IRAQ: COVID-19
Situation Report No.1
27 February 2020
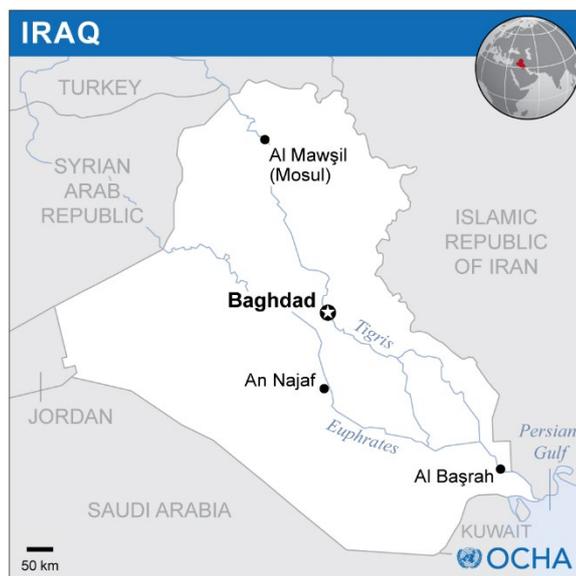
KEY MESSAGES

- Six confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Iraq as of 27-February-2020
- Emergency Cell has been convened
- Month-long school closures implemented in KRI
- Restrictions on gatherings in public sites in several governorates
- Iraq has shut its border with Iran and barred entry from eight other countries considered to be high risk for transmission

SITUATION OVERVIEW

The first recorded case of COVID-19 (also colloquially known as "coronavirus") was recorded in Iraq on 24-February, in the city of Najaf, in Najaf governorate. The patient was a theology student from Iran. Four more cases were reported in Kirkuk governorate on 25-February; the patients were an Iraqi family who recently returned from Iran. One additional case was confirmed in Baghdad on 27-February, again from a traveler who had visited Iran. No additional cases have been confirmed, but testing is underway throughout the country. There have been no known fatalities in Iraq to date due to COVID-19.

Map Sources: ESRI, UNCS.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Map created in Sep 2013.

An inter-agency Emergency Cell has been convened, and relevant United Nations agencies (led by the World Health Organization) have been working in close cooperation with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of the Interior and other appropriate government counterparts. Iraq's medical infrastructure has some significant gaps that WHO is working to address through the fast-track procurement of supplies and equipment. The primary risk of transmission to Iraq comes from neighboring Iran, which has seen a dramatic escalation in infections in recent days (as of 27-February, Iran had 141 confirmed cases with 22 fatalities). Iran and Iraq share 21 official border crossings, and religious tourism is a major source of cultural exchange in both countries. In March 2020, there will be three significant Shia holy days; normally this would be cause for large numbers of pilgrims entering from Iran. However, at present, Iraq has issued an indefinite ban on travelers coming from Iran, China, Thailand, South Korea, Japan, Italy and Singapore, Bahrain and Kuwait (Iraqi nationals, diplomats and official delegations are exempted). Citizens are being advised to avoid public gatherings, conferences, and other unnecessary meetings.

GOVERNORATE-LEVEL CLOSURES

- **Kirkuk**: Public schools, universities and colleges have been suspended in Kirkuk until further notice, as well as ceremonial celebrations and public gatherings, including weddings, funeral receptions and cafés.
- **Salah Al-Din**: The Governor has restricted the entry of "foreigners" into the province (Salah al-Din hosts Shia religious pilgrimage sites), and has closed offices and schools for two days.
- **Ninewa:** Two days of public holidays have been declared to enable authorities to put in place preventive measures.
- **Najaf:** Schools and shrines are closed in Najaf for ten days.
- **Diyala:** Schools and universities have been closed for two days.
- **Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI)**: The Kurdistan Regional Government has closed all schools and universities in the KRI for one month. Two thousand Iraqis in KRI who have recently returned from Iran are being quarantined, with no infection recorded as of yet.

Additional closures are likely to be announced in coming days. It is not yet clear how COVID-19 preventative measures will affect humanitarian response activities in the country, but cancelled missions and movement restrictions should be expected.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON COVID-19

General information:

- https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019

World Health Organization Situation Reports:

- https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/

Global dashboard tracking COVID-19 Cases:

- https://who.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6

Iraq National Plan for Health Security (April 2019):

- http://www.emro.who.int/irq/iraq-news/ministry-of-health-and-who-mobilize-national-authorities-to-facilitate-implementation-of-core-public-health-capacities-under-the-international-health-regulations.html

Latest available information on travel restrictions (IATA):

- https://www.iatatravelcentre.com/international-travel-document-news/1580226297.htm

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