

ICRC RESPONSE TO COVID-19

NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST

JULY 2020



PEOPLE NEEDING HEALTHCARE FIND IT HARDER THAN EVER TO ACCESS HEALTH SERVICES

Violence against people associated with COVID-19 has risen dramatically in various countries across the world since mid-March. ICRC staff have observed stigmatization of COVID-19 patients and healthcare providers in several countries in the Middle East.

Media reports describe threats, verbal and physical abuse across the region in response to testing, imposed quarantines and burial measures, or based on misinformation and out of fear of the fast-spreading infection. Coupled with the chronic weakening of health systems in countries affected by conflict, these acts of violence have made it increasingly difficult for already vulnerable children, men and women to access health services.



ICRC Yemen

After five years of conflict, Yemen's weakened health system has a very limited capacity to cover basic health needs. COVID-19 is another concern for the people who are already in a very vulnerable situation.

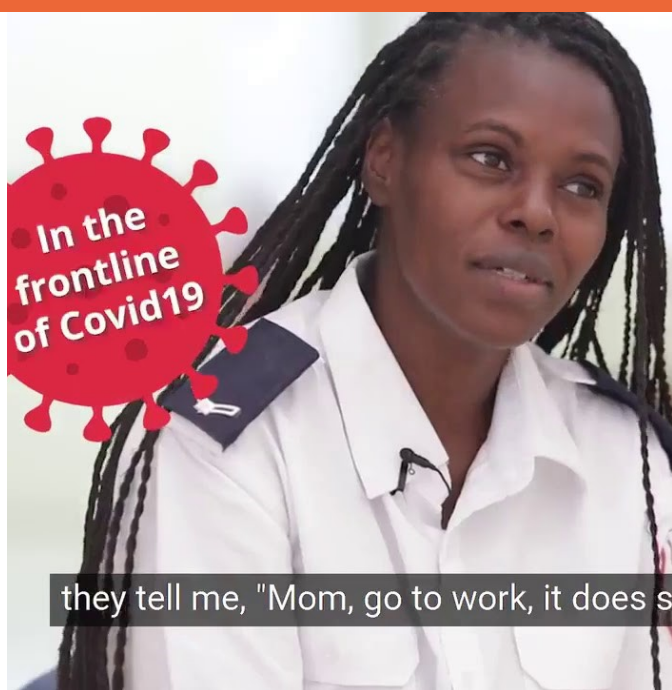
HEALTH CARE WORKERS SHOULD NOT BE TARGETED FOR THE CARE THEY PROVIDE

Faced with a pandemic of unprecedented proportions, which has impacted not only health, but also the education and socio-economic situation of people around the world, several countries in the Middle East have experienced a wave of stigmatization of healthcare providers and COVID-19 responders.

Health care workers are essential for an effective management of the pandemic. Solidarity and resilience are key in these difficult times. The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in addition to being a first responder, has also focused on countering misinformation and spreading messages of solidarity to counter stigmatization of COVID-19 patients and responders.



Yemen. The ICRC and the Yemen Red Crescent Society hand in hand, while distributing aid, in Al-Amal Hospital in Aden.



they tell me, "Mom, go to work, it does s

"The Corona pandemic is like a war. While everyone stays home, I go out"

Asmahan, a mother of six and a Magen David Adom volunteer from the Bedouin community, who collects swab samples from people to be tested for COVID-19, shares how her work makes her feel fulfilled.

HUMANITARIAN WORK GOES ON

All our activities have been adapted to the new reality of fighting against the pandemic. We have reinforced activities that help people affected by conflict, including the detained, the displaced and other most vulnerable people, maintain hygiene, access to food and health care. In particular, we continued supporting health care systems across the region.

HUMANITARIAN DIPLOMACY

“The shameful truth is this: People are dying needlessly in this war because the humanitarian aid they depend on is being bargained away in political negotiations; the cross-border stalemate is holding the lives of millions of people hostage”

ICRC President Peter Maurer

Fourth Brussels Conference on “Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region”

During his intervention, President Maurer addressed the UN Security Council (UNSC) during their discussing discussions of the renewal of the UNSC resolution 2504, which would allow aid relief to enter Syria via Turkey. [\[READ MORE\]](#)



FLYING SUPPLIES IN YEMEN

In June, we dispatched three charter flights from Amman to Yemen with hand disinfectants, surgical masks and gloves, as well as dressing material, infusion sets, medicine, various medical equipment and instruments. Although authorities of the internationally recognized government of Yemen closed the airport to commercial and humanitarian flights, they allowed cargo on these special flights carrying badly needed supplies into Yemen.

JORDAN—FIGHTING COVID-19 IN PLACES OF DETENTION

In Jordan, the ICRC continued strengthening preventive measures against the spread of COVID-19 in places of detention by donating sanitation and personal protective equipment on items to 17 correctional and rehabilitation centers, five juvenile centers, two police detention facilities holding female migrant workers, and one detention facility in the month of June. We also donated 3,000 surgical gloves, 3,000 surgical masks and 1,800 packs of disinfecting wipes to the Correctional and Rehabilitation Centres Department (CRCD) for the use of the families visiting inmates.



ILOT. Family visits to Palestinian security detainees held in Israeli places of detention partially resumed towards the end of June, after being suspended for almost four months due to COVID-19 restrictions. [\[READ MORE\]](#)

IRAQ—FINDING A NEW NORMAL IN THE TIMES OF COVID-19

To help people resume their lives despite amid COVID-19 challenges, our teams in Sinjar, Iraq distributed cash grants while applying all precautionary measures, including social distancing.

Our colleague, Pierre Hodel, Economic Security Delegate in Iraq, explains how we have adapted the way we work to protect both affected communities and our staff, and continue safely helping the most vulnerable families across Iraq. [\[SEE HIS INTERVENTION\]](#)

ILOT—FINDING DIALOGUE AMID A PANDEMIC

When talking to armed groups, even amid a pandemic, continuity of humanitarian operations is always be the top priority. In Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the ICRC talked to arms carriers about the equipment, education, and training that may be needed for the potential tasks they may facing themface. The need for protective equipment for health care workers was well understood, but it took some time for the risks to security first responders or those enforcing quarantine to be understood. To help protect security forces on the front line, we distributed protective equipment, disinfectant, and cleaning products to police stations in the West Bank and Gaza. [\[READ MORE\]](#)

FOSTERING COOPERATION ON THE ISSUE OF THE MISSING

“Time is another dimension when you miss a family member”

Fabrizio Carboni, ICRC’s Director for Near and Middle East, talked about the right of families to search and their right to know the fate of their missing loved ones on 29 June 2020 during a virtual event on [Missing persons](#) organized by the ICRC in co-operation with the Kuwait Mission to the [UN](#) and the government of Switzerland, titled “Operationalizing UNSC Resolution no. 2474”. The participants discussed the avenues adopted for strengthening international cooperation and the practical implementation of the states’ obligations towards the families of the missing as a result of armed conflicts.

SYRIA—SUPPORTING ECONOMIC RECOVERY

The harsh economic consequences of the pandemic has severely impacted millions of already vulnerable people affected by conflict. Abo Mohammad is one of the 1,500 farmers who benefited from the wheat and fertilizers grant provided by the ICRC in Hama, Syria. [\[READ MORE\]](#)

LEBANON—PREVENTING COVID IN REFUGEES CAMPS

Many of the displaced people and refugees we have talked to recently shared with us how the COVID-19 pandemic has brought back memories of some difficult moments in their lives. In Al Jaleel Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon, people expressed worry as some of the camp inhabitants tested positive. [\[WATCH MORE\]](#)



HUMANITARIAN WORK GOES ON...



Working together with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, the ICRC contributed 80 patients' beds and other essential items to the COVID-19 isolation centre at Al Hol camp, North-east Syria. [Tweet](#).

We supported the youth amputee soccer team in Gaza to get back into practice , after the easing of COVID-19 restrictions eased down. [Tweet](#).



In Iraq, where the number of COVID-19 infected patients is on the rise/increase again, the ICRC continued supporting health structures across southern Iraq. [Tweet](#).

Our teams in Lebanon make sure that people living with disabilities are adequately supported in their efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19. [FB post](#).

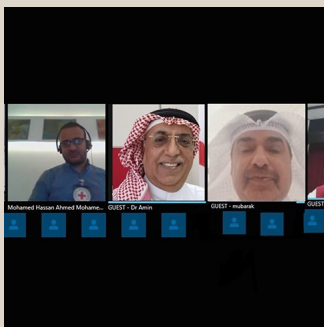


PARTNERSHIPS

The scale of the challenges in the Middle East ravaged by conflict, socio-economic unrest, and most recently, COVID-19, led to the ICRC developing partnerships with a variety of actors in a bid to provide a comprehensive humanitarian response to affected people. On top of our long-standing strategic partnership with the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement partners, we work closely with a number of other actors on a variety of topics, whilst preserving our principled approach.

Read an interview with [Save the Children](#) on partnerships with local actors.

We partnered with people who can influence their communities to raise awareness and counter misinformation, like a doctor from one of the frontline hospitals in Iraq who talks about how to wash your hands properly. [\[WATCH THE VIDEO IN ARABIC\]](#)



Bahrain Red Crescent Society (BRCS) and the ICRC jointly trained 60 BRCS volunteers to prepare them for humanitarian response and relief work during the pandemic. [\[LEARN MORE\]](#)

In Kuwait, the ICRC met with the director general of Qatar Fund to find leeway in strengthening the resilience of communities affected by COVID-19 and discuss ways of dealing with the detrimental consequences of the climate change.





[Sky News Arabia](#) hosted the ICRC Director General, Robert Mardini who described the catastrophic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on livelihoods and economic security globally and in the Middle East.

[The National](#) and the [Washington Post](#) published an interview with the ICRC Director General, Robert Mardini, mentioning our call to states on stranded children in Al Hol.

[Syria Direct](#), a specialized site read by Syria-watchers, quoted ICRC President Peter Maurer's statement to the Fourth Brussels Conference "Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region".

[BBC Radio 4 World Tonight](#) interviewed ICRC President Peter Maurer on the situation that many Syrian are facing amidst conflict and pandemic.

[Al Arabiya](#) and [Sky News Arabia](#) interviewed ICRC Regional Director for Near and Middle East, Fabrizio Carboni, on the humanitarian situation in Syria, stuck between 10 years of conflict and a global pandemic.

[The National](#) published an OpEd by ICRC Regional Director for Near and Middle East, Fabrizio Carboni, on the desperate situation of children stranded in Al Hol camp.

[Sputnik](#) quoted large parts of ICRC Regional Director for Near and Middle East, Fabrizio Carboni, speech on the desperate conditions at Al Hol camp.



We help people around the world affected by armed conflict and other violence, doing everything we can to protect their lives and dignity and to relieve their suffering, often with our Red Cross and Red Crescent partners. We also seek to prevent hardship by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and championing universal humanitarian principles.