



COVID-19 Update

May 3, 2021

Overview

Active cases appear to be slowly receding after an extreme surge in Gaza that has been largely attributed to the emergence of the UK variant (B.1.1.7). Both Gaza and the West Bank are extremely fragile as over-strained medical centers attempt to cope with the after-effects. The rollout of the vaccine remains minimal, with less than 4% of the population in Palestine having received at least one dose.¹ Lebanon is only a little farther along in its vaccine rollout, as the combined political and economic crises in the country continue to hamper the national vaccine plan. Jordan is ahead of the others in its vaccination campaign and the government is including services for refugee camps.

There is also mounting concern over the emergence of the “double-mutant” strain in India, which has been shown to be highly infectious. There is not enough data yet to determine the efficacy levels of the current vaccines against this new strain, though governments are proactively placing limits on air travel.² As we near the end of Ramadan, there have been some reports of uncertainty as to whether receiving the vaccine violates the fasting period. Religious authorities have affirmed that receiving the vaccine is not in violation of any fasting standards.³ Awareness of this fact is important moving forward, as vaccine hesitancy is an important barrier to be overcome.

Gaza

Though the wave appears to be past its peak, Gaza’s healthcare facilities are struggling through the aftermath of the surge that amounted to roughly 1,000 cases per day.⁴ Total active cases in [Gaza](#) stand at 11,964, as compared to 7,010 active cases in the [West Bank](#).⁵ According to data from our field offices, ICU bed capacity has reached a critical level at 70% occupancy, while high demand is putting increasing strain upon oxygen generation stations.

¹ [Our World in Data: Vaccination in oPT](#)

² [NPR: Double Mutant Variant India](#)

³ [The Lancet: Ramadan and COVID-19 Vaccination](#)

⁴ [Relief Web: Vicious New Wave of COVID Hits During Ramadan as Vaccines Trickle in](#)

⁵ <https://corona.ps/>

In response to the new wave, the Ministry of Health in Gaza issued another curfew and restricted travel between governorates. Furthermore, fears of the emergent COVID-19 variants in India have prompted the government to issue quarantine protocols for travelers arriving from India and nearby countries. The MoH has sent a large sample of COVID-19 tests to the WHO to determine if the “double-mutant” variant has already emerged in Gaza.

More than 36,000 people have received at least one dose of the vaccine as reported by our Gaza office on April 26th. The 28,800 vaccines from the latest COVAX shipment were successfully shipped from the West Bank. Gaza still remains dependent upon foreign vaccine donations and what few shipments are delivered from the West Bank. Roughly 110,400 vaccines have arrived in Gaza over the course of the pandemic, which is not even enough to fully vaccinate 3% of Gaza’s two million civilians. Vaccine hesitancy remains a concern, as a poll cited by Arab News indicated that roughly 54% of Gazans did not want to get vaccinated.⁶

West Bank

Though the West Bank is seeing a general decline in active cases in the weeks since the emergence of the UK variant, health facilities are barely keeping up. A report from WHO indicates that 83% of ICU beds are filled and 40 people are on ventilators as the demand for oxygen supplies continues to rise.⁷ News reports indicate that the Palestinian Authority has just recently announced a 30-day state-of-emergency, which plays into rising tensions resulting from both COVID-19 and pending elections.

Vaccine rollout in Palestine may receive a boost, as a recent announcement made on Voice of Palestine Radio indicated that the Palestinian Authority may be receiving 4.5 million vaccines as part of a direct purchase. This would be a major step forward in the development of Palestinian public health services, as the Palestinian Authority has thus far been dependent upon foreign vaccine donations. WAFA news agency confirmed that the deal would be worth \$27.5 million for Pfizer and Sputnik V vaccines, though vaccine hesitancy remains a barrier to these efforts.⁸

Lebanon

[Lebanon](#) is experiencing a reprieve as active cases slowly decline, with 56,224 cases on March 2nd compared to 68,634 from last week. That’s an 18% decrease.⁹ Despite the slow drop in active cases, the vaccination rollout is underperforming due to intertwined economic and political crises. An estimated 294,945 people have received at least one

⁶ [Arab News: Gaza Gravediggers and Medics Stretched as COVID-19 Spikes](#)

⁷ [WHO: Coronavirus 2019 Situation Report 74](#)

⁸ [WAFA: Health Minister Says 4.5 Million Vaccines Expected Soon in Palestine](#)

⁹ [World O Meter: Lebanon COVID-19 Cases](#)

dose as of March 2nd, less than 4.5% of the total population.¹⁰ Vaccine skepticism remains high, and social distancing protocols are mostly unenforced.

The vaccination of Lebanon’s refugees has progressed even more slowly. Human Rights Watch released a report earlier in April that detailed the insufficient numbers of refugees covered by the National Vaccine program.¹¹ According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), some progress is being made in the vaccination of refugees above the age of 75.¹² However, this constitutes a very small sub-section of the population, and the slow overall vaccination progress does not bode well for the nearly two million Syrian and Palestinian refugees in the country.

Jordan

Active cases in [Jordan](#) have fallen significantly in the past month, with 15,485 current cases compared to more than 100,000 at the end of March. Daily deaths have also fallen from a little over 100 at the beginning of April down to 26 on May 2nd.¹³ Though these are positive developments, ICU capacity in Jordan’s north and central regions are running close to 50% and Amman is still the epicenter of infection in the country. Furthermore, there is concern over the spread of the Indian “double-mutant” strain. Roya News reported that three Jordanians tested positive for the new variant. In response, the government is taking precautions to limit outside travelers coming into the country, and looks to implement another 14-day quarantine.¹⁴

The kingdom has put a concerted effort into its national vaccine program, though it still faces logistical challenges in the vaccine rollout. Statistics from April 29th indicate that 919,922 vaccines have been administered and roughly 7% of the population has received at least one dose. UNHCR reported at the end of April that 5,000 Syrian refugees living in Zataari and Azraq camps have received the vaccine and another 13,000 are registered to receive it. This is a small portion of the overall refugee population, but it is one of the few programs in the developing world where the government is actively engaged in the vaccination of refugee camps.

¹⁰ [Our World in Data: Lebanon Vaccination](#)

¹¹ [Human Rights Watch: Lebanon Behind on Refugee Vaccination](#)

¹² [UNCHR: Jordan and Lebanon Refugee Vaccines](#)

¹³ [World O Meter: Jordan COVID-19](#)

¹⁴ [Roya News: Jordan Confirms 3 Cases of Indian COVID-19 Strain](#)

Anera's Response

Anera is engaged in several efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19, which includes funding distribution of the vaccine itself. Thus far we have been raising money to purchase vaccines to inoculate thousands of refugees in Lebanon.

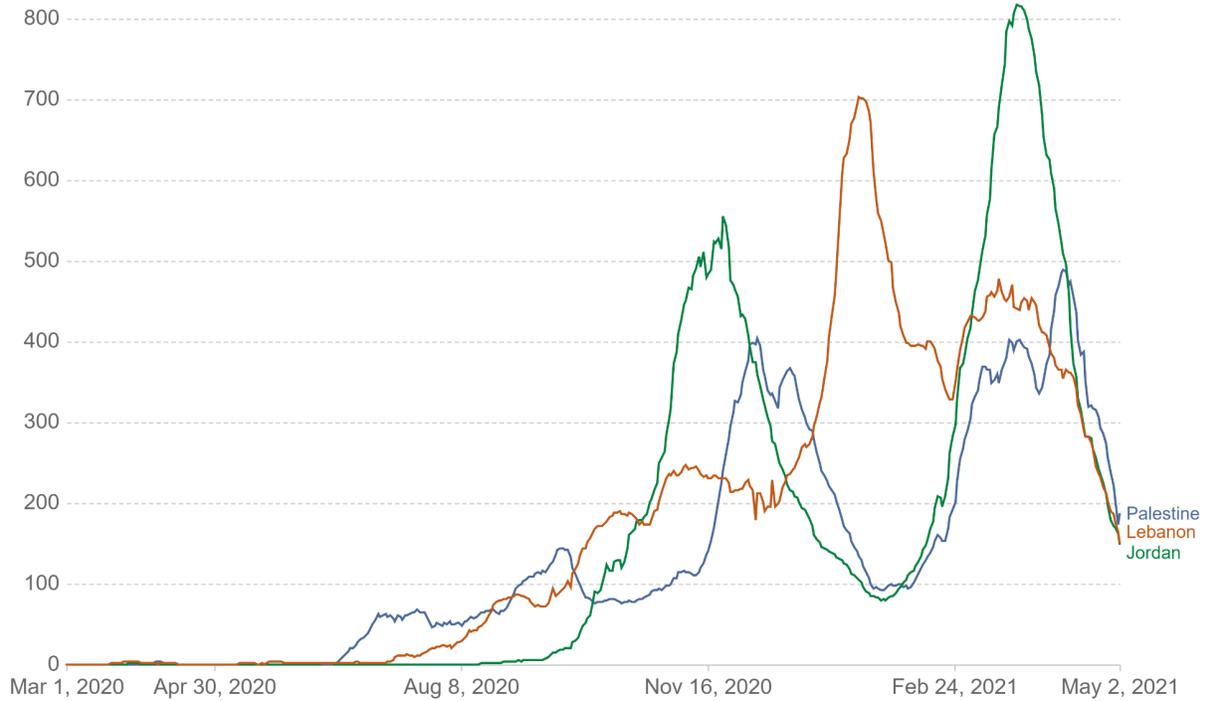
Anera is also encouraging people to register for the vaccine, as well as distributing PPE and other medical and hygiene aid. Awareness campaigns are crucial to stopping the spread of harmful misinformation.

We recently distributed a shipment containing face shields from our partners from Health Partners International of Canada to our many healthcare recipients in Lebanon at the end of April.

Appendix A: [Our World in Data](#) New Cases per Day and

Daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases per million people

Shown is the rolling 7-day average. The number of confirmed cases is lower than the number of actual cases; the main reason for that is limited testing.



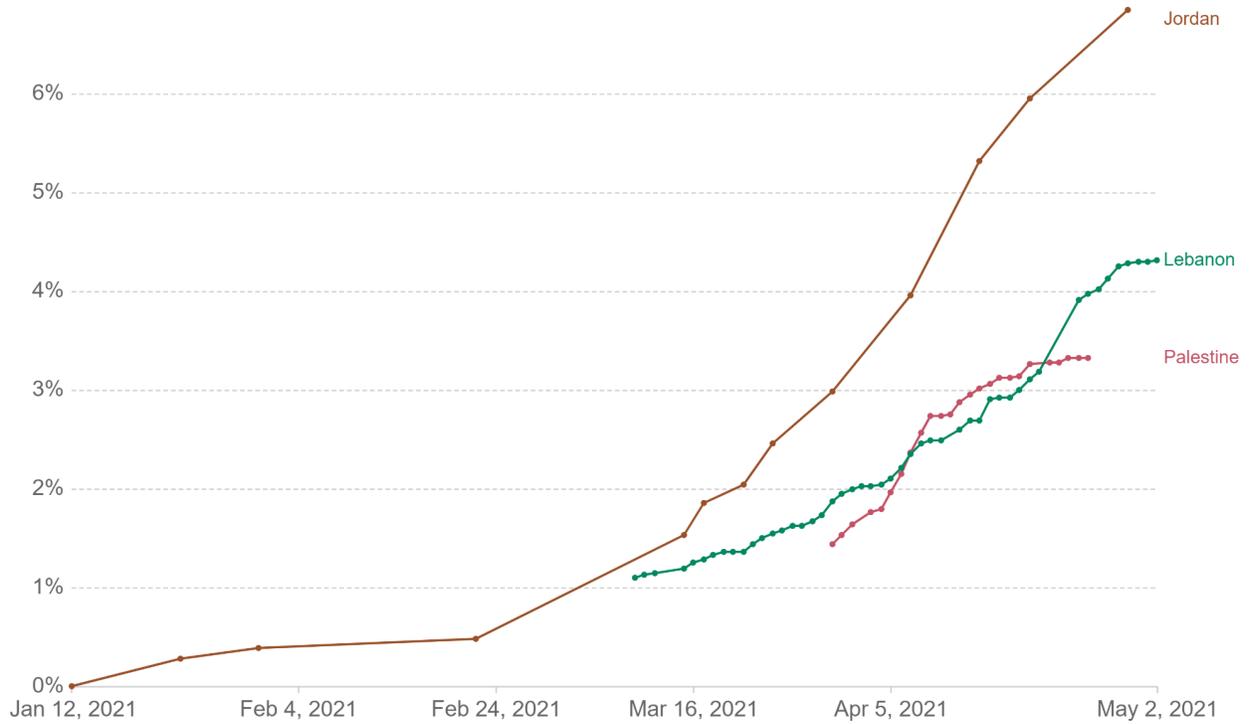
Source: Johns Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data

CC BY

Appendix B: Percent of Population That Received At Least One Dose

Share of people who received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine

Share of the total population that received at least one vaccine dose. This may not equal the share that are fully vaccinated if the vaccine requires two doses.



Source: Official data collated by Our World in Data

CC BY