

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

Brief summary of major changes:

Containment procedures remain in place in the MENA region to curb the spread of COVID-19.

Malta closed schools this month and implemented online learning from 15 March. Non-essential shops and services were closed and restrictions were placed on internal movement and gatherings from 11 March. In **Morocco**, the daily curfew was extended from 16 to 30 March. In **Oman**, almost all schooling moved from in-person to online from 7 March, extending to at least April and a nationwide curfew was imposed between 20:00 and 05:00. Additionally, in **Oman**, flights to and from the **United Kingdom** were suspended on 19 March. **Saudia Arabia** announced this month that all education would be delivered remotely for the remainder of the academic year. In **Algeria**, repatriation flights were banned for the month of March.

Many countries in the MENA region expanded their vaccination programmes this month. In **Iraq**, health care workers, security professionals and elderly persons are now being vaccinated. **Djibouti** began its vaccination programme, residents over 50 years of age as well as those below 50 years with chronic illnesses are currently eligible for vaccination. In **Lebanon**, Sputnik-V vaccines are now being offered through the private health care system to accelerate the vaccination programme. The Oxford AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccines are also available through the Ministry of Health in **Lebanon**. **Syria** began vaccinating health care workers on 1 March and **Tunisia** began vaccinations this month with the Pfizer vaccine, acquired through the COVAX initiative. In **Algeria**, security and civil protection personnel, teachers, religious leaders, politicians and journalists all began receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. **Egypt** began vaccinating the elderly and people with chronic illnesses.

Summaries are created with data from the OxCGRT, uploaded by contributors. For specific references, please see the database www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/covidtracker

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C1: School Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bahrain: In person classes resumed in public schools, private schools, higher education institutes and kindergartens this month. • Jordan: Schools were closed on 10 March for students in all grades as well as in universities and vocational training institutes. • Malta: All schools were to close and education was delivered through online learning from 15 March until at least 11 April. • Oman: From 7 March, almost all education in Oman moved from in-person attendance to online learning. The requirement for online learning was extended from 11 March to 4 April. • Palestine: School closures announced in February were extended from 12 March to the end of the month. • Qatar: School attendance has been restricted to 30% of normal capacity as of 21 March. • Saudi Arabia: On 29 March, Saudi Arabia announced that all education would take place remotely until the end of the school year.
C2: Workplace Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bahrain: As of 4 March, mosques resumed some in-person religious services. Restaurants were also permitted to re-open this month with capacity restrictions of 30 customers. Private indoor gyms and swimming pools also re-opened with sanitation procedures in place. • Iraq: On 10 March, the closure of spas, gyms, swimming pools, cinemas, malls and cafes was extended for two weeks. • Jordan: Between 10 March and 31 March, nightclubs, bars, swimming pools, sports centres, clubs and equestrian clubs were closed. • Libya: Restaurants and cafes which were previously permitted to re-open were closed this month. • Malta: All non-essential shops and services providers are to close from 11 March until at least 11 April. • Morocco: Restaurants, supermarkets and other businesses must close by 20:00 to comply with the nationwide curfew between 21:00 and 06:00. The curfew was in place from 16 to 30 March. • Oman: From 4 March, all commercial activities were required to close between 20:00 and 05:00 with limited exceptions. Restrictions due to expire on 20 March were extended until at least April. • Palestine: Non-essential businesses were closed for much of March, with extensions of restrictions announced on 13 and 20 March to last until at least 3 April. • Qatar: Workplaces were limited to 80% of their normal staff

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	<p>capacity from 21 March.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saudi Arabia: Entertainment and dining services including cinemas, games venues, restaurants, shopping centers, and gyms were permitted to re-open from 7 March. Establishments must implement enhanced sanitization procedures, perform temperature checks of employees and patrons, and comply with social distancing guidelines. • Tunisia: Workplace closure requirements were relaxed in much of the country from 8 March, with restaurants and cafes permitted to open until 20:00, except in Sbeitla and surrounding areas in Kasserine Governorate. Here, in-restaurant dining is banned and other facilities are closed.
C3: Cancel Public Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bahrain: On 4 March, some in-person religious services resumed at mosques and on 11 March, all in-person prayers resumed. • Jordan: Between 10 March and 31 March, nightclubs, bars, swimming pools, sports centres, clubs, equestrian clubs and public parks were closed. • Palestine: Public events and gatherings were prohibited in late February, and restrictions were extended from 13 March until at least April.
C4: Restrictions on Gatherings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malta: From 11 March until at least 11 April, gatherings were limited to a maximum of 4 people, reduced from the previous limit of 6.
C5: Close Public Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Algeria: Public transportation may have been impacted in the wilayas affected by the curfew on Fridays and Saturdays in March. • Jordan: On 11 March, the capacity permitted on public transportation was reduced from 75% to 50% until 31 March. • Oman: Bus and ferry services are operating restricted services from 28 March until at least 8 April, with city services ending at 18:00, and inter-city services arriving at their destination by 18:00 at the latest.
C6: Stay at Home requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Algeria: A curfew was in effect in 34 wilayas including Algiers in early March. By mid March, a curfew was still in effect in nine wilayas including Algiers. • Jordan: From 13 March, the daily curfew time changed to 18:00 for businesses and 19:00 for individuals. The comprehensive curfew in place on Fridays was changed to begin at 19:00 on Thursday and end at 06:00 on Saturday. • Kuwait: From 7 March, a 12 hour curfew was in effect from 17:00 until 05:00 until April.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morocco: The nationwide curfew from 21:00 to 06:00 was extended from 10 March to 30 March. • Oman: From 28 March, a nationwide curfew was in place between 20:00 and 05:00. • Palestine: National curfew restrictions every Friday and Saturday, and between 19:00 and 06:00 on other days of the week, were extended throughout March. • Tunisia: From 8 March, the nightly national curfew was shortened to 22:00 to 05:00 except in Sbeitla and surrounding areas in Kasserine Governorate where the curfew begins at 16:00. People over 65 years of age must remain at home.
C7: Restrictions on Internal movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Algeria: Some travel is now permitted but public transportation options are limited. • Iran: Intercity travel and traffic was banned from areas with high infection rates from 21:00 until 04:00. • Jordan: Internal movement was restricted daily under the revised curfew hours beginning at 19:00. Movement was also restricted for the entire day on Fridays. • Malta: Travel to Gozo is restricted to essential travel or people having a residence on the island from 11 March. • Morocco: The Health State of Emergency was extended to 10 April, further restricting internal movement. Travel to and from Tangier and Casablanca was prohibited, except for people with medical needs or required to travel for work and holding both a letter from their employer and certificate of movement from local authorities. Travel to and from other cities may also require authorization from local authorities. • Palestine: On 21 March, the Palestinian government extended the prohibition of movement of citizens and all transportation between 19:00 and 06:00. Travel between provinces and travel to Jerusalem was banned.
C8: International Travel Controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Algeria: Repatriation flights were banned from 01 March until 31 March. • Iraq: The previous international travel restrictions that were in place were lifted on 10 March. Tourist travel is still banned, but travelers may enter Iraq with a negative PCR test and valid VISA. • Oman: Existing restrictions were extended with a ban on flights between Oman and the United Kingdom and suspension of entry for non-citizens who had visited the U.K. in the preceding two weeks as of 19 March. • Saudi Arabia: The international travel ban implemented in February has been extended until at least May 2021.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tunisia: From 8 March requirements for mandatory quarantine at specified hotels were relaxed, with incoming travelers now required to self-quarantine for 48 hours. Flights from Australia, Brazil, Denmark, South Africa and the United Kingdom have been suspended until further notice.
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"> • Algeria: This month, security and civil protection personnel, teachers, religious leaders, politicians and journalists all began receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. The Sputnik-V vaccine is being administered. • Djibouti: The COVID-19 vaccination programme began this month. Residents over 50 years of age as well as those below 50 years with chronic illnesses are currently eligible for vaccination. The AstraZeneca, Sinovac and Sputnik-V vaccines are available. • Egypt: On 4 March, vaccinations began for the elderly and those with chronic illnesses. The Sinopharm vaccine is being administered. • Iraq: The vaccination programme began on 2 March. Health care professionals, security professionals and the elderly are all eligible for vaccination. The Sinopharm vaccine is being administered. • Lebanon: The Sputnik-V vaccine is now being offered through private health care. The Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines are being offered through the Ministry of Health. • Palestine: AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccines are being administered as of 23 March, initially to medical and health staff in government, private and private hospitals, seniors over the age of 75, patients with cancer or kidney disease, and prisoners. • Syria: Vaccinations for frontline health workers began on 1 March. • Tunisia: A national vaccination campaign was launched on 13 March and from 17 March, the Pfizer vaccine is being administered, delivered through the COVAX initiative.

Cases vs Containment and Health Index:

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