

One Turkish doctor dies, over 600 health workers infected

Author:

Wed, 2020-04-01 22:34

ISTANBUL: A Turkish doctor died and more than 600 health care workers have been infected with the novel coronavirus, the health minister announced on Wednesday, without disguising his grief over the worsening situation.

"The number of our doctor friends, nurses or other health care personnel affected by the novel coronavirus is high. This figure, which I reluctantly announce, is 601," Minister Fahrettin Koca told a news conference, with a voice on the verge of crying.

One of the doctors involved in the fight against the pandemic died Wednesday after having contracted COVID-19, his son announced on Twitter.

That was the first known death of a doctor in Turkey from coronavirus.

Koca said 2,148 people had tested positive for coronavirus and 63 had died in the past 24 hours, a sharp increase pushing the death toll to 277.

Turkey has thus far recorded a total of 15,679 cases, he added.

The health minister for the first time provided the breakdown of the cases by region.

More than half of the total cases in Turkey were recorded in Turkey's largest city of Istanbul, where 117 deaths and 8,852 cases were registered.

It was followed by the major western city of Izmir and the capital Ankara.

Turkey has taken a series of measures to try to limit the spread of the coronavirus from closing schools, quarantining around 50 towns and areas and imposing curfew for elderly people aged over 65.



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[Palestinian dies after being wounded in West Bank clashes: ministry](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

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Wed, 2020-04-01 18:39

NABLUS: A Palestinian died on Wednesday three weeks after being wounded during clashes with Israeli troops near the city of Nablus in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry said.

Islam Dweikat, 22, was shot on March 11 on the outskirts of the city in the

north of the territory, according to the ministry. He died in a hospital in the central city of Ramallah.

Official news agency Wafa quoted a local mayor as saying he was shot by a rubber-coated bullet.

On the day of the clashes, 15-year-old Mohammed Hamayel was killed when he was shot in the face by Israeli live fire, the ministry said at the time. An Israeli army statement from March 11 said soldiers had faced a “violent riot” of roughly 500 Palestinians hurling rocks and setting tires on fire. An AFP journalist in Nablus said hundreds of Palestinians had gathered in an area south of the city in response to rumors that Israeli settlers were coming to seize land.

The army had denied using live ammunition to break up the demonstration, but said it was investigating Hamayel’s death and other reported injuries.

An army spokeswoman confirmed to AFP on Wednesday that an investigation had been opened, but said it would take time to reach a conclusion.



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[UAE announces 150 new cases of coronavirus, two deaths](#)

Author:

Zaynab Khojji

ID:

1585769212058058900

Wed, 2020-04-01 22:41

DUBAI: The UAE announced 150 new cases of coronavirus in the country on Wednesday and two deaths.

Both patients who died had underlying health problems. One of them was a 62-year-old Asian man and the other was a 78-year-old Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) citizen.

Eight people have died of coronavirus in the UAE to date, with 814 recorded cases.



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UAE completes 39 evacuations of citizens from abroad amid coronavirus crisis
More online stores added to shopping list in UAE amid coronavirus pandemic

Egypt's health sector races to scale up coronavirus readiness

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1585761328587610400

Wed, 2020-04-01 17:05

CAIRO: Egypt has ramped up efforts to fight the coronavirus, ordering manufacturers to channel medical protective equipment to public hospitals and announcing 1 billion Egyptian pounds (\$64 million) in extra funding for its health services.

But the capacity of the public health system to cope with an acceleration of cases in the country of 100 million, where population density could increase the chances of quick contagion, remains a concern, some of its doctors say. Decades of underinvestment left many of Egypt's public hospitals dependent on donations for some services and supplies. Poor quality in primary health care facilities and public hospitals means that in recent years more than half of patients have sought private medical care, according to the World Bank.

At Boulaq public hospital in Cairo, the first major renovation for decades began a few months ago after a social media campaign, two medics there said. As other public hospitals are cordoned off to create isolation wards, those like Boulaq that remain open for normal services are feeling the strain.

"Things are not good. We feel the pressure increasing every day," said one male doctor, who asked not to be named. "We are suffering from years of accumulating (problems). We have shortages of medical equipment, devices and supply."

Egypt had allocated 125 billion pounds from its 1.6 trillion pound 2019/20 budget to the health sector. The health minister told parliament in January that 150 million Egyptian pounds had been assigned for renovations at Boulaq, but more was needed, according to state newspaper Al-Ahram.

There was no immediate response from the health ministry to calls seeking comment on Egypt's coronavirus preparedness.

MORE TESTING CENTRES

Egypt is not alone in feeling the strain of the coronavirus, which has killed more than 43,000 people worldwide. From Japan to Italy, Spain, Britain and the United States, health experts have accused governments of initially downplaying the pandemic or failing to take swift enough action.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has praised Egypt's efforts but has also said they can be scaled up in some areas.

Jean Jabbour, head of the WHO's Egypt office said the government's response had so far been prompt. There are 2,000 beds allocated for COVID-19 treatment, half of which are in intensive care units and 600 with ventilators, while 400,000 test kits have been delivered, his office told Reuters.

"This is ready to increase ... whenever there is a surge in the number of cases of COVID-19," Jabbour said.

Egypt reported its first coronavirus case on February 14. The number of confirmed cases has steadily risen to 710, including 46 deaths.

There are about 50 coronavirus testing centers, up from one at the start of the outbreak, and eight isolation and treatment hospitals. Medical staff have received the promise of a modest bonus from the president.

For the moment, officials say they are able to contain the virus by testing, tracing, isolation and treatment, along with restrictive measures including a nighttime curfew and the closure of mosques, schools and tourist sites.

But once the number of cases surpasses 1,000, the tracing would become harder, the health minister has said.

"If we're very lucky we can shut down transmission like they did in China. If we're not so lucky we can delay at least the stage three or community wide transmission," WHO official Yvan Hutin said at a press briefing on Monday.

"If we're not lucky or if we don't work hard enough then it could come faster than we can cope."

(\$1 = 15.7700 Egyptian pounds)



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Snakes or animal genitals? Chinese BBQ pictures spark row in coronavirus-affected Egypt

Trump warns Iran of 'heavy price' in case of attack on US troops

Wed, 2020-04-01 20:08

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump warned Iran on Wednesday of a "heavy price" if it or its allies in Iraq attack US troops stationed there. "If this happens, Iran will pay a very heavy price, indeed!" Trump tweeted. The US president also wrote: "Upon information and belief, Iran or its proxies are planning a sneak attack on US troops and/or assets in Iraq." It was not clear whether Trump meant Washington actually has intelligence of such a plan.

Upon information and belief, Iran or its proxies are planning a sneak attack on U.S. troops and/or assets in Iraq. If this happens, Iran will pay a very heavy price, indeed!

– Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [April 1, 2020](#)

The United States and Iran are in a tense battle for influence in Iraq, where Tehran has powerful allies, including among armed militias, and Washington has close ties to the government.

Some 7,500 foreign troops are in Iraq as part of the US-led coalition helping local troops fight militant groups, but those numbers are being significantly drawn down this month.

The alliance is temporarily bringing some trainers home as a precautionary measure against the coronavirus pandemic and is also leaving some Iraqi bases altogether.

Those bases and foreign embassies, particularly the American mission, have been targeted in more than two dozen rocket strikes since late October. The attacks, which the US has blamed on an Iran-backed armed group, have prompted fears of a proxy war on Iraqi soil.



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