, and may be subject to quarantine. Maltese citizens or residents returning home from non-corridor countries will be subject to additional restrictions.

- **Morocco**: On 14 January the "Health State of Emergency" regulations were extended to at least February 10. Air travel to and from Morocco remains restricted to specific categories of travelers. Citizens and residents of Morocco and, as of September 6, foreign

	nationals of visa-exempt countries with reservations with Moroccan hotels or travel agencies and business people invited by Moroccan companies are allowed to enter and depart. Travelers entering Morocco must present negative PCR test results conducted 72 hours before arrival. Borders with Cueta and Metilla remain closed. ● **Oman**: a one-week closure of land borders announced on 18 January was extended until 1 February. ● **Palestine**: Since 8 January, the border with Israel has been closed, with limited exceptions. The Israeli authorities announced that with effect from 23 December, foreign nationals will not be permitted to enter unless they are citizens of Israel, with some limited exemptions. ● **Qatar**: On 26 January, Qatar extended quarantine requirements for all arrivals to May 31, 2021. These requirements also apply to land arrivals via Qatar's recently opened border with Saudi Arabia who must book specific quarantine packages. Qatari citizens, residents, and certain people undertaking new employment may enter Qatar. Advance permission may be required to enter in addition to quarantine and testing regulations. Tourists and visitors are not allowed to enter. Travelers arriving from the UK, the Netherlands, South Africa, and Denmark must quarantine at specific hotels. ● **Saudi Arabia**: The King Fahd Causeway reopened on 3 January 2021, allowing travel between Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. As of 12 January, Saudi authorities require anyone who is travelling from a country where the new strain of COVID-19 has spread to spend at least 14 days outside the affected country before entering the Kingdom. ● **Tunisia**: On 21 December, the Tunisian government suspended entry for all travellers coming from or transiting through the UK, or other countries where new strains of COVID-19 have been detected. On 25 January it was announced that all direct flights between the UK and Tunisia (and other countries where the new COVID-19 strain has been detected) will be suspended from 1 February until further notice.
H2: Testing Policy	● **Djibouti**: The Government of Djibouti offers COVID-19 tests at Bouffard Hospital. The test is free, but a negative COVID-19 test certificate costs 5,000 Fdj or $30.

	Egypt: The Government of Egypt provides COVID-19 tests at a cost of 1,680 Egyptian Pounds for foreigners and 1,260 Egyptian pounds for Egyptians. **Kuwait**: The Ministry of Health continues randomly testing citizens and residents daily. Testing is not mandatory. **Lebanon**: PCR testing is available at a cost of 100,000 Lebanese lire, the cost being borne by the individual. **Palestine:** Health authorities reported that testing supplies would only last until 3 January. Since December, tests are available to those who are symptomatic as well as those who have been in contact with a positive COVID-19 case if they are above 50 years of age or have underlying health conditions. **United Arab Emirates:** All workers present at the workplace are now required to undertake a PCR test every 14 days.
H3: Contact Tracing	**Bahrain:** Comprehensive contact tracing continues to be carried out, and reports are published by the Ministry of Health. **Jordan:** Health experts in the country indicate that limited contact tracing is being conducted. **Lebanon:** Contact tracing is being conducted and travellers are required to download and activate the "Covid Leb Track" mobile application on arrival, and to present the application to the authorities at Beirut International Airport.
H6: Facial Coverings	**Algeria:** Facial coverings are mandatory in all public spaces, including public transport and private vehicles. **Bahrain:** Mandatory for all individuals to wear a face mask in all public venues and while using public transportation. **Djibouti:** Face coverings must be worn in public and private spaces where social distancing is not possible. **Egypt, Arab Rep.:** On 3 January, the Government of Egypt announced that individuals who do not adhere to precautionary measures such as "wearing a mask indoors" may have to face a penalty. **Iraq:** As of 24 December 2020, the Iraqi Kurdistan region imposes a fine of 20,000 to 50,000 Iraqi dinar on individuals who do not wear masks in public and on public transport. Public and private institutions must require employees to wear masks. **Israel**: Face masks are mandatory in all public places and at work. **Kuwait**: Face masks are mandatory in all public spaces. Violation of the law may lead to imprisonment for up to three months and/or a fine of up to 5,000 KD.

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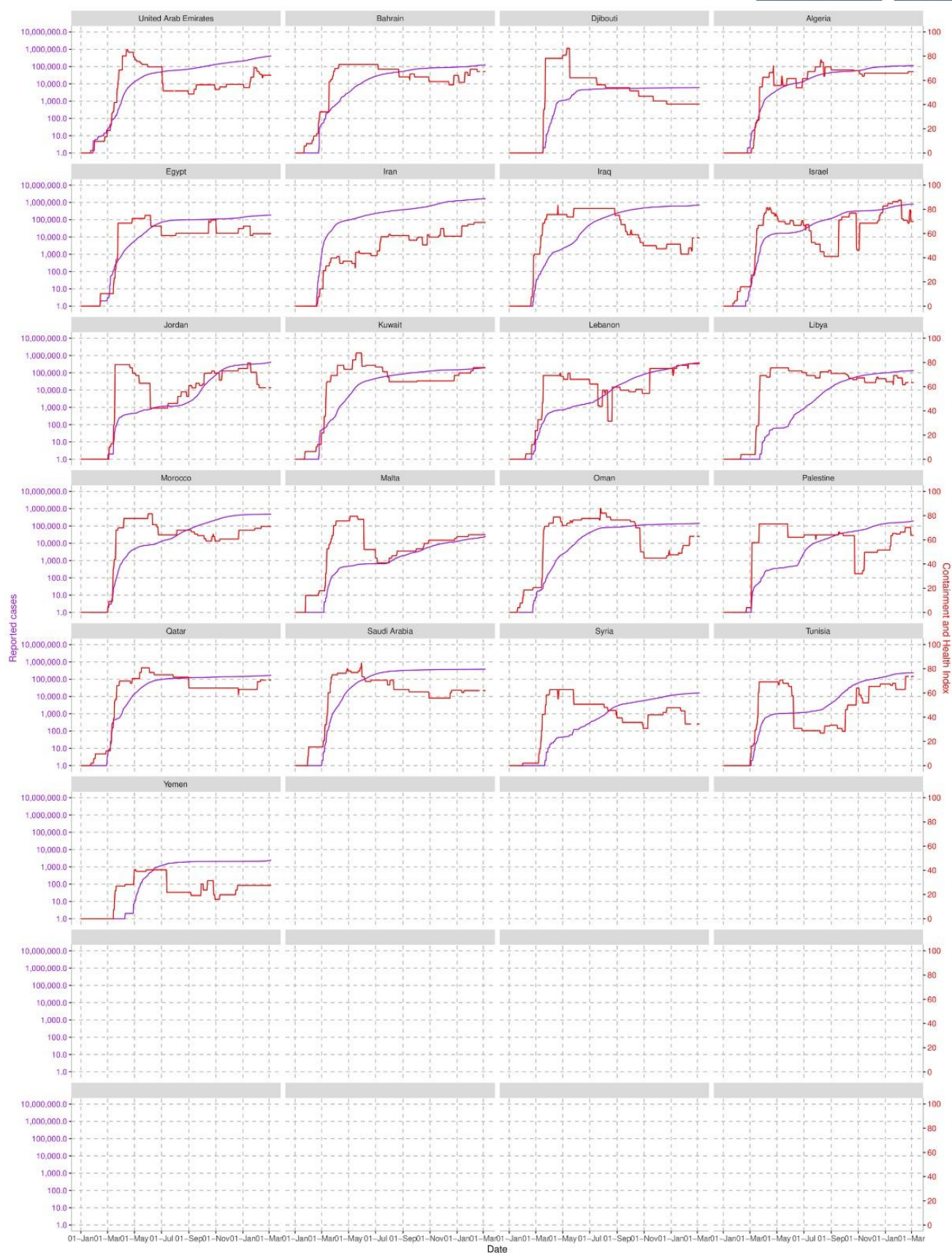
	• **Lebanon**: Masks are required at all times outdoors, in public places, and when traveling by vehicle unless traveling alone.
H7: Vaccination Policy	**Egypt:** Health care workers are now being vaccinated. China's Sinopharm vaccine is being administered. **Israel:** In January, Israel lowered the age requirement for vaccination to 45 and began vaccinating teaching staff. Those who are clinically vulnerable and health care workers are also being vaccinated. **Jordan:** Elderly, medical personnel and those with chronic diseases are now being vaccinated. The Sinopharm and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines are being administered. **Morocco:** Morocco began vaccinating health care workers this month with the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine. **Malta:** On 7 January, Malta began vaccinating people over 85. Currently, those over 85 and health care workers are receiving Pfizer BioNTech vaccine. **United Arab Emirates:** The minimum age requirement for receiving the COVID-19 vaccine was lowered from 18 to 16 this month.

Cases vs Government Response Index:

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

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