

UNHCR Regional Bureau for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

COVID-19 Vaccinations: Update #1

7 February 2021

Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, and Turkey*.

* UNHCR Turkey is covered under the UNHCR Europe Bureau, although operations in Turkey related to the Syria and Iraq Situations are included in the MENA update.

Highlights

- UNHCR continues to advocate for the equitable inclusion of refugees, internally displaced and stateless populations through the [COVAX Facility](#), a global initiative that brings together governments and manufacturers to ensure that COVID-19 vaccines eventually reach those in greatest need.
- So far, there are positive indications from more than half of the countries in the MENA region that they will include refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR in the national vaccination programmes. However, some countries are adopting a phased approach and for many countries planning is still ongoing. In some cases, UNHCR does not yet know if and how persons of concern will have access to vaccination in the near future.
- While UNHCR is not procuring vaccinations – as this remains the prerogative and responsibility of governments – it continues to support governments through other COVID-preparedness and response interventions, in coordination with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and other UN agencies.

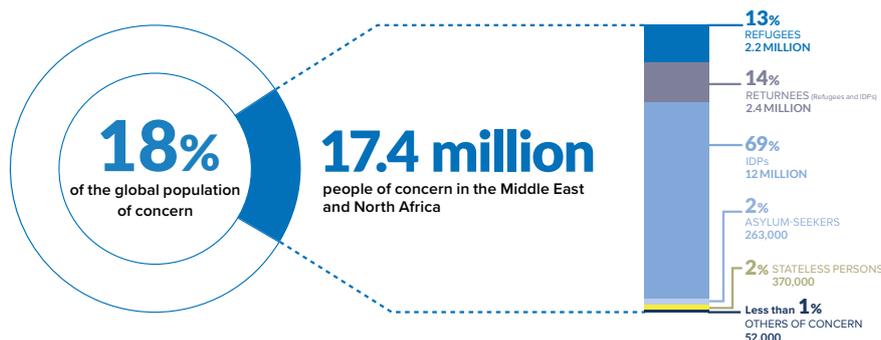
Key Figures

 **All** countries in the MENA region are reporting confirmed cases of COVID-19

 **17.4 million** people of concern to UNHCR in the Middle East and North Africa**

 **4,880** cases of active COVID-19 cases reported among persons of concern as of end-January, including fatalities

2021 PLANNING FIGURES FOR PEOPLE OF CONCERN **
in the Middle East and North Africa



** Figures from the UNHCR Global Appeal 2021 (excluding Turkey, which hosts 3.6 million Syrian refugees).

Situation overview

- **The cumulative impact of COVID-19 has induced an unprecedented protection and socio-economic crisis on communities at large and more specifically for refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and stateless people.** From restricted access to asylum, spiraling gender-based violence, worsening poverty, rising xenophobia, health risks and more – the consequences of the pandemic are threatening the rights, safety and lives of millions of refugees, IDPs and stateless people.
- **COVID-19 remains a global challenge and must be addressed through solidarity and cooperation.** UNHCR is advocating with all Governments to ensure that refugees,

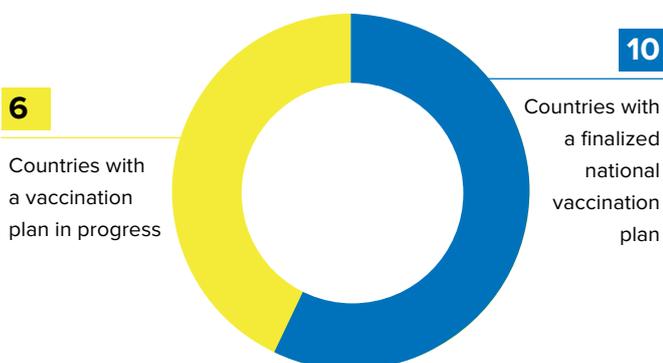
asylum-seekers and stateless people are included in national vaccination plans, in line with WHO's vaccination criteria and on par with nationals.

- **Inclusion is key to protecting refugees, IDPs, stateless people and their host communities.** It is not in the interest of any community or state to have people marginalized, exposed and unprotected. To protect refugees, IDPs, stateless people and their local communities, they need to continue to be included in all phases of the national response plans. Safeguarding their health also protects the health of their host communities and societies.

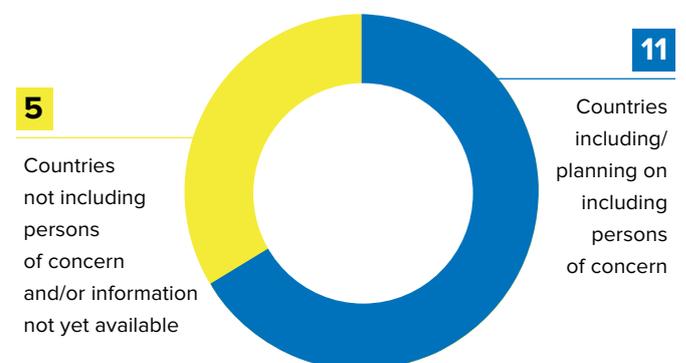
UNHCR persons of concern in national vaccination plans in MENA

- **UNHCR is advocating with Governments in the MENA region to include refugees, internally displaced and stateless persons in their COVID-19 national vaccination plans.** So far, there are positive indications from more than half of the countries in the region that they will include refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR in vaccination programmes. With some Governments, discussions involving UNHCR or other UN entities are ongoing. In certain cases, there is still a risk that refugees will de facto not have access to vaccinations, and exchanges on these questions continue. However, some countries are adopting a phased approach and for many countries planning is still ongoing.
- **UNHCR continues to support countries through other COVID-preparedness and response interventions.** Among these are critical health, sanitation, hygiene and logistical support as well as personal protective equipment. However, UNHCR is not procuring vaccinations as this remains the prerogative and responsibility of governments.
- **For the 16 countries in the region for which UNHCR has information, 10 have finalized their national vaccination plans and 11 have included (or plan on including) persons of concern to UNHCR:**

National vaccination plans in MENA



Inclusion of UNHCR persons of concern in national vaccination plans in MENA



Country highlight: Jordan

Jordan has become one of the world's first countries to start COVID-19 vaccinations for refugees. Raia Alkabasi, an Iraqi refugee living in the northern city of Irbid, was the first UNHCR-registered refugee in the country to receive the vaccine at the Irbid Vaccination Clinic on 14 January 2021. Jordan's Ministry of Health is administering the vaccinations.

“Once again Jordan has shown exemplary leadership and solidarity in hosting refugees. The country has included refugees in every aspect of the public health response to the pandemic, including the national vaccination campaign, proving how it should be done if we are to keep everyone safe,” said UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi.



A medical worker administers a dose of COVID-19 vaccine at the Irbid Vaccination Clinic in Jordan. © UNHCR/Jose Cendon

As part of Jordan's national COVID-19 vaccination plan, anyone living in the country, including refugees and asylum seekers, is entitled to receive the vaccine free of charge. Close cooperation between UNHCR, WHO and other UN agencies, and the Government of Jordan and the Ministry of Health, as well as the strong adherence of refugees to prevention measures, has been key in limiting the spread of the virus among these vulnerable populations. [Read more.](#)

Global Financial Requirements

UNHCR is grateful for the timely, generous, and flexible support of donors in 2020. **So far, a total of USD 473 million (63 per cent) has been contributed or pledged to the UNHCR Global Appeal 2020 out of USD 745 million required.**

UNHCR's [COVID-19 Supplementary Appeal 2021](#) is seeking an additional **USD 455 million, with USD 18 million received so far.** A more detailed update on 2021 will be provided in the next MENA COVID-19 update.

Contributed without restrictions on its use, unearmarked funding allows UNHCR critical flexibility in how best to reach refugees and other populations of concern who are in the greatest need and at the greatest risk.

For more information

- [UNHCR's 2021 Supplementary Appeal](#)
- For MENA regional and country reports on COVID-19 response, please visit – [UNHCR Global Focus](#); [UNHCR Operational Portal \(Syria Regional Refugee Response\)](#); and [The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan website](#)
- Support UNHCR's COVID-19 preparedness and response plans: <https://giving.unhcr.org/en/coronavirus/>

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