

UNHCR Regional Bureau for the Middle East and North Africa

COVID-19 Response

Update #24 (1 – 31 October 2021)

Key Figures



17.4 million

people of concern
in the Middle East
and North Africa
(2021 planning figures)



18,314 cases

of COVID-19 reported among
people of concern (POCs) to
UNHCR since March 2020,
including fatalities



19 out of 19
countries

in the MENA region have
confirmed the inclusion of
refugees in their national
COVID-19 vaccination
programmes or plans



19 out of 19
countries

in the MENA region have
started COVID-19 vaccinations
for refugees

Regional Developments

Despite indications of a fourth wave, many operations in MENA observed a constant or downward trend in COVID-19 infections among refugees and asylum-seekers during October, believed to be in large part to increasing rates of vaccination within refugee communities. While **Egypt** and **Jordan** saw a comparatively similar number of infections from the month prior, **Algeria** and **Mauritania** saw a notable drop in cases particularly among camp-based refugees in October; **Libya** and the **United Arab Emirates** (UAE) also saw a drop in infections among the general population. As government authorities continued to limit access to public as well as private venues to those with proof of vaccination or negative PCR result, UNHCR is responding to concerns raised by people of concern (PoCs) regarding limitations on access to services including vaccinations, as well as possible response measures for foreign nationals not yet fully vaccinated, including threats of deportation.

With governments continuing to receive vaccines through COVAX and bilaterally, UNHCR has maintained support to local health responses. UNHCR support has included the provision of medical equipment including personal protective equipment (PPE), conducting awareness-raising campaigns, assisting PoCs with vaccine registration, and deploying mobile vaccine units in **Iraq**, **Jordan** and **Lebanon**. A data collection system was also rolled out in **Algeria** to better monitor local epidemiological trends among camp-based refugees, including chains of transmission.



*Amani, a young refugee woman from Yemen works with UNHCR Morocco as a community agent. Throughout the pandemic she has conducted sensitization sessions against COVID-19 but has also assisted Arabic speaking refugee women to access protection services.
Photo by ©UNHCR*

Main Lines of Response



Continuing,
adapting, and
delivering protection
and assistance to the
most vulnerable



Strengthening
communication
with communities



Prioritizing immediate
interventions to
prevent infections and
supporting access to
services and materials



Advocating for the
inclusion of refugees,
IDPs and other marginalized
groups into national public
health and other responses,
and supporting national
systems to deliver assistance



Empowering
individuals and
families to make the best
decisions for themselves,
through cash-based
assistance

Highlights from the Field

With the technical support of the WHO, UNHCR **Algeria** oversaw the successful rollout of the GoData Health Information Management System (HIMS) in the Tindouf camps. This data collection and compilation system will allow the generation of weekly epidemiological reports to visualize chains of transmission. UNHCR and WHO teams in Tindouf installed the servers, while a series of trainings were provided by WHO experts.

UNHCR **Egypt** has been providing refugees and asylum-seekers with one-off multipurpose cash grants under the COVID-19 response since the beginning of the pandemic, which covers 65% of the minimum expenditure basket for three months. During October, some 2,300 families (7,249 individuals) were provided with one-off multipurpose cash assistance to cover their basic needs.

In September, UNHCR **Iraq** agreed with the Directorate of Health (DoH) in Duhok and Erbil to establish vaccination units in camps hosting refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs). Additionally, mobile vaccination teams were deployed to Arbat, Qorattoo and Tazade camps as well as other locations to facilitate easy access to vaccines, with over 2,000 doses administered during October.

In **Jordan**, close to 50% of eligible camp-based refugees aged 12 and above (some 33,000 individuals in Azraq and Zaatari camps) have received at least one vaccine dose, with an additional 44,000 registered for future vaccination. As part of the Government of Jordan's effort to increase vaccination rates among refugees, a mobile vaccine station was launched at UNHCR's Registration Centre in Amman on 31 October to encourage vaccinations and spread awareness.

In **Lebanon**, mobile vaccination teams have been deployed to areas hosting refugees in the north and south, with over 7,400 vaccination doses administered. UNHCR is working with partners to deploy a third mobile vaccination unit in November to reach informal settlements located in North-Akkar.

UNHCR **Morocco** conducted a study on vaccine awareness, interest, and access challenges among nearly 3,000 refugees and asylum-seekers. So far, UNHCR has been able to verify that more than 600 refugees have been vaccinated. Access to vaccination is gradually improving, with some refugees able to access vaccinations through the presentation of their asylum-seeker certificate.



*Mobile vaccination campaign in Lebanon.
Photo: © UNHCR*

UNHCR **Libya** continues to support refugees and asylum-seekers with access to vaccinations. During October, the operation produced a video for social media to encourage refugees and asylum-seekers to be vaccinated and provide additional information for accessing dedicated centres.

In **Mauritania**, a vaccination campaign took place from 13 - 21 October in Mbera camp in line with the national campaign. To support in the successful roll-out of the campaign, refugees in Mbera camp volunteered to raise awareness among the refugee community (including door-to-door), and refugee leaders, humanitarian partners and UNHCR coordinated efforts throughout the campaign. Some 15,700 refugees received a vaccine dose during the campaign, surpassing the national average and making Bassikounou the commune with the highest rate of vaccination in the Hodh Chargui region. UNHCR also continued providing cash assistance to 158 refugee households in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou to help them meet their basic needs.

UNHCR **Tunisia** continued COVID-19 sensitization and assistance to PoCs, with no deaths reported among PoCs during the month. Meanwhile, WHO announced Tunisia is expected to reach the year-end target for vaccinating 40% of its population set by the World Health Assembly.

In **Yemen**, UNHCR and protection partners led over 100 COVID-19 awareness-raising sessions for displaced Yemenis, refugees, asylum-seekers and host communities, reaching 16,600 individuals. Additionally, community health workers conducted awareness-raising activities ahead of the November vaccination campaign in southern governorates, with over

4,000 refugees and asylum-seekers registering. UNHCR also distributed multi-purpose cash assistance to more than 19,950 refugees and asylum-seekers in urban areas (81% of all intended beneficiaries) to help them cope with the increased hardship of the conflict, the pandemic as well as the general lack of livelihood opportunities.



Nurses from the Jordanian Ministry of Health register refugees for the COVID-19 vaccine.
 Photo: © UNHCR/ Lilly Carlisle

Global and MENA Financial Information

In 2021, UNHCR is seeking \$924 million, of which over 50% is mainstreamed in the annual budget and some \$455 million is sought through the [COVID-19 Supplementary Appeal](#), for activities in 2021 related to the exceptional socio-economic and protection impacts of COVID-19. As of 16 November, UNHCR's total financial requirements for the COVID-19 Emergency are **49% funded**, with **\$454.3 million received** (inclusive of indicative allocations of softly earmarked and unearmarked funds), of which **\$96.8 million** is for the MENA region.

Resources:

- [UNHCR's 2021 COVID-19 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 [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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