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COVID-19 pandemic in Iran

The **COVID-19 pandemic in Iran** is part of the worldwide pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). On 19 February 2020, Iran reported its first confirmed cases of infections in Qom.^[3] The virus may have been brought to the country by a merchant from Qom who had travelled to China.^[4]

In response to the coronavirus the government cancelled public events and Friday prayers; closed schools, universities, shopping centres, bazaars, and holy shrines; and banned festival celebrations.^{[5][6]} Economic measures were also announced to help families and businesses, and the pandemic is credited with compelling the government to make an unprecedented request for an emergency loan of five billion US dollars from the International Monetary Fund.^[7] The government initially rejected plans to quarantine entire cities and areas, and heavy traffic between cities continued ahead of Nowruz, despite the government's intention to limit travel. The government later announced a ban on travel between cities following an increase in the number of new cases.^{[6][8]} Government restrictions were gradually eased starting in April. The number of new cases fell to a low on 2 May, but increased again in May as restrictions were eased, with a new peak reported on 4 June.^[9]

Some outside estimates of the numbers of COVID-19 deaths are much higher than those from government sources, with one estimate by the People's Mujahedin of Iran claiming over 40,000 deaths.^{[10][11][12][13][14]} The government has also been accused of cover-ups, censorship, and mismanagement.^{[15][16][17][4]} However, the World Health Organization says that it has not seen problems with Iran's reported figures,^[18] although WHO regional emergency director Rick Brennan later said that due to limited testing in the early months, the number of cases reported in Iran could represent only about 20% of the real number until more tests were conducted.^[19] Later increase in the number of cases in May was attributed to increased testing by the Iranian government.^[20] The official number of cases surpassed 200,000 with over 10,000 deaths recorded by June 2020.^[21]

Multiple government ministers and senior officials have been diagnosed as SARS-CoV-2 positive, as well as 23 members of the Parliament (around 8% of all MPs) by 3 March.^[22] At least 12

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	Confirmed cases 10–99
	Confirmed cases 100–499
	Confirmed cases 500–999
	Confirmed cases 1,000–9,999
	Confirmed cases 10,000+
Last updated on 9 May 2020	

Disease	COVID-19
Virus strain	SARS-CoV-2
Location	Iran
First outbreak	Wuhan, Hubei, China (initial reports) ^[1]
Index case	Qom
Arrival date	19 February 2020 (4 months, 3 weeks and 3 days ago)
Confirmed cases	250,458 ^[2]
Recovered	212,176 ^[2]
Deaths	12,305 ^[2]
Government website	
behdasht.gov.ir (http://behdasht.gov.ir/)	

sitting or former Iranian politicians and officials had died from the virus by 17 March.^[5] Notable Iranians reported to have died from COVID-19 include Hadi Khosroshahi,^[23] Mohammad Mirmohammadi, Hossein Sheikholeslam, Fatemeh Rahbar, Reza Mohammadi Langroudi,^[24] Mohammad-Reza Rahchamani,^[25] Nasser Shabani,^[26] Hashem Bathaie Golpayegani,^[27] and Hamid Kahram.^{[28][29]}

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People's Mujahedin of Iran

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of Gorgan. The physicians complained to Filkins that in the coming weeks as the cases mounted and many of the patients started dying, hospital officials told staff "to keep quiet. 'We were given special instructions not to release any statistics on infection and death rates.'" Staff were "ordered not to wear masks or protective clothing. 'The aim was to prevent fear in the society, even if it meant high casualties among the medical staff.'" Officials were afraid fear of the pandemic would reduce voter turnout for the February 21st parliamentary election which would encourage "counterrevolutionaries". On 19 February, two days before the election, the deaths of two Iranians from the pandemic was made public, which meant, according to Iranian journalists Filkins talked to, "we reported deaths before we even reported any infections." By this time there were "hundreds" of ill patients in the hospital in Gorgan, and so many deaths "that a local cemetery hired a backhoe to dig graves".^[7]

Early cases (19 February – 23 February)

On 19 February, two people tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 in the city of Qom.^[3] Later that day, the Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MOHME) stated that both had died.^[35] On 20 February, three new cases were reported by the MOHME. Two of them were from Qom and one from Arak.^[36] On 21 February, 2 deaths and 13 new cases were reported; seven cases were from Qom, four from Tehran, and two from Gilan Province.^[37] On 22 February, the MOHME reported 10 more infected cases, bringing the total to 29, and two more deaths, bringing the total to eight. Eight of the new cases were from Qom and two from Tehran.^[38]

On 23 February, Health Minister Saeed Namaki said that one of those who died was a merchant from Qom who travelled regularly using indirect flights between China and Iran after direct flights were suspended between the two countries, and may have brought the virus from China.^[39]

Spread of COVID-19 (24 February – 19 March)

On 25 February, the Iranian government first told citizens that the U.S. had "hyped COVID-19 to suppress turnout" during elections, and that it would "punish anyone spreading rumors about a serious epidemic."^{[40][41][42]} A closed parliamentary session including Namaki and Ahmad Amirabadi Farahani was held. Body temperatures were tested prior to the meeting and three members of parliament, including Farahani, were requested to excuse themselves from the session and self-quarantine. All three attended the session. Farahani later spoke with journalists and gave television interviews wearing a mask and pair of gloves.^[43] The MOHME reported that there were 593 confirmed cases and 43 deaths as of 29 February.^{[44][45][46][47]}

On 1 March, the MOHME reported 385 new confirmed cases, 11 new deaths, and 52 more people who had recovered, bringing the total recoveries to 175.^[48] On 11 March, the MOHME reported 9,000 new confirmed cases, 354 deaths,^{[49][50][51][52][53]} and a total of 2,959 patients that had recovered. President Hassan Rouhani took the chair of the national taskforce on combatting the outbreak, replacing the Health Minister at the request of lawmakers.^[54]

On 12 March, the MOHME reported 1,075 more new confirmed cases and 75 new deaths. They also reported that 3,276 people had recovered. Iran requested an emergency loan of US\$5 billion from the International Monetary Fund for the first time since the Iranian revolution to help combat the outbreak.^[55] (Previously the IMF had been described by the Islamic Republic as "a tool of U.S.

hegemony").^[7] However, the United States government opposed this request, according to Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council.^[56] On 17 March, the MOHME reported 1,178 more new confirmed cases, 135 new deaths, and 5,389 people who had recovered in total. Sharif University published a study about possible outcomes of the pandemic. Three scenarios were announced: if people cooperated immediately, Iran would see 120,000 infections and 12,000 deaths before the outbreak was over; if there was a medium amount of cooperation, there would be 300,000 cases and 110,000 deaths; and if people did not follow any guidance, it could collapse Iran's already strained medical system and there would be 4 million cases and 3.5 million deaths.^[57] On 19 March, the MOHME reported 18,407 total confirmed cases and 1,284 deaths.

Nowruz peak (20 March – 4 April)

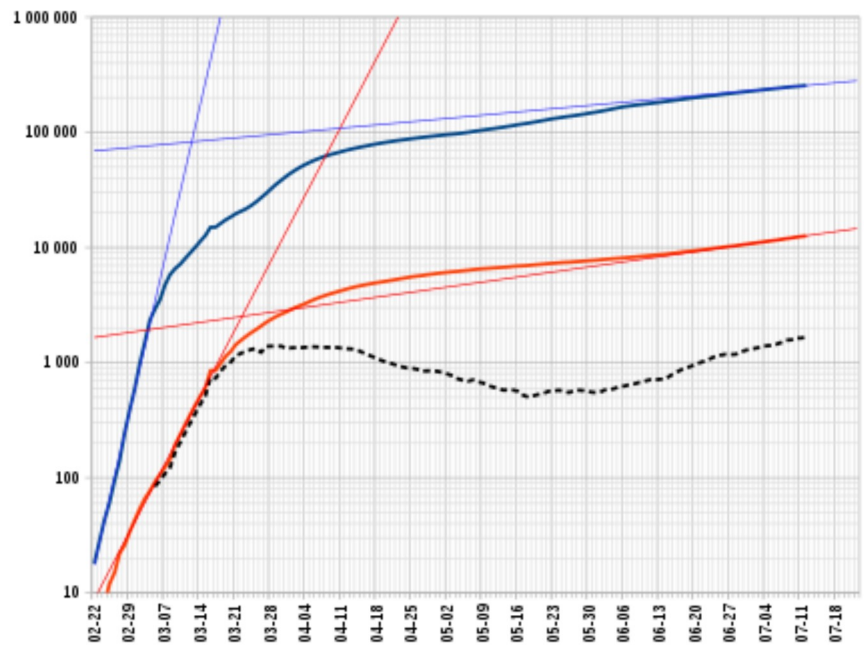
On 20 March, 1,237 new infections and 149 deaths were reported. On 24 March, a new peak of 1,762 new cases was announced with 122 deaths. Rouhani said that the number of patients admitted to hospitals in different provinces as well as deaths due to the virus had decreased, which he took to be promising.^[58] Iran accused Médecins Sans Frontières of being spies, and a team they had sent to Iran to help had been ordered to leave the country.^{[59][60]}

On 25 March, with new cases surpassing 2,000 for the first time, the government warned of a "second wave" of infection.^[61] On 26 March, the MOHME announced that 2,389 more people had become infected, with 157 new deaths.^[62] On 27 March, daily new cases had increased to 2,926 with 144 deaths.^[63]

On 28 March, the number of new cases exceeded 3,000 for the first time (3,076), with 139 new deaths.^[64] On 29 March, 2,901 new cases and 123 new deaths were announced.^[65] Rouhani defended his government's response to the crisis and said that, according to health experts and doctors in Iran, "in some provinces, we have passed the peak [of the epidemic] and are on a downward trajectory".^[66] On 2 April, Rouhani warned that the country might have to fight the



A patient receiving treatment in a hospital in Tehran



Number of cases (blue) and number of deaths (red) on a logarithmic scale.



People in Shiraz wearing facemasks next to a closed market

pandemic for another year. On that day, 3,111 new infections raised Iran's total to 50,468, and 124 new deaths brought the total to 3,160, while 16,711 of those hospitalised had recovered.^[67]

On 4 April, Iran announced the highest number of daily deaths so far, with 158 people having died the previous 24 hours, bringing the total number of deaths to 3,452. The total number of cases had reached 55,743. Iranian officials had expressed concerns that many had ignored rules to stay indoor and cancel travel plans.^[68]

After Nowruz (5 April – 2 May)

On 7 April, MOHME spokesman Kianush Jahanpur stated that the intensification of the social distancing policy had led to fewer new cases in recent days. Rouhani again asked people "to stay at home" and obey guidelines.^[69]

The Islamic Republic News Agency reported that "low-risk" business activities restarted in most of the country on 11 April, except for in Tehran, where they would restart on April 18. Rouhani said, "Easing restrictions does not mean ignoring health protocols... Social distancing and other health protocols should be respected seriously by people." To follow the social distancing, "many government offices also re-opened, with two-thirds of their staff" on 11 April. Theatres, swimming pools, saunas, beauty salons, schools, universities, shopping centers, and restaurants, as high-risk businesses, did not resume, and cultural, religious, and sports gatherings were banned. According to health authorities, "many Iranians have ignored appeals to stay at home", which could lead to a second wave of illnesses.^[70]

On April, a video of a mortuary worker at a cemetery in Qom surrounded by dozens of bodies went viral. The man who filmed it was later arrested, with authorities telling the public that "all bodies were being treated with respect and in keeping with Islam."^[71]

Iranian officials stated that between 20 February and 7 April, at least 728 people had died in Iran due to Methanol poisoning after falsely believing that consuming the alcohol protected them from the virus.^[72]

The daily death toll from COVID-19 dropped below 100 starting 14 April. As the death toll dropped, the lockdown measures continued to be eased, and businesses designated as "low-risk businesses", which include many shops, factories and warehouses, were allowed to reopen in Tehran on 18 April.^{[73][74]}

On 2 May, the country reported 802 new cases, the lowest number of new cases in nearly two months.^[75]

Resurgence (3 May – Present)

After the lockdown measures were relaxed in April, cases of COVID-19 started to increase again in May, with new cases averaging 1,200 a day in early May.^[76]

Despite the rise in cases, all mosques apart from those in Tehran and some major cities were allowed to reopen on 12 May,^[77] and schools to reopen the following week on 16 May.^[78]

An increase in cases in the southern provinces of Khuzestan and Sistan-Baluchestan led to the re-

imposition of lockdown restrictions In mid-May there, with travel in and out of Abadan restricted.^{[79][80]} Health Ministry Spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said on 18 May that around one-fourth of Iran's daily cases were in Khuzestan, with Lorestan, North Khorasan, Kerman, Sistan-Baluchestan and Kermansha also showing significant rate of transmission of the virus.^[81]

The number of cases in the country surpassed 150,000 by 31 May.^[82] However, according to Hassan Rouhani, Iran was in "an acceptable situation" and "not even fragile", with the effective reproduction number (R_{eff}) of the virus in the country at less than one.^[83]

New cases continued to increase in early June, with nearly 3,000 new cases reported on 1 June compared to 802 on 2 May.^[84] The government put the increase in cases down to increased testing, although Health minister Saeed Namaki warned the citizens to follow guidance and social distancing rules or risk a second wave of the disease.^[20] The percentage of infections detected in tests however have increased from 11% on 29 May to 14% on 6 June.^[85]

On 4 June, 3,574 new cases of COVID-19 were reported. This figure surpassed the previous peak of 3,186 reported on 30 March. The worst affected province was Khuzestan, and the provinces of Hormozgan, Kurdistan and Kermanshah were also given "serious virus warning".^[86] President Rouhani blamed a wedding party for contributing to the increase, and stressed that the country had no option but to keep the economy open.^[87]

On 14 June, the number of daily deaths reached over 100 for the first time in 2 months, with 107 deaths reported. The Ministry of Health warned of increasing infections in the rural provinces.^[88]

The total number of cases surpassed 200,000 on 19 June 2020,^[89] while the number of death recorded reached over 10,000 on 25 June.^[21]

On 29 June, Iran's Health Ministry reported a new record number of deaths in a day, with 162 having died the previous 24 hours. It surpassed the previous peak of 158 deaths reported on 4 April.^[90] Iran's health ministry, however, said on 30 June that the country is still in the first wave, and a second wave would not be considered to have started unless there were to be another rise in cases in provinces that already "had a significant peak" in the first few months of the outbreak. The biggest increase in cases that occurred in May and June was in other cities and border provinces such as Khuzestan, Hormozgan, Kurdistan, Kermanshah, Bushehr, West and East Azerbaijan, and Khorasan Razavi, which have been recently designated code 'red' or highest risk areas, rather than in provinces that recorded a peak in the early months.^[91]

On 5 July, a new peak of 163 deaths was reported,^[92] and two days later on 7 July, a further jump in the number of deaths was recorded when 200 died in 24 hours.^[93] Another peak of 221 deaths was reported on 9 July, with the total number of cases exceeding 250,000.^[94]

Infected Iranian officials

February

Iraj Harirchi tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 infection.^[95] Mahmoud Sadeghi, an MP from Tehran, also tested positive for the virus.^{[96][29]} Iran's Vice President for Women and Family Affairs, Masoumeh Ebtekar, was diagnosed with COVID-19, as well as the Chairman of the Iranian

Parliament's National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee, Mojtaba Zolnour.^{[29][97][98]} Iran's First Ambassador to the Vatican, Hadi Khosroshahi, died from COVID-19 infection in Qom.^[29] Mohammad Ali Ramazani Dastak was claimed to have died from COVID-19 on 29 February 2020 but the cause of death was officially given as flu.^[99]

March

Mohammad Mirmohammadi, a member of the Expediency Council which advises the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, was reported to have died of the disease.^[100] Twenty-three members of the Iranian Parliament were reported to have been infected.^[22] The head of emergency medical services, Pirhossein Kolivand, was diagnosed with the disease.^[101] Mohammad Sadr, a member of the Expediency Council, had reportedly been infected with coronavirus.^[102] Akbar Dehghan (head of Qom seminary interpretation staff), Ayatollah Mohsen Habibi (a member of the Supreme Council of Tehran's Seminaries),^[24] and former Ambassador to Syria Hossein Sheikholeslam died from the disease.^[103] Subsequently, all government officials were forbidden from international travel, and parliament was indefinitely suspended.^[104] Elected Member of Parliament Fatemeh Rahbar died due to coronavirus.^[105] Ayatollah Reza Mohammadi Langroudi also died from the virus.^[24] Esmail Najjar, the chief of Iran's Crisis Management Organization, was infected with coronavirus.^[106] Former MP Mohammad-Reza Rahchamani died from the virus.^[25] Farhad Tazari, the former head of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps' Political Bureau, also died of coronavirus.^[107] Iran's First Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri was infected with the virus.^[108] Ali Asghar Mounesan, Minister of Cultural heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism, and Reza Rahmani, Minister of Industry, Mines and Business, got sick.^{[109][110]} Member of Expediency Discernment Council Ali Akbar Velayati was infected with the virus.^[111] Nasser Shabani, a senior commander of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), died from the virus.^[26] Minoo Mohraz, a member of the committee to combat coronavirus, tested positive for the virus.^[112] Hashem Bathaie Golpayegani and economist Fariborz Raisdana died from the virus.^{[27][113][114]} Former MP Hamid Kahram died from the coronavirus.^[28]

July

The new parliament convened on 27 May 2020, and all members of parliament were tested to be negative for the virus.^[115] On 4 July 2020, five members of parliament were announced to have contracted the disease as new cases of COVID-19 continued to increase in the country.^[116] A few days later, it was reported that around seven had tested positive after more than 100 MPs were tested,^[117] then at least eight. Issa Jafari, an MP representing Bahar and Kabudarahang, died from the illness on 13 July 2020.^[118]

Government response

The government has given a positive assessment of Iran's response to the pandemic while also warning of sinister forces.

On 23 March 2020, Ali Khamenei mentioned a conspiracy theory that the US created "a special version" of the virus "based on Iranian genetic information they have gathered",^[119] that was affecting the country, although he provided no evidence for the theory and added, "I do not know how real this accusation is."^{[120][121][122]} He also warned "there are enemies who are demons, and there are

enemies who are humans, and they help one another."^[7] Earlier he speculated that the virus outbreak may be a "biological attack" on Iran.^[123] Major General Salami, Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, stated, "Iran is currently engaged in biological warfare and will definitely win the war."^[124] These claims were seen by many, including the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), as being anti-semitic.^{[125][126]}

Rouhani, however, said on 26 February that there were no plans to quarantine areas affected by the outbreak, and only individuals would be quarantined.^[8] On 1 April, Rouhani said that "Iranians had done "great work" and that the outbreak appeared to be receding in all provinces. He said that Iran had been more successful than other countries at controlling the virus, despite the US-imposed sanctions.^[127]

Khomeini has also praised the country's efforts: "The Iranian nation had a brilliant performance in this test. The people's cooperation has also created beautiful, fascinating and astonishing scenes, and they can be seen everywhere"; and compared it favorably to the West where resident have (he alleged) "fought with one another over toilet paper".^[7]

On 26 February, Iranian Cyber Police announced that, in order to stop the spread of photos and videos with false information about the coronavirus, notices were given to 118 people and 24 others were arrested.^[128] These indictments were considered vague by Article 19,^[129] and the government's attempt to control the information flow. Iranian football player Mohammad Mokhtari, who on 10 March had posted on Instagram criticising the authorities' handling of the outbreak, was arrested by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.^[130] On 14 March, he was released after offering expressions of regret.^[131] On March 30, Iran banned all printing and distribution of newspapers.^[132] Iran said it has arrested 3600 people for "spreading rumors" about coronavirus in the country.^[133]

Healthcare action

According to the Tasnim news agency, Southwest Asia's largest factory producing face masks in Iran was opened by Mohammad Mokhber, director of the Headquarters for Execution of Imam Khomeini's Order on 14 April 2020. The factory is able to "produce 4 million masks per month".^[134] According to the report of EIKO's officials, the EIKO has provided several medical facilities to fight with the coronavirus pandemic in Iran, including " 25 million three-layered and N95 masks, launching a production line of medical masks, production of Iranian test kit for coronavirus infection, research on the medicine of the disease, launching the 4030 phone line with the help of 2,200 doctors and paramedics for answering people's questions about coronavirus, making oxygen concentrator (with producing 50 machines every day), production of 400,000 liters of disinfectant gel".^[135]

On 2 March, the government announced plans to mobilise 300,000 soldiers and volunteers to combat



Deputy Health Minister Iraj Harirchi (left) and spokesperson of the Government Ali Rabiei (right) at a press conference. Hours after the conference, Harirchi announced that he tested positive for the virus.



Disinfection of Piroozi, Tehran

the spread of the virus, as well as to deploy drones and water cannons to disinfect streets.^[136] On 13 March, a plan was announced to clear streets, shops, and public places by the Revolutionary Guards. In addition, 1,000 fixed and mobile detection clinics would be set up, the army would work alongside medical staff as well as producing face masks and gloves, and army beds would be made available for patients.^[137]

The head of the Medical Council of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mohammad Reza Zafarghandi, said on 18 March that 22 million Iranians had been screened and that the condition of a one and a half million was being monitored. He also said that the numbers given by the MOHME are those of confirmed cases, adding, "The reality is the real numbers are higher than the [reported] numbers."^[138] The Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics created the first COVID-19 test kit on 23 February.^[139] The government created an application and a website to combat the outbreak.^[140]

Citizens were advised to avoid using banknotes.^[141]

Several prominent figures have promoted unproven medical remedies, including Khamenai, Abbas Tabrizian and Hossein Ravazadeh.^[142]

Prisons

Iranian judiciary spokesman Gholam Hossein Ismaili said that "he was activating a range of preventive measures including cutting the number of people being sent to jail and allowing some inmates out on temporary early release."^[143]

On 9 March, around 70,000 prisoners were temporarily released to limit the further spread of the disease within prisons.^{[144][145]} On 10 March, more than 54,000 prisoners were temporarily released to prevent the spread of coronavirus.^[146] On 17 March, about 85,000 prisoners were temporarily released due to the coronavirus,^[147] and two days later the government announced plans to pardon 11,000 prisoners, including those charged with political crimes.^{[148][149]}

On 27 March, 70 inmates escaped Saqqez Prison in Kurdistan province.^[150] On 28 March, prisoners in the western Iranian city of Hamadan rioted and escaped, using the outbreak as a pretext according to Hamedan's prosecutor.^{[151][152]} Prisoners in the city of Mahabad, in Iran's Kurdish region, also attempted to escape.^[153] On 30 March, there was a prison riot in the south of the country. Although 100,000 prisoners have been released as a measure to contain the pandemic, an estimated 50,000 people are still behind bars, including violent offenders and "security cases", dual nationals and others with Western ties.^[150] Human rights activists reported that during riots in different jails on 30 and 31 March, at least 20 prisoners were killed in two prisons in Ahwaz when the guards opened fire of the prisoners. Several other prisoners were reportedly killed in Shiban prison, also in Ahwaz.^[154] On 3 April, Rupert Colville, a spokesman for the United Nations Human Rights Commission, expressed his worries about prison conditions in "countries including Iran, one of the worst-hit in the world". There have been riots in the prisons of Iran and some other countries, "prisoners who are afraid, who are distressed at the big loss of contact from family members and so on. So, there are many, many issues surrounding this." Colville's comment came after Daniel Zeinolabedini, a juvenile offender in Mahabad prison in northeast Iran, died after he was reportedly beaten by prison guards.^{[155][156]} A riot had erupted on 28 March, before Daniel's death, over prison conditions and the failure of the authorities to temporarily release the prisoners amid the pandemic.^[157]

On 7 April, Iranian authorities moved some political prisoners from Shibani prisons in Ahwaz to an unknown location after the protests. According to Radio Farda, the regime severely suppressed the protests and several prisoners were killed.^[158] A report issued by Amnesty International on 9 April indicated that during the protests, around 35 inmates were killed and hundreds wounded when security forces used live ammunition against them.^[159]

Cancellations

Cultural and sporting events, closing of public places

The Ministry of Sports and Youth took steps to cancel sporting events, including football matches.^[160]

Khamenei decided to cancel his Persian New Year speech, which takes place every year at the Imam Reza shrine, Mashhad.^[161]

On 22 February, the Ministry of Islamic Culture and Guidance announced the cancellation of all concerts and other cultural events for one week.^[162] The traditional Persian fire festival Chaharshanbe Suri was also banned by the government.^[163]

In late March,^[164] all parks and public gardens were closed by the order of officials and police did not let people enter.^[127]

Education

The MOHME announced the closure of universities, higher educational institutions, and schools in several cities and provinces.^[165] The Corona National Anti-Virus Headquarters ordered academic organizations to launch learning management systems.^[166] Iran's health minister announced schools and universities would be closed until the start of the holiday for Nowruz, the Persian New Year, on 20 March.^[141]

Religion

In late February, the MOHME said that Friday prayers would not be held in Tehran and areas affected by the outbreak that week.^[167] On 20 February, according to a letter from the MOHME to the governor of Qom, a request was made to "limit the number of pilgrims at the Fatima Masumeh Shrine and other religious sites".^[168] However, Shia shrines in Qom remained open for pilgrims to congregate.^[169] The head of Fatima Masumeh Shrine encouraged pilgrims to visit the shrine on 27 February, saying, "We consider this holy shrine to be a place of healing."^[170]

On 16 March, to prevent the spread of coronavirus, Fatima Masumeh Shrine, Jamkaran Mosque in Qom, and Imam Reza Shrine in Mashhad were closed.^[171] Following this announcement, some people protested by entering the shrine, but they were driven out by workers and the doors were closed again.^{[172][173]}

Travel

Rouhani ordered the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development to make decisions about public commuting and the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade to build required medical equipment.^[174] As confirmed cases mounted, Iran's health minister announced on 5 March that checkpoints would be placed between cities to limit travel.^[141] The government indicated that it might use force to limit travel between cities.^[175] On 17 March, the government warned that "millions" might die from the coronavirus if people were to keep ignoring health guidelines and continue traveling. As of mid-March, 90% of the 18,000 coronavirus cases in the Middle East were in Iran.^{[176][177]} On 20 March, media reports suggested that heavy traffic continued for the Nowruz holiday. A government minister warned that the crisis might continue for six months if the disease was not brought under control.^[178] On 25 March, the government warned that Iran might be facing a second wave of COVID-19 because people were ignoring guidance on travelling during the Nowruz holidays, and banned all new trips between cities.^[179]

Economic decision

Measures would include guaranteeing bank credit of 10m rials (\$61) to 23m families (which they have to pay back with 4% profit) — most of the population — and low-interest rate loans up to 20m rials to lower-income households as care packages.^[180] The Administrative and Recruitment Affairs Organization ruled that telecommuting of government employees would be permissible.^[181] On 24 March, Rouhani announced that half of all government employees would work remotely at home.^[182] In order to restrict the spread of the disease, most businesses deemed non-essential were closed.^[69] According to Rouhani, "the authorities had given the go-ahead for the resumption of certain economic activities 'step by step' from April 11".^[69]

On 26 March, Rouhani requested to withdraw 1 billion dollars from National Development Fund and Khamenei allowed the withdrawal after eleven days.^[183] On 28 March, Rouhani announced that 20% of the country's annual budget would be allocated to fight the virus.^[184] The following day, he defended against criticisms of the government's response to the outbreak, saying that he needed to weigh protecting the country's economy that was already affected by US sanctions while fighting the worst outbreak of the region.^{[66][185]}

Easing of restrictions

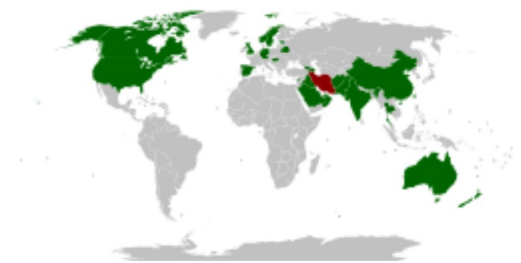
On 5 April, President Hassan Rouhani announced that economic activity in "low-risk" sector would resumed nationwide apart from Tehran province starting 11 April. On 18 April, Iran allowed some businesses in Tehran and nearby towns to re-open with a third of government offices employees still working from home, schools, restaurants, malls and grand bazaar remained closed.^[186] The lockdown continued to be eased in May; all civil servants were allowed to return to work, mosques and schools were reopened, restrictions on restaurants were eased, shopping malls allowed to extend opening hours.^{[187][188]} After the Turkey-Iran border at Bazargan was closed in February, a limited number of trucks were allowed to move between the two countries on 7 May,^[189] and the border was reopened on 4 June.^[190]

The easing of restrictions was followed by an increase in the number of new cases; despite the risk of a second wave of the infections, President Rouhani said on 6 June that there was no option but to keep the economy open.^[87] Rouhani said on 14 June that the main priority was to control prices and supply the basic means of life for the people of Iran as the country suffered the repercussions of the

COVID-19 outbreak with prices of food and household items increasing and currency falling.^{[191][192]} A campaign to encourage its citizens to wear face mask was launched on 27 June 2020,^[193] and the following day it was announced that wearing face mask would be made compulsory in "covered spaces where there are gatherings" until 22 July.^[194]

International reaction

On 20 February, a SARS-CoV-2 confirmed case was reported for a woman in her 30s who had arrived in Canada from Iran.^[195] On 25 February, a woman in her 60s, and the next day her husband, who was also in his 60s, tested positive for SARS-CoV-2.^[196] On 21 February, Lebanon confirmed the first COVID-19 case, a 45-year-old woman travelling from Qom.^{[197][198]} On 24 February, neighbouring countries Kuwait, Iraq, and Bahrain announced that they had recorded their first coronavirus cases from people who came from Iran.^[199] According to Oman's Health Ministry, two Omani women who visited Iran were infected with the coronavirus.^[200] On 26 February, Pakistan announced two persons had been diagnosed with COVID-19, one of them known to have visited Iran.^[201] Georgia confirmed its first COVID-19 case, a 50-year-old Georgian man who returned from Iran.^[202] China confirmed a man in Zhongwei, Ningxia, who returned from Iran, tested positive for SARS-CoV-2.^[203] Estonia confirmed the first COVID-19 case, an Iranian citizen living in Estonia who returned from Iran.^[204] Kuwait confirmed 43 cases of COVID-19, all of them involved people who had travelled to Iran in February.^[205] Germany, Norway, Sweden, and Spain also confirmed new cases involving individuals with previous travel to Iran.^{[206][207][208][209][210][211]} On 28 February, New Zealand and Belarus reported their first cases of COVID-19, both involving people who had traveled from Iran.^{[212][213]} On 29 February, Qatar reported the first infection in a citizen who was evacuated from Iran.^[214]



Countries with COVID-19 cases linked to Iranian clusters

On 1 March, Armenia announced its first case of coronavirus infection, identified in a man who had returned from Iran.^[215] On 5 March, India confirmed a case in a citizen who recently travelled to Iran. Thailand announced the 46th and 47th confirmed cases in the country were a 22-year-old Chinese and 20-year-old Thai who had recently travelled to Iran.^[216] On 9 March, Iran was recognized as a source spreading coronavirus to other countries. All of Iran's neighboring states put some kind of limitations on travel or closed their borders with Iran.^{[217][218]} Shanghai confirmed four imported cases from Iran.^{[219][220]} The Chinese province of Gansu also confirmed 25 imported cases from Iran.^{[221][222][223][224][225][226][227]}



World Health Organization representatives holding joint meeting with Tehran administrators

Travel restrictions

On 23 February, Georgia suspended flights to and from Iran.^[228] On the same day, Pakistan,^[229] Turkey,^[230] Afghanistan, and Armenia closed their land borders with Iran.^[231] Afghanistan stopped

all forms of travel to and from Iran with three suspected cases reported, while Turkey stopped all incoming flights from Iran.^{[232][233]} On 24 February, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, and Tajikistan^[234] restricted and suspended all flights from and to Iran.^{[235][200]} Citizens of the United Arab Emirates were banned from traveling to Iran.^[236] Armenia also suspended flights to Iran but scheduled flights to repatriate its citizens from Iran.^[237] On 26 February, Kazakhstan announced a plan to stop flights to and from Iran starting 1 March.^[238] On 27 February, Russia announced that it would limit flights to and from Iran except for those operated by Aeroflot and Mahan Air, and would also stop issuing visas to Iranian citizens starting 28 February.^[239] New Zealand announced temporary restrictions on people travelling from Iran.^[240] Malaysia set up separate immigration lanes for travellers from countries with major COVID-19 outbreaks, including Iran.^[241] The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) upgraded the status of Iran to level 3 (avoid non-essential travels due to widespread community transmission).^[242] On 29 February, Australia announced a ban on foreigners arriving directly from Iran, and required them to stay in a third country for 14 days before entering Australia. A woman returning from Iran had also tested positive for the virus.^[243] Azerbaijan later closed its border with Iran as two Azeri citizens were confirmed to have been infected in Iran.^[244]

On 2 March, Sweden announced that it had suspended flights operated by Iran Air, the first country to ban flights by the airline.^[245] On 4 March, Thailand declared that all people travelling from Iran must be quarantined for 14 days.^[246] Iraq and Azerbaijan stopped allowing trucks and imports from Iran; earlier on 29 February Azerbaijan had closed its borders to the people coming from Iran.^[247] On 6 March, Russia announced that it would temporary ban visitors arriving from Iran starting the next day.^[248]

Humanitarian assistance

The UN's Children Fund (UNICEF) has flown aid into Iran. In late February, the first cargo plane with personal protective equipment (PPE) arrived, followed by another on 3 March and a third on 16 March. On 3 March, the United Arab Emirates sent an aircraft with medical supplies and five WHO experts. Uzbekistan sent a plane on 16 March.^[249]

The fifth batch of testing kits was dispatched to Iran by the World Health Organization on 28 February.^[250] Russia provided Iran with 500 kits for 50,000 tests.^[251] A group of Chinese medical experts with a new pack of humanitarian aid entered Iran on 29 February.^[250] The Chinese Defense Ministry announced on 20 March that test kits, protective suits, and medical masks provided by the People's Liberation Army were handed to the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran.^[252]

On 23 March, the European Union pledged €20m in humanitarian assistance. The EU said that it was committed to helping Iran combat the pandemic and said that it would further support Iran's plea for IMF financial help.^[253]

U.S. President Donald Trump said he would be willing to provide coronavirus aid, such as ventilators, to Iran to help deal with the pandemic "if they ask for it."^[254]

US sanctions

The Iranian embassy in London claims that "US sanctions have made it difficult for governmental and

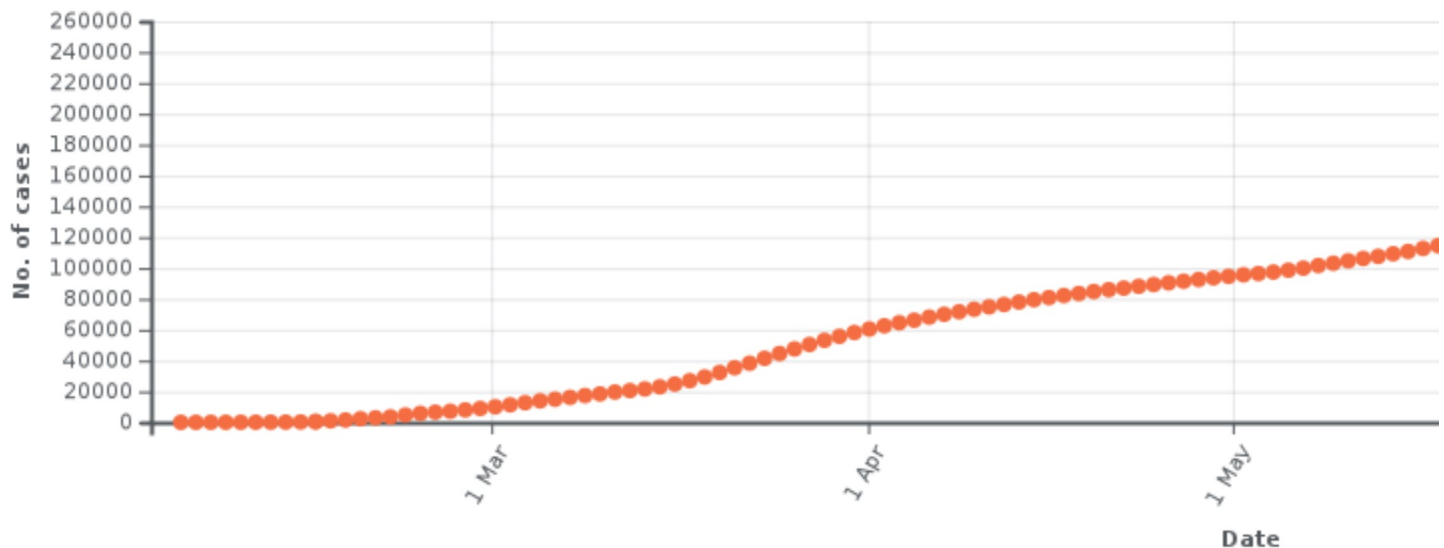
non-governmental institutions to provide medication for people who are infected by the coronavirus. Sending medical supplies to Iran through the recently established Swiss channel requires written permission from the US. Recently, sanctions on 12 new Iranian entities were imposed by the US Department of State. According to the Trump administration, Iran is using sanctions "as an excuse to hide their own incompetence, including a reluctance to take the necessary tough measures to restrict population movements".^[255] It is argued that while the sanctions legally allow pharmaceuticals and humanitarian products to be sold to Iran, due to their nature, very few banks are willing to risk sanctions by trading with Iran.^{[256][257]}, which has severely limited the medical supplies available to the Iranian public health system in dealing with the coronavirus outbreak. One right-wing lobby group in the United States, United Against Nuclear Iran, has argued that all global humanitarian trade with Iran should be stopped and medical supplies should be prevented from reaching the country.^[258]

Rouhani wrote a public letter to world leaders asking for help, saying that Iran did not have access to international markets due to the sanctions.^[259] The UK, Pakistan, China, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Group of 77 all urged the US to ease sanctions on Iran to help it fight the growing coronavirus outbreak.^{[260][261][262][263][264][265]} Khamenei has also stated that he does not trust that the United States would provide medicine because it could "spread the virus more".^{[266][120]}

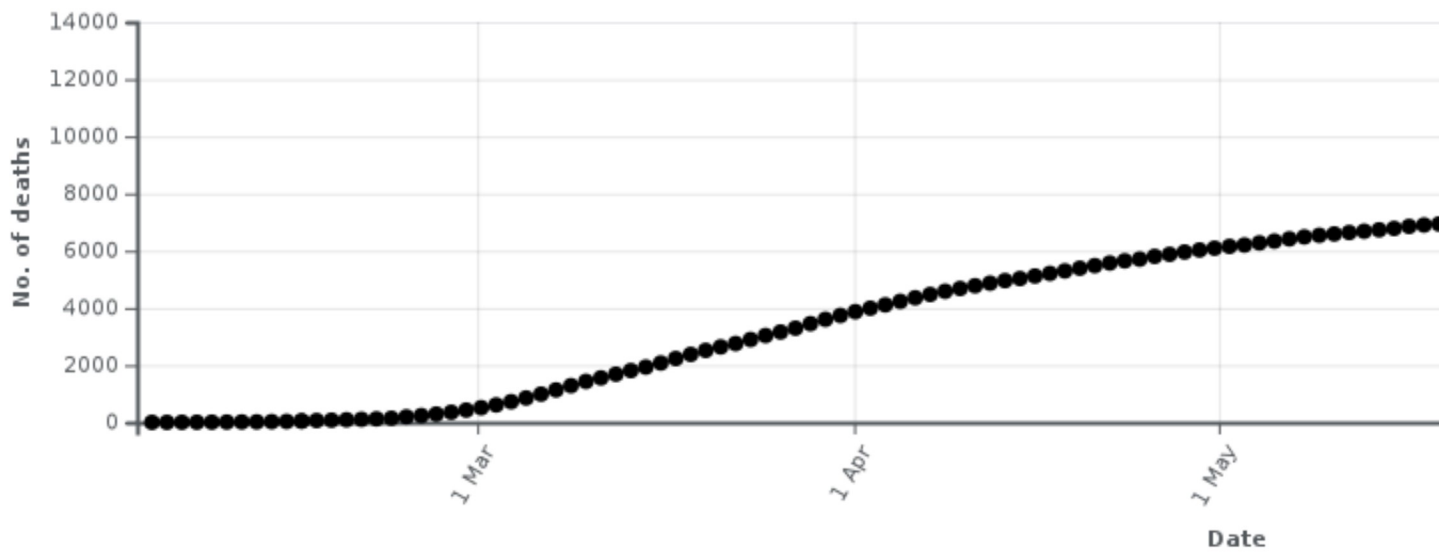
The United States Government rejected allegations by Iran and asserted that sanctions do not include the import of medicine and medical facilities to Iran. Morgan Ortagus, the spokeswoman for the State Department, suggested that Iran use the funds from Setad to fight COVID-19.^[267] On April 6, 2020, Iran announced it would be withdrawing 1 billion euros from the sovereign wealth fund to fight COVID-19.^[268]

Statistics

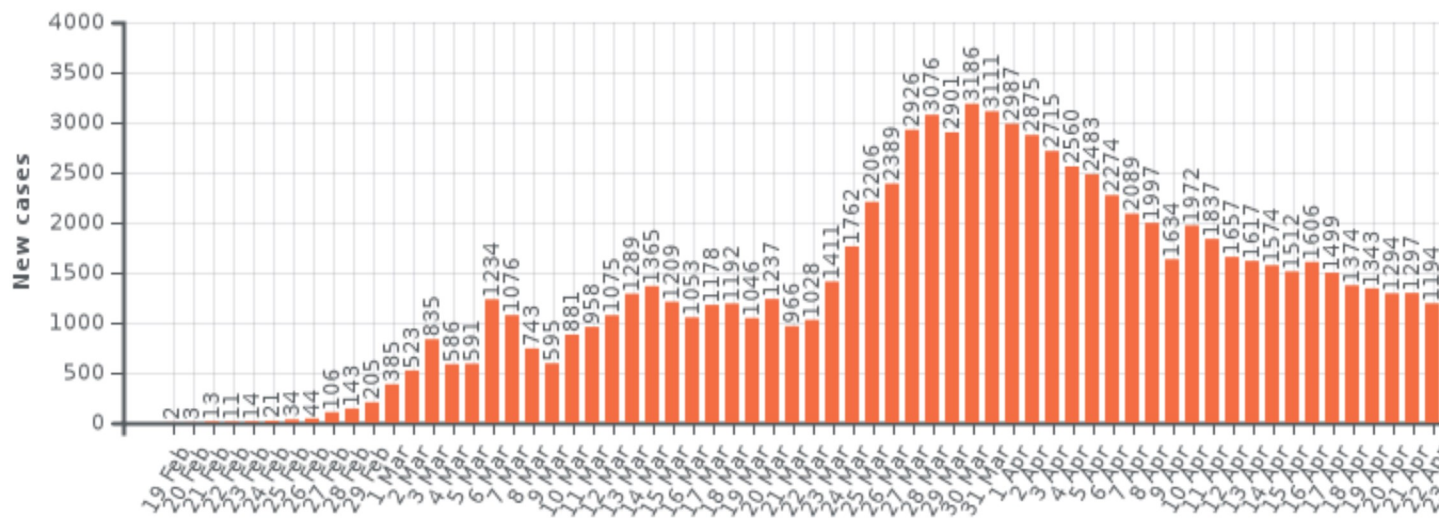
Total cases



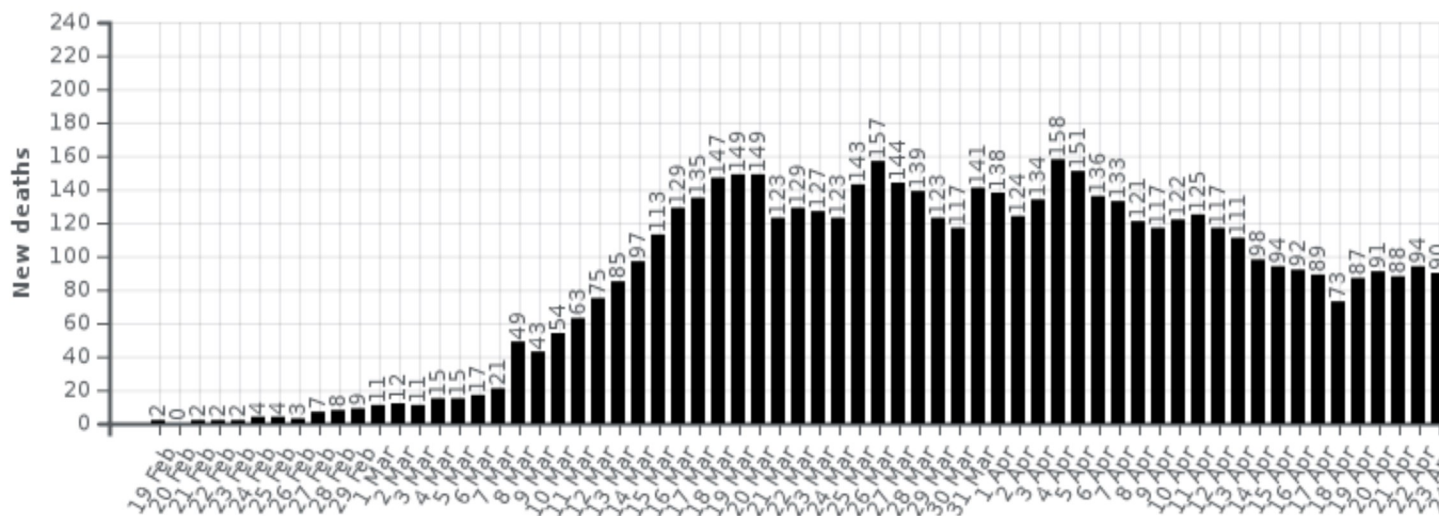
Total deaths



New cases



New deaths



Data per day

Confirmed infection cases and COVID-19 deaths in Iran in February and March ()

Date	New [a]	N. sum [b]	Deaths	D. sum	Source
February and March					
19 Feb 2020	2	2	2	2	[3][35]
20 Feb 2020	3	5	0	2	[36]
21 Feb 2020	13	18	2	4	[37]
22 Feb 2020	10	28	2	6	[38]
23 Feb 2020	15	43	2	8	[269]
24 Feb 2020	18	61	4	12	[11]
25 Feb 2020	34	95 ^[c]	4	16	[271]
26 Feb 2020	44	139	3	19	[272]
27 Feb 2020	106	245	7	26	[273]
28 Feb 2020	143	388	8	34	[46]
29 Feb 2020	205	593	9	43	[274][275]
1 Mar 2020	385	978	11	54	[276]
2 Mar 2020	523	1501	12	66	[48]
3 Mar 2020	835	2336	11	77	[277]
4 Mar 2020	586	2922	15	92	[278]
5 Mar 2020	591	3513	15	107	[279]
6 Mar 2020	1234	4747	17	124	[280]
7 Mar 2020	1076	5823	21	145	[281]
8 Mar 2020	743	6566	49	194	[282]
9 Mar 2020	595	7161	43	237	[283]
10 Mar 2020	881	8042	54	291	[284]
11 Mar 2020	958	9000	63	354	[285]
12 Mar 2020	1075	10075	75	429	[286]
13 Mar 2020	1289	11364	85	514	[287]
14 Mar 2020	1365	12729	97	611	[288]
15 Mar 2020	1209	13938	113	724	[289]
16 Mar 2020	1053	14991	129	853	[290]
17 Mar 2020	1178	16169	135	988	
18 Mar 2020	1192	17361	147	1135	
19 Mar 2020	1046	18407	149	1284	

20 Mar 2020	1237	19644	149	1433	
21 Mar 2020	966	20610	123	1556	
22 Mar 2020	1028	21638	129	1685	
23 Mar 2020	1411	23049	127	1812	[291]
24 Mar 2020	1762	24811	123	1934	[292]
25 Mar 2020	2206	27017	143	2077	[293]
26 Mar 2020	2389	29406	157	2234	[294]
27 Mar 2020	2926	32332	144	2378	[295]
28 Mar 2020	3076	35408	139	2517	[296]
29 Mar 2020	2901	38309	123	2640	[297]
30 Mar 2020	3186	41495	117	2757	[298]
31 Mar 2020	3111	44606	141	2898	[299]

Confirmed infection cases and COVID-19 deaths in Iran in April and May ()

Date	New [a]	N. sum [b]	Deaths	D. sum	Source
1 Apr 2020	2987	47593	138	3036	[300]
2 Apr 2020	2875	50468	124	3160	
3 Apr 2020	2715	53183	134	3294	
4 Apr 2020	2560	55743	158	3452	
5 Apr 2020	2483	58226	151	3603	
6 Apr 2020	2274	60500	136	3739	
7 Apr 2020	2089	62589	133	3872	
8 Apr 2020	1997	64586	121	3993	[301]
9 Apr 2020	1643	66220	117	4110	
10 Apr 2020	1972	68192	122	4232	
11 Apr 2020	1837	70029	125	4357	
12 Apr 2020	1657	71686	117	4474	
13 Apr 2020	1617	73303	111	4585	
14 Apr 2020	1574	74877	98	4683	
15 Apr 2020	1512	76389	94	4777	
16 Apr 2020	1606	77995	92	4869	
17 Apr 2020	1499	79494	89	4958	
18 Apr 2020	1374	80868	73	5031	
19 Apr 2020	1343	82211	87	5118	
20 Apr 2020	1294	83505	91	5209	
21 Apr 2020	1297	84802	88	5297	
22 Apr 2020	1194	85996	94	5391	
23 Apr 2020	1030	87026	90	5481	
24 Apr 2020	1168	88194	93	5574	
25 Apr 2020	1134	89328	76	5650	
26 Apr 2020	1153	90481	60	5710	
27 Apr 2020	991	91472	96	5806	
28 Apr 2020	1112	92584	71	5877	
29 Apr 2020	1073	93657	80	5957	
30 Apr 2020	983	94640	71	6028	
1 May 2020	1006	95646	63	6091	
2 May 2020	802	96448	65	6156	

3 May 2020	976	97424	47	6203	
4 May 2020	1223	98647	74	6277	
5 May 2020	1323	99970	63	6340	
6 May 2020	1680	101650	78	6418	
7 May 2020	1485	103135	68	6486	
8 May 2020	1556	104691	55	6541	
9 May 2020	1529	106220	48	6589	
10 May 2020	1383	107603	51	6640	
11 May 2020	1683	109286	45	6685	
12 May 2020	1481	110767	48	6733	
13 May 2020	1958	112725	50	6783	
14 May 2020	1808	114533	71	6854	
15 May 2020	2102	116635	48	6902	
16 May 2020	1757	118392	35	6937	
17 May 2020	1806	120198	51	6988	
18 May 2020	2294	122492	69	7057	
19 May 2020	2111	124603	62	7119	
20 May 2020	2346	126949	64	7183	
21 May 2020	2392	129341	66	7249	
22 May 2020	2311	131652	51	7300	
23 May 2020	1869	133521	59	7359	
24 May 2020	2180	135701	58	7417	
25 May 2020	2023	137724	34	7451	
26 May 2020	1787	139511	57	7508	
27 May 2020	2080	141591	56	7564	
28 May 2020	2258	143849	63	7627	
29 May 2020	2819	146668	50	7677	
30 May 2020	2282	148950	57	7734	
31 May 2020	2516	151466	63	7797	

Confirmed infection cases and COVID-19 deaths in Iran in June ()

Date	New [a]	N. sum [b]	Deaths	D. sum	Source
1 Jun 2020	2979	154445	81	7878	
2 Jun 2020	3117	157562	64	7942	
3 Jun 2020	3134	160696	70	8012	
4 Jun 2020	3574	164270	59	8081	
5 Jun 2020	2886	167156	63	8134	
6 Jun 2020	2269	169425	75	8209	
7 Jun 2020	2364	171789	72	8281	
8 Jun 2020	2043	173832	70	8351	[302]
9 Jun 2020	2095	175927	74	8425	
10 Jun 2020	2011	177938	81	8506	
11 Jun 2020	2218	180156	78	8584	
12 Jun 2020	2369	182525	75	8659	
13 Jun 2020	2410	184955	71	8730	
14 Jun 2020	2472	187427	107	8837	
15 Jun 2020	2449	189876	113	8950	
16 Jun 2020	2563	192439	115	9065	
17 Jun 2020	2612	195051	120	9185	
18 Jun 2020	2596	197647	87	9272	
19 Jun 2020	2615	200262	120	9392	
20 Jun 2020	2322	202584	115	9507	
21 Jun 2020	2368	204952	116	9623	[303]
22 Jun 2020	2573	207525	119	9742	
23 Jun 2020	2445	209970	121	9863	
24 Jun 2020	2531	212501	133	9996	
25 Jun 2020	2595	215096	134	10130	
26 Jun 2020	2628	217724	109	10239	
27 Jun 2020	2456	220180	125	10364	
28 Jun 2020	2489	222669	144	10508	
29 Jun 2020	2536	225205	162	10670	
30 Jun 2020	2457	227662	147	10817	

Confirmed infection cases and COVID-19 deaths in Iran ()

Date	New [a]	N. sum [b]	Deaths	D. sum	Source
1 Jul 2020	2549	230,211	141	10,958	
2 Jul 2020	2652	232,863	148	11,106	
3 Jul 2020	2566	235,429	154	11,260	
4 Jul 2020	2449	237,878	148	11,408	
5 Jul 2020	2560	240,438	163	11,571	
6 Jul 2020	2613	243,051	160	11,731	
7 Jul 2020	2637	245,688	200	11,931	[304]
8 Jul 2020	2,691	248,379	153	12,084	
9 Jul 2020	2,079	250,458	221	12,305	
10 Jul 2020	2,262	252,720	142	12,447	
11 Jul 2020	2,397	255,117	188	12,635	
12 Jul 2020	2,186	257,303	194	12,829	
13 Jul 2020	2,349	259,652	203	13,032	

Notes:

- a. New SARS-CoV-2 lab-confirmed infections
- b. Total number of SARS-CoV-2 lab-confirmed infections
- c. The suspected number of SARS-CoV-2 cases in Iran was announced as 900 on 25 February.^[270]

New COVID-19

Date	Region 1							Region 2						Regio		
	Qom	Teh	Maz	Alb	Sem	GoI	Qaz	Esf	Frs	Hor	Koh	Cha	Bus	Gil	Ard	Azs
2020/02/19	2															
2020/02/20	2															
2020/02/21	7	4												2		
2020/02/22	8	2														
2020/02/23	7	4	1											2		
2020/02/24	8	3						2						2		
2020/02/25	16	8	2	2					1	1				2		
2020/02/26	15	4	1		1				2	1	2			1		
2020/02/27	7	38	7	3	3			8						23	5	2
2020/02/28	16	64	9	3	2	2	2	10						25	1	4
2020/02/29	21	52	12	8	4	22	6	12	8					17	3	6
2020/03/01	30	170	11	31	3			13	8	2				28		
2020/03/02	N/A															
2020/03/03	N/A															
2020/03/04	101	253	9	19	8	9	25		14			1		35		9
2020/03/05	32	56	50	61	22	4	31	118	19	2		8	3	80	17	10
2020/03/06	137	61	180	129	54	67	65	150	13	6	4	5	2	91	11	10
2020/03/07	145	126	305	3	24	58	2	96	14	11		2	3	70	1	2
2020/03/08	17	266	14	2	37	13	29	80	9	5	3	5	2	2	9	30
2020/03/09	27	140	13		45		40	37	29	17		5	1	28	22	22
2020/03/10	39	169	253	32	1	4	10	17	18	17	2	11	7		19	17
2020/03/11	53	256	32	45	63	9	27	170	19	10		1		5	1	29
2020/03/12	42	303	79	74	40	25	42	4	29		15	11	3	84	14	7
2020/03/13	42	303	192	6	38	21	12	110	33	4				71	15	97
2020/03/14	32	347	17	134	47		47	155	11				7	113	33	59
2020/03/15	84	251	72	67	41	25	22	126	9	7	1		6	43		36
2020/03/16	19	200	96	49	34	42	40	118	43	16	5	3	4	18	30	35
2020/03/17	29	273	59	116	33	30	26	75	31	6		2	4	45	19	78
2020/03/18	22	213	61	76	60	20	53	162	60	12	13	4	4	21	10	84
2020/03/19	31	137	58	61	16	9	47	108	21	5	15	3	8	73	16	58
2020/03/20	36	220	84	95	52	15	8	145	50	17	1	3	1	99	35	55
2020/03/21	20	232	28	55		6	59	101	22		12	2		57	6	72

2020/03/22	17	249	36	60		10	29	87	26	2		2		38	19	57
Total	1178	5098	1700	1177	645	391	669	1979	505	148	73	68	55	1191	289	813
Notes:																

Alternative estimates

The figures given by the MOHME have been disputed both inside and outside Iran, including by members of the Iranian Parliament.

A letter claiming to be from the MOHME to the office of the President that circulated on social media suggests that the Iranian authorities were aware of confirmed SARS-CoV-2 cases and deaths many days before the official announcement. Government officials said that the letter was a fake.^{[326][327]} Another letter also circulated on social media; it was signed by interior minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli and sent to Health Minister Saeed Namaki to request that the announcement of coronavirus outbreak be delayed until after the parliamentary election to avoid a low turnout of voters. The government has also denied this claim.^[328]

On 9 March, Graeme Wood stated that he deems the official count "certainly an undercount", and provided alternative estimates which he calls "doomsday figures".^[329]

Some researchers have used the vital registration data from the National Organization for Civil Registration of Iran and estimated that around 5000 excess deaths have happened in winter. They argue most of these deaths were due to COVID-19, meaning the real number of COVID-19 deaths was about five times larger than the official count.^{[330][331]}

World Health Organization verification

On 28 February, Michael Ryan, chief of the WHO health emergencies programme, told the press that the mortality rate in Iran indicated its outbreak might be more widespread than realised.^[332]

On 2 March, WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom said in an interview with CNBC that the WHO has its own mechanism for checking national health authorities' statistics and did not see problems with the official Iranian government SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19 counts.^[333]

On 17 March, WHO regional emergency director Rick Brennan said the number of cases reported in Iran could represent only about 20% of the real numbers because testing was restricted to severe cases, as is the case even in some wealthy European countries. He added, "We've said the weakest link in their chain is the data. They are rapidly increasing their ability to test and so the numbers will go up... There's a great commitment and they are taking it seriously from the highest level of government."^[19]

Other sources

Iranian officials

Masoud Pezeshkian, the First Deputy of the Parliament of Iran, claimed on 3 March that the figures reported by the MOHME are "not real".^[334] Member of parliament for Qom Ahmad Amirabadi Farahani claimed on 24 February that COVID-19 had arrived in Qom three weeks prior, in early February, that the first death had occurred on 13 February but was not announced by officials, and that the true number of COVID-19 deaths in Qom was 50.^{[11][335]} Deputy health minister Iraj Harirchi denied giving false figures.^[336]

As two MOHME officials, a former ministry official and three doctors claimed, Iranian authorities knew of an increasing number of patients with lung infections and high fever in Qom in early January but they did not announce the news until weeks later because of the upcoming elections.^[337]

Anonymous sources reported by media

On 28 February, BBC reported 210 deaths had occurred in Iran, citing "sources in the country's health system", while the official number for the day was 34.^[332] MOHME spokesman Jahanpur rejected the BBC report in a tweet.^[12]

On 12 March, *The Economist* wrote that "[s]ome in the government think the actual number of cases is closer to 100,000", while the official count of infected people was about 9,000.^[338]

On 22 March, Radio Farda reported that, "based on the statements made by local officials in various parts of Iran", around 2,372 have died, while the official death toll reached 1,556.^[339] Radio Farda also said on 21 March that since Iran's government statistics only included those who had tested positive for the disease, due to a lack of test kits, deaths may be registered as respiratory complications or influenza. They put their estimate of the number of infections at 16,000 in Tehran alone when the official figure given was 20,610 for the whole country on that date.^[340]

Satellite imagery from Qom cemetery

On 12 March, *The Washington Post* published satellite images and analysis provided by Maxar Technologies, saying that vast burial pits were being excavated near Qom, said to be used to accommodate the victims in the city. The digging of the new section of burial pits began on 21 February, only two days after the government announced their first cases of COVID-19, and then rapidly expanded. The number of fresh graves suggests preparation for a far larger number of deaths.^{[341][342]} A Qom municipality official responsible for the city's burial sites said that "the graves had been planned before the outbreak as part of usual procedures in the cemetery", and Press TV, a state-funded news organization, claimed that the overall length of the purported 100 yards could not accommodate more than about 75–100 graves.^[343]



Burial site at Qom's Behesht Masoumeh Cemetery

U.S. officials

Brian Hook, the US State Department's envoy on Iran, said that the Iranian government had lied "and their media was instructed not to report on the coronavirus outbreak as it rapidly spread from the religious city of Qom to other cities".^[4] US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made a number of accusation against Khamenei in March, saying that Khamenei had lied about the outbreak in Iran and continued to keep Mahan Air flying to and from China in February, spreading the virus and putting lives at risk, as well as jailing those who spoke out, and that funds for coronavirus had been stolen by officials.^{[344][345][346]}

People's Mujahedin of Iran

The exiled organization People's Mujahedin of Iran (MEK) accused the Iranian government of covering up the true death toll, and gave a higher death count, up to 20 times higher than the official figures.^{[347][13]} According to Radio Farda, In a joint statement in late March, one hundred Iranian activists blamed Khamenei and Rouhani for covering up the spread of coronavirus and turning it into a catastrophe affecting the whole country. All of the signatories live outside of Iran.^[348]

See also

- COVID-19 pandemic by country and territory
- COVID-19 pandemic in Asia

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External links

- Data and maps, frequently updated:

- "Coronavirus Iran updates and news" (<https://coronavirus-global.com/iran>) [Latest news and statistics of coronavirus in Iran.] (in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Italian, Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish, Estonian, and Russian). Retrieved 4 April 2020.

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This page was last edited on 13 July 2020, at 23:35 (UTC).

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