

# Yemen fights cholera outbreak with vaccination drive

Author:

Tue, 2020-12-29 02:14

HAJJAR: Yemen is fighting a cholera outbreak in the southeastern province of Hadramout, with local and international health bodies carrying out an emergency vaccination campaign.

Outbreaks in the remote Hajjar district usually last from April to September and cases vanish in the following months. But this year the district's main hospital reported receiving new cases of cholera in October, November and December for the first time in decades.

UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO) and health authorities in Yemen, alarmed by the increase in cases, joined forces to carry out an emergency cholera vaccination campaign in Hajjar from Dec. 20-25.

"The continuing arrival of new cases to the hospital is a source of concern to us and it is an indication that cholera is endemic in Hajjar," Abdullah Awadh Bahendi, the director of Hajjar's main hospital and the director of the Health Ministry's district office, told Arab News.

The campaign targeted 40,000 people in the district's rural and urban regions.

Hundreds of posters and leaflets were distributed and trucks roamed around broadcasting messages about the campaign's significance.

Health worker Nashwa Mubarak said awareness activities that took place before or during the campaign had yielded fruit as most Hajjar residents took the vaccine with little objection.

"As a woman, I target women who would not accept male visitors and I also convince hesitant women," she told Arab News.

Health officials said they had registered at least 250 confirmed cases of cholera and one related death in Hajjar since April, compared to 520 cases and six deaths in 2019.

The WHO said that health facilities had recorded 167,278 suspected cases with 48 associated deaths from Jan. 1 to Aug. 2 this year. The highest numbers of cases were reported in the western province of Hodeidah, 26,936, followed by Sanaa with 24,593.

## **FASTFACT**

**Hundreds of posters and leaflets were distributed and trucks roamed around broadcasting messages about the vaccination campaign's significance.**

Health officials in Hajjar attribute the regular resurgence of cholera to crumbling sewage and drinking water systems, in addition to seasonal gatherings of people during the harvest of date palm trees.

Houses discharge sewage in the open or to small holes close by. Flash floods and heavy rains have largely destroyed sewage and water systems in urban

areas, prompting people to use polluted water.

"The rains and floods have devastated water pipelines," Bahendi said. "The cholera reemerges when people turn to unclean water."

He added that the latest humanitarian interventions from the Health Ministry and international organizations had helped to reduce the number of cholera cases.

"Reasons behind cholera outbreaks have nothing to do with the war. We demand building sewage and water systems for Hajjar which would help ending cholera."

Floods isolate villages due to their rough geography, making it difficult for health workers to reach the sick.

Bahendi suggested building several health centers in remote villages along with rehydration corners for dealing with mild cases of cholera and equipping health centers with staff and ambulances.

Residents in Hajjar said fixing water and sanitation systems should be a priority and that they had no choice but to drink unclean water because they could not afford to buy processed bottled water.

Suleiman Ahmed, who is 48, said he contracted the disease after drinking unclean water or eating contaminated food.

"I cannot afford to buy clean water," he told Arab News from his hospital bed in Hajjar. He added that the hospital's directors had advised him to boil water before drinking it or cooking with it if he could not afford to buy bottled water.

Khaled Al-Kaledi, the head of the health department at the Hadramout office of the Health Ministry, said the office had classified Hajjar as a high-risk district due to the high number of cholera cases compared to other areas in the province.

He added that officials, including him, had taken the vaccine to convince the public it was safe.

"People's reactions with the campaign are amazing," he told Arab News.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Yemen](#)

[cholera](#)

KSA announces \$81m megaprojects in Yemen

---

## [Turkey facing delayed China vaccine amid controversial extradition deal](#)

Tue, 2020-12-29 00:27

JEDDAH: China's parliament ratified on Sunday an extradition agreement with Turkey to boost its alleged counterterrorism efforts abroad.

However, critics warn that the agreement will be used in tandem with economic and diplomatic pressure on foreign governments to deport Uighurs, a Turkic-speaking ethnic minority.

The deal was signed in 2017 by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan during a visit to Beijing, but it has yet to be ratified by Turkey's parliament.

Media have speculated that the extradition deal might be used by Beijing as a bargaining chip to boost its investments in Turkey and increase sales of its coronavirus vaccine in the country.

China has already delayed delivery of the first shipment of the Sinovac vaccine to Turkey for several days after a "customs-related problem" arose.

Beijing is also expected to adjust its trade and business ties with Turkey, which is in dire need of foreign capital, depending on the willingness of Ankara to ratify the extradition deal in the near future.

China is still among Turkey's largest import partners.

The first train carrying goods from Turkey to China reached its destination on Saturday, having covered a distance of 8,693 km

However, despite the battered Turkish economy facing a depletion of foreign exchange reserves, an expert said Turkey "would not ratify the agreement anytime soon."

Turkey's domestic situation means the ruling party risks losing its nationalistic coalition partner over accusations that the agreement will harm Uighur minorities, the expert said.

"The government is likely to receive a huge blow from the opposition parties

and its coalition partner if it proceeds with ratifying the bill in parliament amid the fragile political circumstances,” the expert told Arab News.

If the agreement is passed by the Turkish parliament, Uighur refugees in Turkey will face extradition to China if they are accused of committing terror or political crimes.

However, if Uighurs are granted Turkish citizenship, extradition requests could be denied by Turkish authorities.

Turkey’s government already faced heavy criticism earlier this year following reports that some exiled Uighurs were deported to China through third countries, mostly Tajikistan.

Critics have said that the long-term residency applications of some Uighurs were also rejected by Turkey, but Ankara has denied the claims.

A motion brought forward by Turkey’s main opposition party to establish a parliamentary committee to investigate China’s treatment of Uighurs was vetoed by the ruling party earlier this year.

Last month, Yusufujrang Aimaitijiang, an Uighur man who claimed to have been forced by Chinese authorities to provide information about fellow Uighurs in Turkey, was shot twice in Istanbul.

There are also mounting allegations about Uighur refugees being interrogated by Turkish police over terror-related claims.

About 50,000 Uighur refugees are believed to live in Turkey. Many have fled the crackdown in northwest China, and see Turkey as a safe haven.

Several districts on the European side of Istanbul have already become popular among Uighurs, and they are welcomed with solidarity by Turkish locals.

China has faced widespread criticism regarding its policies targeting Uighurs and its use of forced labor in mass internment camps.

Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi recently held a phone conversation with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu.

During the call on Dec. 14, Wang said that “both sides should stand against terrorism,” while Cavusoglu said Turkey “will not allow China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity to be undermined,” according to a statement by the Chinese foreign ministry.

Turkey was absent from a group of 22 countries that urged the UN Human Rights Council in July to investigate systemic human rights abuse in China.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Turkey](#)

[China vaccine](#)

[Coronavirus](#)

Turkey stokes fears of new Libya war  
Russian forces act to curb fighting in Syria

---

## Lebanese blame 'brutal' Syrian regime over refugee attack

Author:

Tue, 2020-12-29 00:03

BEIRUT: An arson attack that destroyed a Syrian refugee camp in northern Lebanon has led to widespread criticism of the Assad regime for failing to help or repatriate its displaced citizens.

In the wake of the attack that forced 370 people to flee the camp late on Saturday, Lebanese political leaders accused the Syrian regime of intimidating refugees in the country and deliberately hindering their return.

The accusations came as the Lebanese army confirmed that eight people – two Lebanese and six Syrian nationals – had been arrested in connection with the arson attack, which followed a pay dispute between Syrian workers and their Lebanese employers.

The Syrian Arab News Agency quoted an official source in the foreign ministry calling on Lebanon to “secure protection and care for the displaced Syrians.”

The official source also repeated calls for refugees “forced to leave the country by an unjust war to return to their homeland,” saying that “every effort is being made to facilitate their return.”

However, Lebanon’s Foreign Ministry said that it had received no communication from Syrian officials, either directly or through the embassy in Damascus.

Head of the Progressive Socialist Party Walid Jumblatt accused the Syrian regime of hypocrisy over its condemnation of the attack on the camp and calls to punish the perpetrators.

“This regime gang has destroyed entire villages and cities in Syria, and violated Lebanon with acts of terror and assassination,” he said.

However, former Hezbollah chief Sheikh Subhi Al-Tufayli said that the media campaign calling for the return of Syrian refugees “raises fears of a dirty project that aims to solve the refugee problem by handing them over to the murderous regime in Damascus.”

On Monday, UNHCR spokesman Khaled Kabbara visited the charred campsite to inspect damage.

According to the refugee agency, most of the 370 residents have since been housed in other camps in the region or have found accommodation with locals.

About 1.5 million Syrians live in Lebanon, including 1 million registered as

refugees with the UN, Lebanese government figures show. However, large numbers of Syrians are also believed to have entered the country surreptitiously and are unregistered.

Syrian refugees make up 25 percent of the Lebanese population, with 17 percent living in camps, UNHCR has said.

A recent referendum showed that 96 percent of the refugees want to return to Syria as soon as they feel safe.

The social media debate over the return of Syrian refugees to their homeland included praise for Saudi Arabia following urgent assistance provided by KSrelief to residents left without shelter after Saturday's arson attack.

Syria's Ambassador to Lebanon, Ali Abdul-Karim, told the Syrian Al-Watan newspaper that the Syrian foreign ministry had contacted the embassy to check on the refugees' welfare.

"Some Lebanese have opened their homes to the Syrians who have lost their shelter," he said.

The Syrian envoy also called on Lebanon to "punish those responsible and those who caused harm to the displaced Syrians."



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Syria](#)

[Russia](#)

[Lebanon](#)

[Jordan](#)

Hundreds of Syrians flee as refugee camp torched in Lebanon  
Lebanon reserving nearly 2 million coronavirus vaccines

---

## [Egypt cancels New Year celebrations, shuts event halls](#)

Author:

Tue, 2020-12-29 00:00

CAIRO: Egypt has canceled all New Year celebrations and will shut down any facility organizing festivities in an attempt to control the high number of new coronavirus cases.

The government is also banning weddings, funerals and other gatherings, and fining violators.

Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly told a meeting of the Supreme Committee for the Management of the Coronavirus Crisis that the past few days had witnessed a remarkable increase in the number of new cases, which demanded the meeting be convened to discuss how to limit the spread of the virus.

Cabinet spokesman Nader Saad said the meeting discussed a number of issues. It ensured the need to cancel all New Year celebrations and to take measures to close any facility that organized celebrations and to stop any activities, celebrations or festivals during the coming period.

It was also decided to completely close event halls and stress to hotels that weddings should only be hosted in open spaces, he added.

There has been a drop in tourism because of fresh coronavirus waves and European lockdowns, and a 80 percent decline in the hotel occupancy rate compared to the same period last year, according to officials from the Egyptian Chamber of Tourism.

Hotel occupancy decreased in December compared to the same period last year to around 15 percent in Cairo, 20 percent in Giza, 8 percent in Luxor and Aswan, and 15-20 percent in Sharm El-Sheikh and Hurghada, according to tourism officials.

Madbouly said that violators of COVID-19 guidelines should be penalized immediately, starting from Jan. 3.

People who do not follow measures and do not wear a facemask will get a fine of EGP50 (\$3.18) and, in the event of a failure to pay, the violator will be

referred to prosecution bodies for further action to be taken.

The prime minister also ordered that restaurants and cafes commit to only taking in 50 percent of their capacity, intensifying campaigns in the most affected governorates.

Violators will be fined EGP4,000 and the facility will be closed for a week, provided that the collection of fines begins on Jan. 3. If the violation is repeated the closing period doubles.

Event halls violating the newly issued decisions will see their officials being referred for investigation if the venue is affiliated with the state, and being fined if affiliated to an association. Measures will be taken against the board of directors of the association.

During the meeting, it was also emphasized that the largest number of oxygen cylinders be secured for those needing them, and to confirm the availability of all medicines for coronavirus treatment protocols and medical supplies in all hospitals and private pharmacies.

It was also requested that citizens not hoard medicine.

The meeting heard that the Egyptian Drug Authority was taking measures to register different types of coronavirus vaccines that have been announced internationally. The companies producing these vaccines will be contracted according to the required quantities once this registration is complete.

The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Interior will prepare the vaccination process.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Egypt](#)

[Coronavirus](#)

[New Year celebrations](#)

Fire at Egyptian hospital kills 7 coronavirus patients Egyptian startup prepares MENA students for a post-pandemic world

---

## [Jordan detects two coronavirus variant cases: Minister](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

1609087286075250600

Sun, 2020-12-27 16:40

AMMAN: Jordan on Sunday confirmed two cases of a particularly infectious coronavirus variant in a man and his wife who had arrived from Britain. Health Minister Nazir Obeidat said the Jordanian couple traveled to the kingdom on December 19 and were found to be infected with the new strain of the virus after being tested and isolated.

The couple were still in quarantine and being monitored by medical experts according to virus protocols, Obeidat said, adding they were both in "excellent health" condition.

The new strain of the virus emerged earlier this month in Britain and has already reached several European countries, as well as Japan and Canada. The new strain, which experts fear is more contagious, prompted more than 50 countries to impose travel restrictions on Britain.

Jordan was among them and has barred flights from the UK since Monday, with the ban to be enforced until January 3.

The Middle Eastern country has officially recorded more than 286,356 cases of the novel coronavirus and over 3,729 deaths.

In mid-December, Jordan announced it had approved emergency use of the Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine.

Obeidat said last month that vaccines would be distributed free of charge to Jordanians as well as foreign residents.

Since the virus first emerged earlier this year, Jordan has imposed strict restrictions, with schools and universities still closed and a night-time curfew imposed nationwide.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Coronavirus](#)

[Jordan](#)

[UK](#)

Jordan launches COVID-19 vaccine registration website Jordan continues cross-border goods transport with Saudi Arabia despite new virus restrictions