



# Chronicling the Coronavirus: A Perspective from Jordan



West Asia-North Africa Institute, March 2020



West Asia-North Africa Institute (WANA) has put together a working chronology of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic as it has unfolded in Jordan. The journal-like texts have been accompanied by reflections that touch on questions of epidemiology as well as issues of governance and policymaking as seen through the prisms of human security, sustainable development and social justice.

The WANA Institute envisions that the research could lead to governance and policymaking recommendations on the national level for Jordan as well as on the regional and international levels.

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Published by: The WANA Institute, Royal Scientific Society, PO Box 1438 Amman 11941 – Jordan

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Printed in Amman, Jordan

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Manufactured in Jordan

## Introductory Note

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The team at the West Asia-North Africa Institute (WANA) has put together a working chronology of the global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and a working chronology of the situation as it has unfolded in Jordan. The journal-like texts have been accompanied by reflections that touch on questions of epidemiology as well as issues of governance and policymaking as seen through the prisms of human security, sustainable development and social justice.

The chronologies are intended to form a body of evidence for a study that compares policy responses towards the outbreak of the novel coronavirus across a select number of countries in the West Asia-North Africa region. WANA plans to study countries that do and do not share some or all of their political, economic and social characteristics with one another such as the Occupied Palestinian Territories (the West Bank and Gaza), Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, Kuwait, Qatar and Jordan. The institute envisions that the research could lead to governance and policymaking recommendations on the national level for Jordan as well as on the regional and international levels.

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## 1 Highlights

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- The novel coronavirus is a zoonotic disease. In 2007, the World Health Organisation warned that the risk of novel zoonotic diseases was growing due to urbanisation and climate change.
- The wet market in the city of Wuhan may not be the only source of the initial outbreak. The earliest dates of animal-to-human transmission and human-to-human transmission may have occurred as early as the first week of October in 2019.
- The coronavirus appears to have spread across the globe due to travel from China, Italy and Iran. The World Health Organisation declared a global pandemic on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March.
- The environmental upside to the reduction in most activities in countries under lockdowns and curfews is likely to be temporary. Fossil fuel consumption is expected to rise again and the concomitant drop in oil prices will impact renewable and green energy investments negatively.
- As of the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2020, around 800,000 cases and 40,000 deaths have been recorded. The United States of America has overtaken Italy in terms of the total number of recorded cases while Spain appears to be closely trailing Italy in both the number of cases and deaths.
- The number of cases has steadily risen in Jordan since a case was first recorded on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March although the slope depicting the total caseload may have begun to flatten out.
- The initial outbreak in Jordan was linked to unrestricted travel to and from Europe. The later jump in the number of cases is linked to the government advisory against social events of all kinds that went unheeded at a wedding in Irbid.
- The policy response in Jordan has been characterised by a pre-emptive approach to the suppression of an outbreak. The policymaking priority thus far has largely been public health.
- The policy response appears to have been hindered by a lack of foresight and contingency planning. Events indicate that the Defense Law was quickly activated and that the curfew was then put into place in the absence of any workable plans for the day after.
- The provision of public education and the safe delivery of basic commodities and necessitates was eventually facilitated by a number of Jordanian technology startups.
- The proportion of individuals complying with the curfew may have increased once the government supplanted the threat of jail time with the threat of a monetary fine.
- The government has put into place some protections for the formal economy. Temporary amendments to the Social Security Law have been made, and the Central Bank has directed all banks to ease policies and procedures for consumer, retail and commercial clients.
- The supply of piped water and foodstuff has mostly been consistent. Air quality recorded an improvement in the days after the curfew was announced. Waste collection in Amman has continued, and levels of household food waste may drop if efficiency goes up.

- The crisis is likely to have generated an amount of political capital for the State to spend just as it appears to have reinforced trust in the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army. The crisis could be an opportunity for the government to regain the trust that has been lost over the years.
- The government appears to have begun to put into place a social protection strategy for Jordanians who derive their livelihoods from the wages paid to them as day laborers. A majority of the Jordanian labour force is employed in the informal economy.
- The crisis has highlighted that the government needs to institutionalise a system for public-private partnerships characterised by accessibility and fairness.
- The government appears unlikely to change course in the near future since the announcement of Defence Orders No. 4 and No. 5 on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March.

## 2 Background: Coronavirus Disease

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Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a zoonotic disease caused by the SARS-2-CoV-2 virus, which belongs to a group of viruses that cause diseases in mammals and birds known as coronaviruses. The word *corona* means crown in Latin, and the crown-like appearance of the viruses has lent them their name. The common cold and more severe illnesses like pneumonia, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) are caused by coronaviruses.

COVID-19 is considered to be a highly infectious disease. The virus spreads through the air once an infected individual coughs or sneezes and via objects and surfaces that have been contaminated by an infectious individual who has not practiced good hand hygiene. The virus has been found to remain in the air – suspended in droplets smaller than five micrometers known as aerosols – for up to three hours, on cardboard for up to 24 hours, plastic and stainless steel for up to two to three days, wood for up to four days, glass for up to five days, and on copper up for up to four hours.<sup>1</sup> A study has found that around a fifth of cases show no symptoms of an infection.<sup>2</sup>

The general symptoms associated with COVID-19 include fever, headache, cough, muscle pain, confusion, trouble breathing and persistent pain or pressure in the chest. The symptoms may appear anywhere between two to 14 days after exposure. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has reported that one out of six people fall seriously ill when exposed to the virus and will require intensive care whereas most people will experience the disease as a regular cold.<sup>3</sup> The WHO has noted that those at a greater risk of a serious infection, in comparison to healthy individuals with a strong immune system, are individuals over the age of 60 and those with underlying medical conditions like diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease and cancer.<sup>4</sup>

A relationship between the SARS-2-CoV-2 virus and climate change has not been established. The WHO warned back in 2007 that the risk of novel zoonotic diseases emerging was growing due to urbanisation and the effects of climate change and global warming.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Neeltje van Doremalen et al. “Aerosol and Surface Stability of SARS-CoV-2 as Compared with SARS-CoV-1.” *New England Journal of Medicine* (2020); DOI: [10.1056/NEJMc2004973](https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMc2004973) (accessed March 23, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Mizumoto, Kenji et al. “Estimating the asymptomatic proportion of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) cases on board the Diamond Princess cruise ship, Yokohama, Japan 2020.” *Euro Surveillance*, Vol. 25, No. 10. (2020). DOI: [10.2807/1560-7917.ES.2020.25.10.2000180](https://doi.org/10.2807/1560-7917.ES.2020.25.10.2000180) (accessed March 23, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> World Health Organisation quoted in Sarah Bosely et al. “Coronavirus symptoms: what are the symptoms and should I call the doctor?” *The Guardian*, March 20, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/03/coronavirus-symptoms-what-are-they-and-should-i-call-the-doctor> (accessed March 23, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> World Health Organisation. “Coronavirus.” The World Health Organisation. [https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1) (accessed March 23, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> See: Prentice, Thomson et al. “The World Health Report. A Safer Future: Global Public Health Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.” *The World Health Organisation*. (2007). [https://www.who.int/whr/2007/whr07\\_en.pdf](https://www.who.int/whr/2007/whr07_en.pdf) (accessed March 25, 2020).

### 3 Chronology: The Outbreak of the Coronavirus Pandemic

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The WHO received a report documenting a cluster of unexplained cases in the capital of the central Chinese province of Hubei on December 31, 2019. A subsequent investigation found that two-thirds of the patients had either visited or held jobs as stallholders and handlers at the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market,<sup>6</sup> which the Wuhan health authorities immediately shuttered on January 1, 2020. The novel coronavirus responsible for the infections was isolated by the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention on January 3, and the gene sequence of the virus was then reported to the WHO on January 7 and made available to the public on January 10. The first death attributable to an infection by the virus was reported one day later on January 11.

A majority of the environmental samples collected from the market that tested positive for the SARS-2-CoV-2 virus were reported to have been from the zones of the market where over a hundred wildlife and exotic animals were reported to have been sold.<sup>7</sup> The virus responsible for the SARS epidemic of 2002 has been found to have originated in bats<sup>8</sup> and is believed to have been transmitted to humans via an intermediary host: the civets that were sold in the markets of the south-eastern province of Guangdong.<sup>9</sup> An intermediate host has not been found in the case of COVID-19 although the pangolins sold at the wet market were suspected.<sup>10</sup>

The Chinese researchers involved in documenting the clinical features of the first cases in Wuhan have identified December 1, 2019 as the earliest date of the onset of symptoms associated with the virus.<sup>11</sup> An unverified report in *The South China Morning Post* has claimed that patient zero contracted the virus on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November and that Chinese officials have identified 266 individuals that contracted the virus in 2019.<sup>12</sup> Publicly available genomes of the virus have been studied, and geneticists have suggested that the pathogen jumped from either a single infected animal or a small group of infected animals into the human population via either a single human individual or a small group of human individuals possibly as early as October 1, 2019.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Chaoling Hung et al. “Clinical features of patients infected with 2019 novel coronavirus in Wuhan, China.” *The Lancet*, Vol. 395, No. 10223. (2020). DOI: [10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30183-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30183-5) (accessed March 20, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> Xinhua. “China detects large quantity of novel coronavirus at Wuhan seafood market.” *Xinhuanet*. January 27, 2020. [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-01/27/c\\_138735677.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-01/27/c_138735677.htm) (accessed March 21, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> Cryanoski, David. “Bat cave solves mystery of deadly SARS virus – and suggests new outbreak could occur.” *Nature*. December 01, 2017. <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-017-07766-9> (accessed March 21, 2020)

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>10</sup> Cryanoski, David. “Mystery deepens over animal source of coronavirus.” *Nature*. February 27, 2020. <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-00548-w> (accessed March 21, 2020).

<sup>11</sup> Chaoling Hung et al. “Clinical features of patients infected with 2019 novel coronavirus in Wuhan, China.” *The Lancet*, Vol. 395, No. 10223. (2020). DOI: [10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30183-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30183-5) (accessed March 20, 2020).

<sup>12</sup> Ma, Josephine. “Coronavirus: China’s first confirmed case traced back to November 17.” *The South China Morning Post*, March 13, 2020. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/3074991/coronavirus-chinas-first-confirmed-covid-19-case-traced-back> (accessed March 21, 2020).

<sup>13</sup> Kristian Anderson. “Clock and TMRCA based on 27 genomes.” *Virological*. January 25, 2020. <http://virological.org/t/clock-and-tmrca-based-on-27-genomes/347> (accessed March 21, 2020); Andrew Rambaut. “Phylogenetic analysis of 23 nCoV-2019 genomes.” *Virological*. January 23, 2020.

The first case outside of China was reported on the 13<sup>th</sup> of January. A Chinese tourist had arrived from Wuhan and tested positive for the novel coronavirus in Thailand. The Ministry of Health in Japan reported that a Japanese national who had been to Wuhan tested positive for the virus on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January. South Korea reported that a Chinese woman had tested positive for the virus on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January. The WHO reported that the total number of global cases was 282 and that the majority of cases had been recorded in the Chinese province of Hubei on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January as well.<sup>14</sup> On the same day that the numbers were released, the head of the National Health Commission in China confirmed human-to-human transmission of the novel coronavirus.

By the time Wuhan was placed under effective quarantine on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January, Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States of America (US) all reported cases of patients that had tested positive for the virus after returning from Wuhan. Vietnam reported the first recorded instance of human-to-human transmission outside of China on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January. The patient had also been to Wuhan. Two days later, the WHO revised the global risk from moderate to high in the situation report it published on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January. The number of global cases rose to 2,789 with additional infections in Australia, the US, Canada, Malaysia, Nepal and Singapore by the 27<sup>th</sup> of January.

The United Arab Emirates was the first country in the West Asia-North Africa region to report a case. Abu Dhabi announced on the 29<sup>th</sup> of January that an individual had arrived to the country from Wuhan and tested positive for the virus. The WHO declared a public health emergency of international concern on the 30<sup>th</sup> of January. Finland, France, India and the Philippines had all reported confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus by then, and all the patients had a travel history to China. Germany had also reported a case of the novel coronavirus although the 25-year-old patient had recently returned from Milan, Italy. Two confirmed cases were then reported by Italy on the 31<sup>st</sup> of January, and both individuals had a travel history to Wuhan. Russia, the United Kingdom, and Sweden all reported cases on the 31<sup>st</sup> as well. In Sweden, a woman had tested positive for the virus upon returning from Wuhan. By the 1<sup>st</sup> of February, Cambodia, Malaysia and Sri Lanka had all reported cases as well.

The WHO identified a total of 72 states implementing travel restrictions on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February, and Jordan was not among those identified.<sup>15</sup> The lull in new countries reporting cases was broken by Egypt. The second country in the West Asia-North Africa region to report a case of the novel

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<http://virological.org/t/phylogenetic-analysis-of-23-ncov-2019-genomes-2020-01-23/335> (accessed March 21, 2020).

<sup>14</sup> World Health Organisation. "Novel Coronavirus Situation Report 1." *The World Health Organisation*. January 20, 2020. [https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200121-sitrep-1-2019-ncov.pdf?sfvrsn=20a99c10\\_4](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200121-sitrep-1-2019-ncov.pdf?sfvrsn=20a99c10_4) (accessed March 21, 2020).

<sup>15</sup> World Health Organisation. "Novel Coronavirus Situation Report 18." *The World Health Organisation*. February 7, 2020. [https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200207-sitrep-18-ncov.pdf?sfvrsn=fa644293\\_2](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200207-sitrep-18-ncov.pdf?sfvrsn=fa644293_2) (accessed March 21, 2020).

coronavirus confirmed that a case with links to China on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February. Iran confirmed a case on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February. The initial reports indicated that the carrier of the virus may have been a merchant who returned from China. Lebanon confirmed a case on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February. A woman returning from Qom in Iran had tested positive for the virus. Israel also confirmed a case on the same day. The woman positive for the virus after she returned from a cruise ship that had been quarantined in Japan. Bahrain confirmed a case too on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February. The individual had arrived to Manama from Iran via Dubai. Kuwait announced on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February that the three cases that it had detected had also returned from Iran. Iraq reported a case too on the same day. The individual was identified as an Iranian scholar of religion in the city of Najaf. Oman reported two cases on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February as well. The two nationals had returned from Iran. The first case reported by Afghanistan to the WHO on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February had also returned from Qom.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of February, the WHO reported that more new cases were being reported from outside of China than from inside the country.<sup>16</sup> Brazil had reported a case one day earlier. The man had been to Italy. Nigeria then confirmed a case involving travel to Italy on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February. Mexico also confirmed two cases involving travel to Italy on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February. Iceland too reported a case involving travel to Italy on the same day. Azerbaijan also confirmed three cases on that day as well. The individuals had all been to Iran. Armenia also reported a case involving travel to Iran on the same day. A man in Luxembourg who had been to Italy positive for the virus on the 29<sup>th</sup> of February. The Czech Republic reported three cases involving travel to Italy on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March. The Dominican Republic reported a case on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March involving an Italian citizen had tested positive for the virus. Indonesia also reported two cases on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March. A Japanese person later tested positive in Malaysia and was found to have infected the two individuals.

Jordan and Morocco each reported a case on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March. The two individuals had been to Italy. Saudi Arabia also reported one case on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March. The national had returned home from Iran via Bahrain. Tunisia as well confirmed a case on that day. The individual had been to Italy. Argentina reported a case on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March. The individual had been to Italy. Chile reported a case on the same day. The individual had been to Southeast Asia. Ukraine reported a case on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March as well. The man had travelled from Italy to Romania and then entered Ukraine by car. Poland confirmed a case on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March. The individual had been to Germany. Gibraltar as well reported a case on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March. The person had been to Italy and returned home via Malaga in Spain. Hungary reported two cases on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March. One of the two students had been to Iran. Slovenia confirmed a case on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March. The tourist had arrived to the country from Morocco via Italy. The Faroe Islands confirmed a case on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March. The individual had returned home from Paris in France. Bosnia reported a case on the 5<sup>th</sup> of

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<sup>16</sup> World Health Organisation. "Novel Coronavirus Situation Report 37." *The World Health Organisation*. February 26, 2020. [https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200121-sitrep-1-2019-ncov.pdf?sfvrsn=20a99c10\\_4](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200121-sitrep-1-2019-ncov.pdf?sfvrsn=20a99c10_4) (accessed March 21, 2020).

March. The individual had been to Italy. South Africa also confirmed a case on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March. The individual had been to Italy. A case was confirmed in the Vatican City on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March. Martinique also confirmed two cases on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March.

Bhutan confirmed a case on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March. The American citizen had arrived to the country via India. Cameroon reported a case on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March. The Frenchman had recently arrived to the country. Serbia reported a case on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March. The individual had recently been to Hungary. Colombia too reported a case on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March. The patient had been to Italy. Peru as well reported a case on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March. The individual had travelled to Spain, France and the Czech Republic. Togo reported a case on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March. The individual had been to Germany, France, Turkey and Benin. Costa Rica reported two cases on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March. One individual had been to New York and the other had been to Panama. The Occupied Palestinian Territories reported seven cases on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March. The cases involved contact with Greek tourists in late February that then tested positive. The Maldives confirmed two cases on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March. An Italian tourist that had recently been in the country later tested positive for the virus. Moldova reported a case on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March. The individual had been to Italy. Paraguay too confirmed a case on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March. The individual had been to Ecuador.

Bulgaria confirmed two cases on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March. The individuals had not visited countries where cases of the coronavirus had been registered. Bangladesh confirmed three cases involving travel to Italy on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March. Two of the cases had been to Italy and the third had direct contact with one of the two. Albania reported two cases involving travel to Italy on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March. Brunei reported a case on the 9<sup>th</sup> of March. The man had been to a tabligh gathering in Malaysia. Cyprus confirmed two cases on the 9<sup>th</sup> of March. One individual had been to Italy and the other to the United Kingdom. Panama reported a case on the 9<sup>th</sup> of March. The individual had been to Spain. Burkina Faso confirmed two cases on the 9<sup>th</sup> of March. The individuals had been in France. Mongolia confirmed a case on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March. The French national had arrived from Moscow. Bolivia confirmed two cases involving travel to Italy on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March. Jamaica reported a case involving travel to the United Kingdom on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March. Congo reported a case involving travel to France on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March.

The WHO declared a global pandemic on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March. The novel coronavirus had spread to 114 countries with more than 118,000 recorded cases, and 4,291 people had lost their lives.

As of the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2020, 801,061 cases have been recorded, and 38,749 lives have been lost.

### 3. Reflections: Local and Global Epidemiologies

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The initial investigation conducted in Wuhan could imply that human-to-human transmission was already occurring before China confirmed that human-to-human transmission had taken place across the country on January 20 or that the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market was not the only site where individuals contracted the virus. The research carried out by the geneticists could lend credence to the hypothesis that human-to-human transmission was already occurring before January 20 and the hypothesis that the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market was not the only site where individuals contracted the virus.

The initial outbreak outside of China appears to have been driven by international travellers exiting the city of Wuhan and limited to countries in the regions of East Asia and Southeast Asia. Although a travel quarantine was placed on Wuhan on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January, travel from the city had quickly transported the virus to West Asia, South Asia, Eastern Europe and North Asia, Oceania, North America and Europe by the end of January. A total of 72 states had travel restrictions in place one week later on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February. The series of outbreaks recorded across West Asia in February had all involved travel to and from Iran.

The global epicentre of the pandemic appears to have shifted to Italy by February. Countries in West Asia, North Africa, South Asia, the Caribbean, South America and Africa began reporting cases in early March that involved recent travel to Italy. The coronavirus appears to have crisscrossed its way within the European Union and the rest of Europe via Italy by way of both air and land transportation options by early March as well. Cross-continental and intra-regional travel from places other than Italy such as the rest of Europe, Southeast Asia and the United States may have further internationalised the virus by the time the WHO declared a global pandemic on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March.

## 4. Reflections: The Environment

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The environment has seen positive changes since the discovery of the outbreak in Wuhan. Satellites have detected a reduction in nitrogen dioxide and carbon dioxide emissions across the world.<sup>17</sup> Lebanon has enjoyed rare clear skies and the waters of Venice are now clear, but the earth just experienced its second hottest February in 141 years.<sup>18</sup> Some scientists have welcomed the reduction in pollutants and also warned that the levels will bounce back should human activity return as usual once the pandemic is over.<sup>19</sup> The dip in oil prices will negatively impact investments in renewable energy and other kinds of green energy – the global demand for solar energy is expected to decrease by 16% this year.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Steffen, Andrea. “Pollution Levels Plummet Due to Coronavirus Economic Lockdown.” *Intelligent Living*. March 24, 2020. <https://www.intelligentliving.co/global-pollution-levels-plummet-due-to-coronavirus-economic-lockdown/> (accessed March 25, 2020).

<sup>18</sup> National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – US Department of Commerce. “Earth just had its 2<sup>nd</sup> – hottest February on record.” March 13, 2020. *Natural Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration*. <https://www.noaa.gov/news/earth-just-had-its-2nd-hottest-february-on-record> (accessed March 25, 2020).

<sup>19</sup> Newburger, Emma. “Air pollution falls as coronavirus slows travel, but scientists warn of longer-term threat to climate change progress.” *CNBC*. March 22, 2020. <https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/21/air-pollution-falls-as-coronavirus-slows-travel-but-it-forms-a-new-threat.html> (accessed March 25, 2020).

<sup>20</sup> Bloomberg Energy Finance quoted in Boyle, Louise. “Coronavirus could cut emissions this year but spell worse news for the climate crisis.” *The Independent*. March 17, 2020. <https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/coronavirus-climate-crisis-emissions-flights-environment-a9406486.html> (accessed March 25, 2020).

## 5. Chronology: The Events in Jordan

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On the 1<sup>st</sup> of February, a Royal Jordanian flight landed at Queen Alia International Airport carrying 71 passengers who had been evacuated from Wuhan upon the directives of His Majesty King Abdullah II. 54 Jordanian students, seven Palestinian students and students from Tunisia, Lebanon, Oman, Syria and Bahrain were among those evacuated. The evacuation marked the early response to what then seemed a distant threat. At the press conference held before the arrival of the evacuees, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Health, Hikmat Abul Foul, confirmed that no cases of the novel coronavirus had been detected among the incoming students or anyone else in the country for that matter.<sup>21</sup> Upon arrival, the students were then quarantined at the Epidemiology Department at the al-Bashir Public Hospital and tested again as a precaution.

One month later on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March, the government announced that it had confirmed one case of the novel coronavirus. The case involved a Jordanian citizen who had recently been to Italy. The individual had fallen ill at home and was asked to report to a quarantine centre in Amman where he spent several days prior to being transferred to the epidemic isolation ward at the Prince Hamzah Public Hospital. A specialised team was then dispatched to sterilise the patient's home and the family was asked to self-isolate for two weeks. The Minister of Health, Dr. Saad Jaber, announced that schools will be closed and public gatherings will be banned if the number of cases across the country rises to 20.<sup>22</sup>

The Central Bank was quick to steer its strategy once the government reported a case of the novel coronavirus on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of March, it sent a circular to banks urging them to review and examine their business continuity plans including by updating scenarios that reflect any emerging risks and to rectify any weaknesses.

The government had already put into place a number of measures to pre-empt an outbreak. The procedures included a temporary entry ban on all non-Jordanians coming in from China, Iran and South Korea that was announced on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February. The Minister of State for Media Affairs, Amjad Adaileh, noted that Jordanians arriving from those countries will be placed in quarantine for two weeks to ensure they have not contracted a coronavirus infection.<sup>23</sup> The Health Minister also announced that a number of Jordanians arriving from Italy had been quarantined as a preventive measure and that medical teams have been stationed and thermal detectors had been

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<sup>21</sup> Kayed, Maram. "Ministry of Health confirms no coronavirus cases as Jordanian, Arab students arrive from Wuhan." *The Jordan Times*. February 01, 2020. <https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/ministry-health-confirms-no-coronavirus-cases-jordanian-arab-students-arrive-wuhan> (accessed on March 29, 2020).

<sup>22</sup> Saad Jaber quoted in Roya News. "First coronavirus case in Jordan confirmed." *Roya News*. March 2, 2020. <https://en.royanews.tv/news/20134/2020-03-02> (accessed on March 29, 2020).

<sup>23</sup> Amjad Adaileh quoted in Roya News. "Non-Jordanians coming from Iran, South Korea and China prevented from entering Jordan." *Roya News*. February 23, 2020. <https://en.royanews.tv/news/20061/2020-02-23> (accessed on March 29, 2020).

installed and activated at airports and different border crossings on the 26<sup>th</sup> of February.<sup>24</sup> The Minister had also added that the authorities have granted permits to Jordanian factories to produce masks on a large scale and would inaugurate a military field hospital in the Khaw area of Zarqa.<sup>25</sup> A nationwide awareness campaign was also launched while flights to and from Italy were suspended and flights to major destinations in Asia were reduced at the end of the month.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of March, the government announced an additional number of decisions after neighbouring countries had all announced a rise in the number of cases. The decisions included a travel ban from and to Lebanon, a travel ban from and to Syria (except for commercial freight), the closure of the northern, southern and King Hussein border crossings (commercial and cargo freight was excluded), a travel ban from and to Iraq via the Karameh Border Crossing (commercial and cargo freight were excluded while travel was only permitted through the Erbil and Baghdad airports), the closure of maritime borders with Egypt and a 50% reduction of flights to Egypt (citizens were not allowed to travel to Egypt unless absolutely necessary), a ban on departures and arrivals from France, Germany and Spain as of the 14<sup>th</sup> of March, a mandatory home quarantine on Jordanians coming from all restricted countries, and a ban on international and Arab conferences if not approved by the Cabinet. Diplomatic missions, international organisations, foreigners, investors and residents were excluded from the travel bans provided that they complied with the precautionary measures set out by authorities.

A series of stricter measures were made public in an announcement on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March. Several cases, mostly involving tourists, had been registered over the preceding days. The measures included the closure of all educational institutions. The Amman Baccalaureate School's bold decision to close its classrooms and move to distance education and operating remotely, as a precautionary measure, had preceded the government announcement. Other measures included the suspension of all flights to and from the country as of the 17<sup>th</sup> of March, the closure of all land and maritime border crossings to passenger traffic, an advisory against all kinds of public events and gatherings including social events such as funerals and weddings, the suspension of prayer at all mosques and churches (the public call to prayer would be continued and a unified Friday sermon would be broadcast on television), the prohibition of hospital and prison visitations, the closure and sterilisation of archaeological sites, the closure of sporting venues and sports clubs, swimming pools, youth centres and movie theatres, and a closure to all cafes, restaurants and bars including those serving narghile. No restrictions were placed on work in the public sector and businesses, institutions and organisations in the private sector were allowed to determine their own measures to protect employees and ensure business continuity. The government instructed all Jordanian citizens abroad to stay put, and also announced the formation of a crisis center.

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<sup>24</sup> Saad Jaber quoted in Roya News. "Health Minister: A Number of Jordanians arriving from Italy quarantine." *Roya News*. February 26, 2020. <https://en.royanews.tv/news/20099/Health-Minister--A-number-of-Jordanians-arriving-from-Italy-quarantined> (accessed on March 29, 2020).

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of March, the Central Bank sent another set of circulars to banks and asked the banks to implement them through the end of the year. Among the circulars was a request for banks to reduce their mandatory cash reserve ratios – the first such request since 2009 – in order to enhance liquidity, reduce the cost of credit and enhance the attractiveness of dinar-denominated assets. The Central Bank also offered banks interest- and guarantee-free finance on the value of cash reserve reductions. Another circular announced that the Central Bank will allow banks to postpone debt instalments owed by companies affected by the commercial consequences of the shutdown.

A decision to quarantine all incoming travellers was ordered also on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March – the day before the ban on all flights in or out of the country would come into effect. The 5,000 Jordanians that flew in the day before the ban were quarantined for two-weeks in 4- and 5-star hotels at the Dead Sea and in Amman. The quarantined individuals were hosted at the hotels and provided for with necessities such as food, water and required medication at government expense. A prison riot over visitation rights at a facility in the governorate left two dead on the same day as well.

One day later, the Royal Hashemite Court announced a Royal Decree approving the recommendation by the Cabinet to activate Defence Law No. 13 of 1992. In the letter addressed to Prime Minister (PM) al-Razzaz, His Majesty emphasised that orders issued under the law

will be within the most limited scope possible, without infringing on Jordanians' political and civil rights, but, rather, safeguarding them and protecting public liberties and the right to self-expression enshrined in the Constitution and in accordance with regular laws currently in effect, and guaranteeing the respect of private property, be it real estate, or movable and immovable funds.<sup>26</sup>

Following the decree, the Jordan Armed Forces - Arab Army (JAF) announced that it would begin deploying units at the exit and entry points of cities throughout the country as the Cabinet ushered in a series of measures that would take effect in the early hours of the morning on the day after. The country had recorded 40 confirmed cases by then including the seven that had attended a wedding in Irbid where some of the hosts and guests had recently been to Europe.

The Cabinet thus ordered a halt to all public sector work (with the exception of vital sectors as determined by the PM, such as the health and security sectors, and according to the recommendations of ministers), the closure of the private sector (bakeries, pharmacies, grocery stores and supermarkets, food and medicine-supply chains, and water, electricity and fuel providers were allowed to continue operating), a prohibition on all travel between all the governorates, a stop to all forms of public transportation, a halt on the printing and distribution of newspapers (which were determined to contribute to the spread of the novel coronavirus), a prohibition on

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<sup>26</sup> His Majesty King Abdullah II quoted in The Jordan Times. "Royal Decree approves Cabinet decision to proclaim Defence Law." *The Jordan Times*. Marc 17, 2020. <https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/royal-decree-approves-cabinet-decision-proclaim-defence-law> (accessed on March 29, 2020).

gatherings of more than ten people, a suspension to all medical care services (except in the case of medical emergencies), and the building of quarantine camps to receive the Jordanians coming in via open land crossings, and citizens to stay put at home except in the case of an emergency.

The first order issued under the Defence Law concerned the 2014 Social Security Law. Defence Order No. 1 suspended the implementation of old-age insurance for private sector employees for three months as of the 1<sup>st</sup> of March and reduced the social security subscription ratio for institutions and employees from 21.75 percent to 5.25 percent. The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship launched a website to increase public awareness on the novel coronavirus also on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March. The [website](#) has provided daily brief and live updates on cases, recovery rates and deaths, guidelines on home self-isolation, and access to an electronic platform for donations by individuals and organisations. The Ministry of Health had previously activated a toll-free 24-hour phone service – ‘Ask about Corona’ – earlier to answer medical inquiries and offer consultations with regard to the virus.

Once the government ordered a halt to all forms of public life, the Central Bank issued a circular to all banks to suspend operations in the Kingdom starting from the 18<sup>th</sup> of March until the evening of the 31<sup>st</sup> of March. Some banks were reportedly allowed to open on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March to process salaries, unemployment allowances and maternity allowances for clients without ATM cards. The Central Bank left it up to the banks to determine branches that will provide those services. In the circular, the bank underlined the requirement that all banks continue to provide electronic banking and other services to their customers, including the financing of imports and call centre services, and emphasised the importance of ensuring the safety of all employees present at the workplace for the purposes of providing these services. The Bank also stressed that all banks need to take all necessary measurements to maintain ATM cash supplies until the end of March.

The Central Bank also requested that banks put into place a number of measures to soften the impact on retail, consumer and commercial clients. The banks were also requested to schedule or reschedule client debt without additional commission while maintaining debt allocations and pending benefits until clients pay no less than three monthly instalments or two quarterly instalments or one half-year instalment from the date of scheduling and not for less than the value of the pending interest. The request included credit card payments, housing loans and personal loans without any commission or delayed interest.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of March, His Majesty called on the government to facilitate distance learning procedures for students and parents during a meeting of the National Policies Council that he chaired via teleconference, which was also attended by His Royal Highness Crown Prince al-Hussein and Chairperson of the Council His Royal Highness Prince Feisal. The government had only started broadcasting Tawjihi lessons on the Jordan Television sports channel the day before.

At the meeting, the Minister of Education noted that all educational content will be available over the next few days on a free platform and will be broadcast on two additional dedicated channels.<sup>27</sup>

The Ministry of Health also expressed its appreciation for the donations it had received since the start of the crisis on that day. Several companies, federations, associations, and chambers of industry as well as the Senate, the Lower House, some governorate councils, and members of the judiciary had all made voluntary contributions to a designated bank account at the Central Bank of Jordan. The Judicial Council decided to release around 3,000 people held on civil debt charges in order to prevent the spread of disease and preserve prisoner health and safety on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March as well while the Greater Amman Municipality announced specific timings for garbage collection. By the end of the day, the caseload had reached 48. When Her Majesty Queen Rania urged citizens to stay at home on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March, and the caseload had jumped to 69.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of March, a nationwide curfew was put into place under another defence order. Defence Order No. 2 prohibited citizens in all parts of the Kingdom from moving around as of 7AM on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March. The order also stipulated the closure of all shops across the country until an announcement that would be forthcoming on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March and put into a place a maximum prison sentence of one year for the violators. The day prior to the announcement of the curfew saw the Minister of Water and Irrigation, Raed Abu Soud, instruct water delivery bodies and companies across the Kingdom supply water to all citizens regardless of unpaid water bills on the condition that the outstanding dues are of a value less than JD300. In the evening, some Jordanians lined up at automated teller machines (ATMs) to withdraw cash in case of a prolonged economic crisis; a majority of employers had released salaries earlier than usual.

A siren on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March announced the start of the curfew. Almost all Jordanians appeared to have complied with the order. The streets in Amman were empty except for patrol cars, the occasional gas delivery truck, and the Greater Amman Municipality trucks that began sterilising the main streets and commercial districts of the capital. A few corner stores were reported to have opened and sold to the law enforcement agents patrolling public spaces and those willing to dare the trip. The curfew was otherwise strictly enforced, and some 300 Jordanians were arrested for violating it on that day. Tens of cars had also been impounded.

On the second day of the curfew, some 400 Jordanians had been arrested, and some areas in southern Amman begun to report delays in the supply of water.<sup>28</sup> According to officials in the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, water consumption had increased by 40 percent in the first two

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<sup>27</sup> Tayseer Nuaimi quoted in The Jordan Times. "King, via teleconference, chairs follow-up meeting on distance learning procedures." *The Jordan Times*. March 18, 2020. <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/king-teleconference-chairs-follow-meeting-distance-learning-procedures> (accessed on March 29, 2020).

<sup>28</sup> Roya News. "Water Ministry Calls on Jordanians to Rationalize Consumption/المياه" ندعو الأردنيين لترشيد الاستهلاك. *Roya News*. March 22, 2020. <https://royanews.tv/news/209248> (accessed on March 25, 2020).

days of the curfew.<sup>29</sup> Transportation permits had been issued to vegetable and fruit farmers, poultry and livestock farmers as well as dairy producers and retailers were able to access the 3,850 tons of fruits and vegetables that had been shipped to the central market at the Greater Amman Municipality over the weekend.<sup>30</sup> Ambient air measures and air pollutants including particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter less than 10 microns, Carbon monoxide, Sulphur dioxide, Nitrogen dioxide and Ozone had been measured by the Ministry of Environment, and levels of dust and suspended particulate matter had significantly decreased on that day.<sup>31</sup> The Minister of Education announced the launch of the online platform – [Darsak](#) – on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March as well.

By the end of the third day of the curfew, escapades of restless residents unaccustomed to staying at home for 48 hours began circulating on social media, and the government had announced plans for the provision of basic necessities in cooperation with the municipal councils. The Minister of Labour, Nidal al-Batayneh, specified that the distribution of bread, water, infant formula, medicine, gas and diesel would begin on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March.<sup>32</sup> “We have to prepare ourselves for a difficult period,”<sup>33</sup> Minister of State for Media Affairs Amjad Adaileh said.

Speaking on the ‘Sawt al-Mamlaka’ television program, al-Batayneh said that water and bread will be delivered by Greater Amman Municipality vehicles in Amman from 9AM to 5PM while buses would deliver water and bread in other governorates. According to al-Batayneh, other commodities such as frozen chicken, eggs, sugar, rice and tobacco would start to be available by the 26<sup>th</sup> of March. He also added that delivery companies would be allowed to deliver commodities to households starting from the 29<sup>th</sup> of March.<sup>34</sup>

The first day of deliveries – the 24<sup>th</sup> of March – was met with mixed results. Necessities were either distributed directly from vehicles and buses or at public meeting points like police stations. In some communities, citizens heeded government advice and stood meters apart in neat lines. In other communities, people gathered in crowds and crowds clamoured around delivery vehicles. In

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<sup>29</sup> Officials quoted in Namrouqa, Hana. “Water resource operating at highest capacity as demand surges by 40 percent.” *The Jordan Times*. March 23, 2020. <https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/water-resources-operating-highest-capacity-demand-surges-40-cent> (accessed March 25, 2020).

<sup>30</sup> Al-Ordon al-Youm. “3,850 tonnes of produce delivered to the central market/ توريد 3850 طن خضار وفواكه وورقيات/ للسوق المركزي” *Al-Ordon al-Youm*. March 22, 2020. <https://alordoon.com/news/archives/83238> (March 24, 2020)

<sup>31</sup> Environmental Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate – The Ministry of Environment. “National Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Network.” The Ministry of Environment. <https://www.jordanenv.com/?fbclid=IwAR1bRAqPKjTowgWF1WvYAUQuQs5xKotN4NfRViN7JNl2tmMPJOrGdsHzOHs> (accessed March 22, 2020).

<sup>32</sup> Nidal Al-Batayneh quoted in the *Jordan Times*. “Kingdom-wide distribution of basic necessities to begin on Tuesday.” *The Jordan Times*. March 23, 2020. <https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/kingdom-wide-distribution-basic-necessities-begin-tuesday> (accessed March 25, 2020).

<sup>33</sup> Amjad Adaileh quoted in the *Jordan Times*. “Gearing up for the herculean task ahead.” *The Jordan Times*. March 23, 2020. <https://www.jordantimes.com/opinion/editorial/gearing-herculean-task-ahead> (accessed March 25, 2020)

<sup>34</sup> Nidal Al-Batayneh quoted in the *Jordan Times*. “Kingdom-wide distribution of basic necessities to begin on Tuesday.” *The Jordan Times*. March 23, 2020. <https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/kingdom-wide-distribution-basic-necessities-begin-tuesday> (accessed March 25, 2020).

some areas of East Amman, some violations of the law were noted – a majority of which appears to have been prosecuted in no small part due to documentation on social media.

In the evening, the PM announced that the government would allow people to leave their homes on foot to purchase necessities from corner shops, grocery stores and supermarkets, bakeries and pharmacies that would be open from 10AM to 6PM. Al-Razzaz added that points of sale would be closed down if they got too overcrowded. On the following day – the 25<sup>th</sup> of March – retailers were allowed to purchase products directly from farmers while members of the Public Security Directorate vigilantly and diligently patrolled neighbourhoods and warned shop keepers that customers must line up at a distance from one another and that stores must not accommodate more than a few customers at a time. A siren marked the resumption of the curfew at 6PM. The day had seen more arrests and impoundments.

The 26<sup>th</sup> of March saw the issuance of Defence Order No. 3, which came to tighten the regulations that have governed the lockdown. The day also saw the distribution of 2000 tonnes of vegetables, 1000 tonnes of chicken and 1000 tonnes of dairy product and eggs were distributed to the markets. The new defence order stipulated that individual violations of the curfew would be additionally punishable by a fine of no less than JD100 and no more than JD500. The order also stipulated that shop owners who allow their shops to operate outside approved hours would see their shops closed for a period of 14 days and be fined a ticket of no less than JD1,000. The Minister of State for Media Affairs Amjad Adaileh announced a drop in the number of curfew violators two days later on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March.<sup>35</sup>

Defence Order No. 4 was issued a few days later on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March. The order established a relief fund called *Himmat Watan* to receive local and foreign contributions greater than JD100,000. The Central Bank of Jordan was tasked with supervising the fund, which is to be run by a committee nominated by the bank and approved by the PM. Two previous accounts had been created for the same purposes under the auspices of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Development. The Minister of Health had noted that the cost of quarantining an individual is around JD150 per day and that the cost of treatment is around JD1400 per person per day.<sup>36</sup>

Defence Order No. 5. was also issued on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March. The order suspended the validity of all periods and dates stipulated in the applicable legislations, including periods of limitation, lapse of hearing cases, or periods of litigation in all types of courts in the Kingdom. The order is applicable as well to prosecutions departments, arbitration bodies, implementation departments,

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<sup>35</sup> Amjad Adaileh quoted in Ammon. “PM extends holiday for ministries and government institutions for two weeks.” *Ammon*. March 29, 2020. <http://en.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleno=42887#.XoeotW5RXAA> (Accessed on March 30, 2020).

<sup>36</sup> Saad Jaber as quoted in Kayed, Maryam. “Health Minister’s coronavirus cost remarks draw public ire.” *The Jordan Times*. March 10, 2020. <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/health-ministers-coronavirus-cost-remarks-draw-public-ire> (accessed March 30, 2020).

wages authority and any council of conciliation, mediation and disciplinary councils. The order also suspended the provisions of the Companies Law No. (22) of 1997 and its amendments, as well as the instructions issued pursuant thereto regarding the meetings of public bodies, boards of directors, and boards of directors of public and private joint-stock companies.

In the days between the announcement of the third order and the release of the fourth and fifth orders, a number of events had taken place.

The country had logged five deaths attributable to an infection by the novel coronavirus while the total number of confirmed coronavirus infections had risen to 268. The authorities had sealed off the city and province of Irbid once it had emerged that a significant proportion in the number of new cases had attended the wedding held in mid-March, and security forces reportedly blocked even those with permits from going in or out of the province while villages within the governorate were isolated from one another.<sup>37</sup> During a press briefing at the National Center for Security and Crisis Management, the Minister of State for Media Affairs, Amjad Adaileh, noted that necessities and services would be delivered to all the areas under lockdown in Irbid.<sup>38</sup>

The government had also announced the launch of [Mouneh](#), a directory of supermarkets, firms and applications that provide delivery services to households which also lists the grocery stores open throughout the country, and ride-hailing companies like Uber and Careem that once faced government hurdle after hurdle to obtain approvals to operate in the Kingdom had announced a partnership to help and deliver necessities and basic commodities to doorsteps while the daily consumption of all kinds of agricultural products had risen by 11 percent.<sup>39</sup>

HRH the Crown Prince had also delivered a message of hope, resilience and optimism to all Jordanians and the authorities began to discharge the quarantined individuals who were offered free transportation and greeted with flowers as they left the luxury hotels by members of the armed forces tasked with securing the premises of those hotels.

As of the 31<sup>st</sup> of March, Jordan has recorded 274 cases of the novel coronavirus, 29 recoveries and 5 deaths.

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<sup>37</sup> Arraf, Jane. "A Wedding in Jordan Leads to a Coronavirus Cluster and Closure of a Major City." *NPR*. March 27, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/03/27/822451283/a-wedding-in-jordan-leads-to-a-coronavirus-cluster-and-closure-of-a-major-city> (accessed March 29, 2020).

<sup>38</sup> Amjad Adaileh quoted in *Roya News*. "Government decides to place Irbid governorate on complete lockdown." *Roya News*. March 26, 2020. <https://en.royanews.tv/news/20453/2020-03-26> (accessed March 26, 2020).

<sup>39</sup> [Ibrahim al-Shahahdeh in quoted in Khaberni "Produce consumption rises by 11% from average levels / زيادة استهلاك الخضار والفواكه 11% عن المعدل"](#) *Khaberni*. March 30, 2020. (accessed on March 31, 2020).

## Reflections: Jordan

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The relatively effective response of the government to the crisis along with the increased visibility and involvement of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) and other security agencies like the Public Security Department in the handling of the crisis is likely to have generated an amount of political capital for the State to spend. A poll conducted by IPSOS has shown that a majority of citizens agree with the decision to keep the public at home and put a halt to daily routines and are content with the enforcement of the Defense Law.<sup>40</sup>

The crisis could be an opportunity for the government to regain the trust that has been lost over the years. Last year, research conducted by WANA examined the impact that the government's absence as the provider of human security programming and services such as healthcare and schooling in marginalised communities has had on public perceptions of other state and non-state actors.<sup>41</sup> The research found that while the government is the most expected actor to provide human security programming it is the least trusted actor to do so, and that the military is the least expected but most trusted actor to provide human security programming. The high levels of trust in the Jordanian military were found to be in part due to the efficient and effective provision of human security programming and services in some locales across the Kingdom.

The crisis has forced the government to act quickly, and the government has resorted to its 2-degree-of-separation 'rule' in crafting a response to the challenges of securing the supply of basic necessities and commodities and the delivery of education from a distance: someone, often a government official, knows someone who has a solution or someone that has the network and means to come up with a solution. [Mouneh](#) was developed by ArabiaWeather Inc., a Jordanian tech firm headquartered in Amman since 2006, while [Darsak](#) was developed by Abwaab, a newly founded Edutech Jordanian company headquartered in Amman, and in collaboration with Mawdoo3, the online giant of an Arabic content publisher headquartered in Amman. Although an unprepared government cannot be entirely faulted for resorting to quick and available solutions in the face of a crisis, the effects of the shutdown and the curfew have brought to the fore the long path ahead of the country in institutionalising an equitable and open system for sustainable public-private partnerships.

Conversations with people from Amman, al-Salt, Karak and Aqaba during the second week of the curfew have shed some light on the impact that socioeconomic status on the ability to access the

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<sup>40</sup> As cited in the Jordan Times. "Majority of citizens support government measures against COVID-19 poll shows." *The Jordan Times*. March 17, 2020. <https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/majority-citizens-support-govts-measures-against-covid-19-poll-shows> (accessed on March 25, 2020).

<sup>41</sup> West Asia-North Africa Institute. "White Paper: Towards More Effective Human Security Approaches in the Context of the Emerging Threat of Radicalization in Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia." The West Asia-North Africa Institute. November 2019. [http://wanainstitute.org/sites/default/files/publications/English%20White%20Paper\\_0.pdf](http://wanainstitute.org/sites/default/files/publications/English%20White%20Paper_0.pdf) (accessed March 25, 2020).

digital solutions provided by the government for education during the shutdown. A mother from the governorate of Karak highlighted the role played by socio-economic factors in mediating access to technology, reliable internet connectivity, and a parent's ability to guide the student throughout the process. The 35-year-old mother to three children who attend public school lamented the effects on inequality on the ability of children to navigate life in both normal times and times of crises. Three other interviewees also noted the tempering effects of inequality on the success of the distance learning measures put into place by the government.<sup>42</sup>

Monitoring and evaluation tools are necessary to measure the impact of the crisis and the efficacy of the solutions that the government has adopted in order to ensure as well that existing solutions can be developed and improved to better prepare us for future crises. The Royal Scientific Society, was one of the few organisations that were required by the government to continue operating its labs as part of its service to the nation, in areas as diverse as testing and ensuring the safety of water, air, food, hospital equipment and medical supplies as well as testing of crucial ICT software for the government online educational platforms.

With a halt on most commercial activity except for small windows when essential services are open, the Jordanian economy sits mostly at a standstill. The government has placed strict controls on some prices and has other regulations in place to deter shopkeepers and retailers from partaking in the practice of price gouging. Nonetheless, some Jordanians have almost certainly suffered. Around 700,000 Jordanians earned their livelihoods from work in the informal sector in 2016 – a figure that had increased by ten percentage points in six years but remains well below the regional average.<sup>43</sup> Labourers in the informal economy are often paid their wages per day and receive none of the benefits associated with employment in the formal economy like health insurance or retirement income. The shutdown and the curfew that followed have meant that around half of a labour force composed of 1.4 million people has experienced an interruption to their livelihoods.

The Ministry of Social Development has set up a relief fund (Al Khair) to receive donations for the families that have been directly affected by the crisis and the day labourers that have lost their source of income due to the lockdown although, and according to the Minister of Social Development, the data of only 200,000 workers in the informal economy has been collected thus far.<sup>44</sup> Refugees who work informally continue to receive cash assistance from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR)<sup>45</sup> – perhaps, and in the event of a months-long

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<sup>42</sup> As reported by WANA staff member Ala'a al-Mufleh.

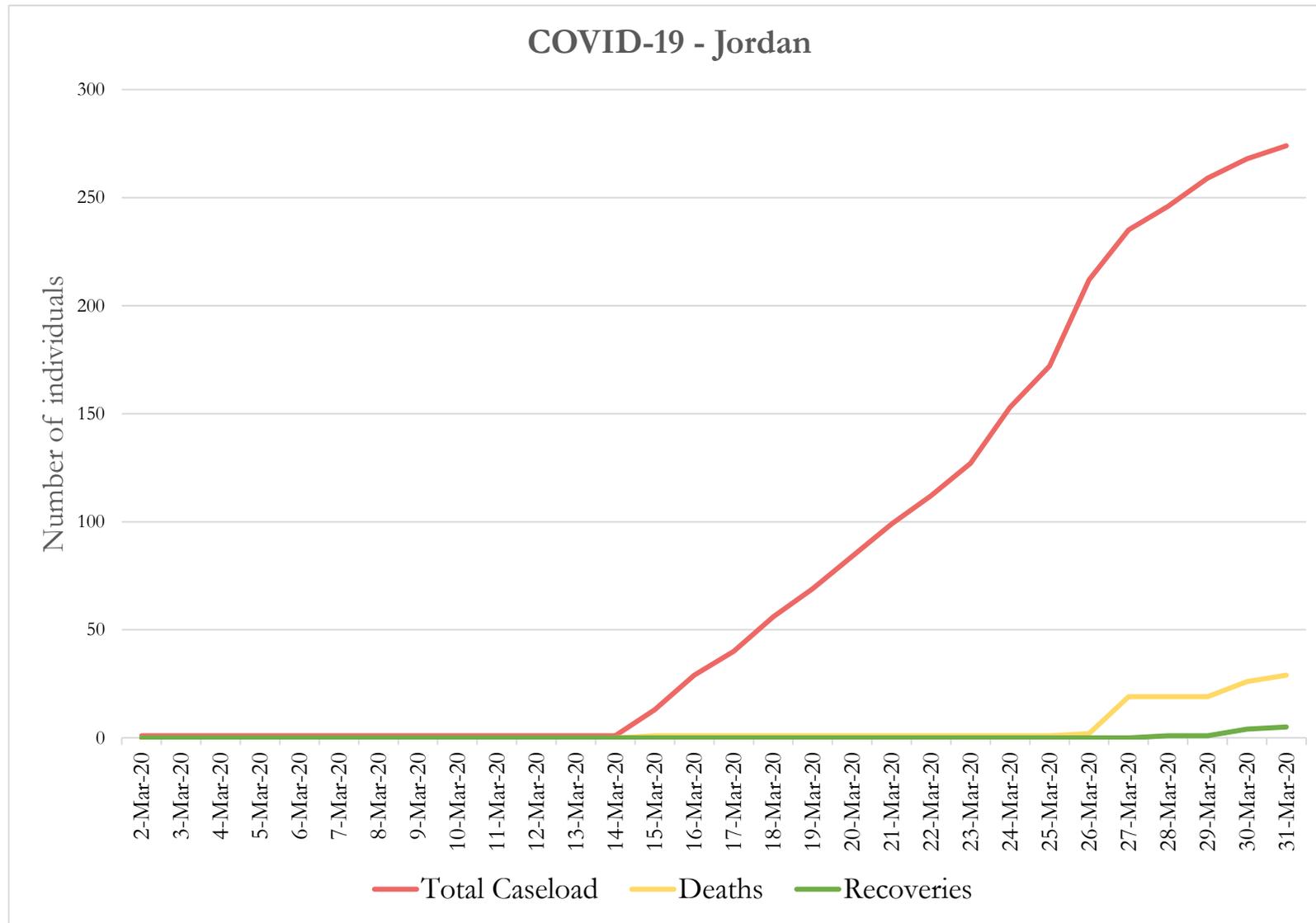
<sup>43</sup> [Jordan Strategy Forum. "Dealing with People with Limited Daily Income and Those Most Exposed to Challenges Throughout the Coronavirus Crisis." \*Jordan Strategy Forum\*. March 2020. \(accessed March 25, 2020\).](#)

<sup>44</sup> Basma Ishaqat quoted in *The Jordan Times*. "PM issues Defence Order No. 4 establishing coronavirus relief fund." *The Jordan Times*. March 31, 2020. <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/pm-issues-defence-order-no-4-establishing-coronavirus-relief-fund> (accessed on April 1, 2020).

<sup>45</sup> *The Jordan Times*. "UNHCR cash assistance to refugees in Jordan counties – representative." *The Jordan Times*. March 29, 2020. <https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/unhcr-monthly-cash-assistance-refugees-jordan-continues-%E2%80%94-representative> (accessed on March 30, 2020).

economic shutdown and concomitant recession, a basic income could be made available for every Jordanian who works in the informal economy to cover rent, necessities, and - if applicable – monthly debt instalments.

Chart I: COVID-19 in Jordan





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