

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	01-30 April, 2021
Reported by	Simon Powell and Annamarie Candler

Brief summary of major changes:

Several restrictions were loosened in **Israel** this month. All formal education centres re-opened as of 21 April. Most of the economy has also re-opened. However, some public services are only accessible to Green Pass holders. Face masks are no longer mandatory in open spaces. **Israel** is planning to begin offering vaccinations for children ages 12 to 15 once the **American** and **European** authorities approve the Pfizer vaccine for this age group.

International travel restrictions were introduced in the MENA region this month. In **Iran**, authorities are maintaining strict international travel restrictions. Flights to and from **France, India and Pakistan** were suspended this month. **Iran** also closed its Eastern land borders on 28 April. The **United Arab Emirates** and **Morocco** have both banned flights from **India**. All air, land and sea borders remain closed in **Saudi Arabia** until 17 May.

Many countries in the MENA region expanded eligibility for COVID-19 vaccinations in April. **Libya** began its vaccination program this month. Approximately 500 000 citizens have registered to receive their vaccine. **Yemen** received its first shipment of vaccines under the COVAX initiative on 31 March, and began administering them on 20 April. **Iran** began the second phase of its vaccination program this month. Residents 80 years and above as well as elderly persons with comorbidities are currently eligible for vaccination. In **Djibouti** and **Malta**, residents over 50 years of age are now eligible to receive their vaccine.

C1: School Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Israel: All formal education centres re-opened in April. Masks are required indoors and social distancing procedures are in place.● Libya: Public and private schools began using a hybrid approach (in-person and remote learning) on 21 April. Students are gradually returning to classes beginning with students in year 12.● Malta: School closures began to be reversed, with childcare centers, kindergartens and primary schools allowed to re-open
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Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker

Regional report - Middle East and North Africa



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RESPONSE TRACKER**

	<p>from 12 April.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oman: Requirements for all students except those in Grade 12 to continue learning online from 2 April until further notice. • Qatar: All public and private schools, preschools and universities were closed for in-person attendance from 4 April, with education taking place via distance learning. • Syria: On 3 April, the Ministry of Education announced an early end to the school year from kindergarten to Grade 8; Grade 9 and secondary school students will continue to attend classes. Additionally, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research suspended all universities and institutes from 5 to 17 April. • Tunisia: All schools are to be closed from 17 April through at least the end of the month.
C2: Workplace Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iran: Iran is using a tiered colour system to establish COVID-19 restrictions where severity varies based on colour. New restrictions were imposed in Tehran, a red zone, this month. Here, one third of employees are required to stay home to prevent the spread of COVID-19. • Israel: Most of the economy has re-opened. However, some services and venues can only be accessed by Green Pass holders (those who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19). Some venues have restrictions on occupancy or capacity. • Kuwait: All commercial businesses remain closed between 7:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. daily, except for pharmacies and grocery stores. Restaurants are permitted to deliver food between 7:00 p.m. and 3:00 a.m. • Malta: Non-essential shops that were closed on 11 March were allowed to re-open as of 26 April, although restaurants, bars and gyms remain closed. • Morocco: The national "Health State of Emergency" was extended until 10 May, requiring restaurants, shops, supermarkets and other businesses to close between 8:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. During Ramadan, such businesses must close by 7:00 p.m. • Oman: Workplace attendance in government facilities was reduced to 50% as of 4 April, and commercial activities are banned during Ramadan. • Qatar: From 9 April, employee capacity permitted in the workplace was reduced to 50% of regular capacity (excluding military, security and healthcare services). • Syria: From 3 April, local authorities announced that all restaurants, cafes, schools, universities and institutions must close, although essential shops, groceries and services can remain open.
C3: Cancel Public Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iran: Non-essential gatherings remained prohibited during Ramadan. • Israel: Sporting events are now permitted with 5000 to 10 000 attendees in open spaces and 4000 attendees in closed spaces. Other events are now permitted with 500 to 750 attendees at events where participants are not seated. • Jordan: During the month of Ramadan, mosques were permitted

Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker

Regional report - Middle East and North Africa



	<p>to remain open provided that safety protocols were followed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saudi Arabia: Ifars and suhoors are banned from being held in mosques during Ramadan. • Syria: Mass gatherings of people are banned from 3 April.
C4: Restrictions on Gatherings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Israel: The number of guests at an outdoor gathering was increased from 50 to 100 this month. • Lebanon: During the month of Ramadan, beginning 12 April, all religious and social ceremonies were prohibited. • Oman: All gatherings, cultural and sporting events are prohibited during Ramadan. • Qatar: From 9 April, social gatherings were suspended. Up to 5 people who have been fully vaccinated are allowed to meet in open spaces, and gatherings of family members are restricted to those who live in the same household, or to 2 people if they live separately.
C5: Close Public Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Israel: Capacity restrictions on public transportation (city buses, inter-city buses, trains and school buses) were lifted this month. • Qatar: From 9 April, bus services were reduced by 50%. Carrying capacity was reduced to 20% of normal load for both bus and metro services, and both are closed on Fridays and Saturdays. No more than 4 people can be carried in vehicles, including the driver.
C6: Stay at Home requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iran: From 10 April, a ten day lockdown was in effect in cities classified as red zones. At that time, 257 cities were red zones including all provincial capital cities. • Lebanon: During the month of Ramadan, from 12 April until 12 May, there is a nationwide curfew in effect from 9:30 p.m. until 5:00 a.m. • Morocco: The nationwide curfew remains in place, having been extended until 13 April and again to at least 10 May. During Ramadan, curfew hours are extended to 8:00 p.m. until 6:00 a.m., and people must have written authorisation to be outside their homes during these hours. • Oman: During Ramadan, a night-time curfew is in place between 9:00 p.m. and 4:00 a.m. • Syria: A national night-time curfew from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. was implemented between 6 to 12 April. A total curfew was also announced in Ar-Raqqqa, Qamishli, and Al-Hasakeh cities for the same period. • Yemen: Authorities in the governorate of Ma'rib imposed a curfew for the period of Ramadan from 1:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m.
C7: Restrictions on Internal movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No major changes recorded.
C8: International Travel Controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iran: Flights to and from the United Kingdom resumed this month. Flights to and from France were suspended on 14 April and flights to and from India and Pakistan were suspended on 25 April. Flights to and from Botswana, Brazil, the Czech Republic, Iraq, Estonia, Ireland, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Slovakia, South Africa and Zambia remain suspended. Additionally, Iran closed its

Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker

Regional report - Middle East and North Africa



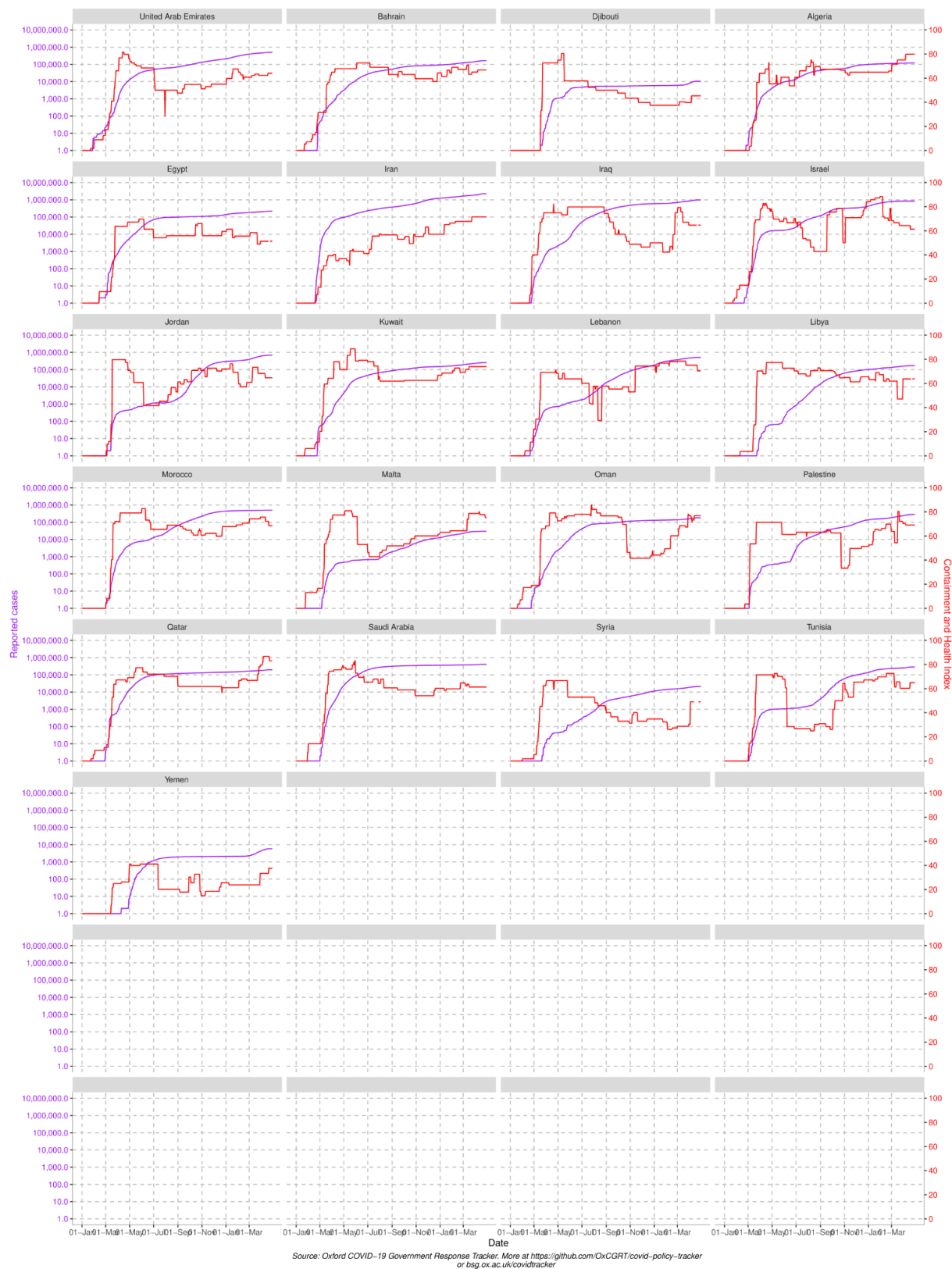
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	<p>Eastern land borders on 28 April.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Israel: From 7 April, some foreign nationals who have either been fully vaccinated or have recovered from COVID-19 are permitted to enter Israel on a case-by-case basis subject to additional requirements such as having a first-degree family member who lives in Israel. • Morocco: From 14 April, flights between Morocco and India were suspended, and Indian citizens are not permitted to enter the country. • Oman: From 8 April, entry to Oman is restricted to Omani citizens and holders of residency visas. • Saudi Arabia: A ban on international travel for Saudi citizens and the closure of the kingdom's land, sea, and air borders remains in effect until 17 May. • United Arab Emirates: A ban on travel from India was implemented on 23 April.
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"> • Israel: As of 18 April, face masks are no longer mandatory in open spaces. • Syria: Face masks are mandatory in all public places from 3 April.
H7: Vaccination Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Djibouti: Those over 50 years of age as well as those under 50 years of age with comorbidities are now being vaccinated. • Iran: The second phase of the mass vaccination program began on 25 April, those over 80 years of age and elderly with comorbidities are eligible for vaccination. • Libya: Libya began its vaccination program on 17 April. Vaccines are being prioritised for medical staff treating patients in ICUs followed by elderly persons and those with chronic diseases. Approximately 500 000 people have registered for vaccinations. • Malta: From 10 April, Malta extended its vaccination program from three existing groups (key workers, clinically vulnerable, and elderly people) to anyone aged 50 or above. • Qatar: The age requirement for vaccine eligibility was reduced to 35 from 22 April. • Yemen: The COVAX initiative delivered 360,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine to Yemen on 31 March, and the vaccination campaign began administering them to key workers, the clinically vulnerable and elderly people on 20 April.

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Cases vs Containment and Health Index:



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