

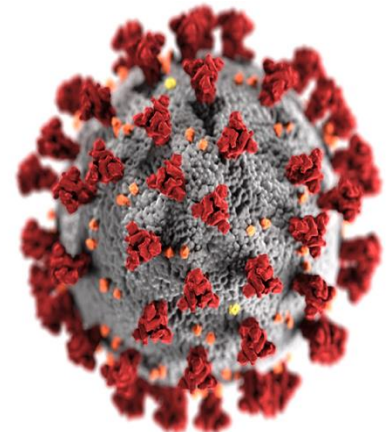


**REPUBLIC OF LEBANON**  
**MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

# **Ministry of Public Health Response to COVID-19 till Now & Way Forward**

**H.E Dr. Hamad Hassan**  
**Thursday July 2, 2020**

**1214**  
[www.moph.gov.lb](http://www.moph.gov.lb)



# Context of COVID-19 in Lebanon

- Prevailing, financial and economic crises in the country:
  - Purchasing power has decreased by almost 60% since October 2019
  - Restricted banking measures affected whole population, especially suppliers' ability to purchase goods from abroad including medical supplies
  - Unemployment rates reached around 50% and people who are still employed suffered cut-downs on their salaries (some reaching more than 50%)
- **High concentration of refugees (Syrians and Palestinians)**, many of whom live in crowded living conditions with limited access to healthcare with concern of spread of virus among this population
- COVID-19 has exacerbated this economical situation and pre-existing shortages on already strained public health system



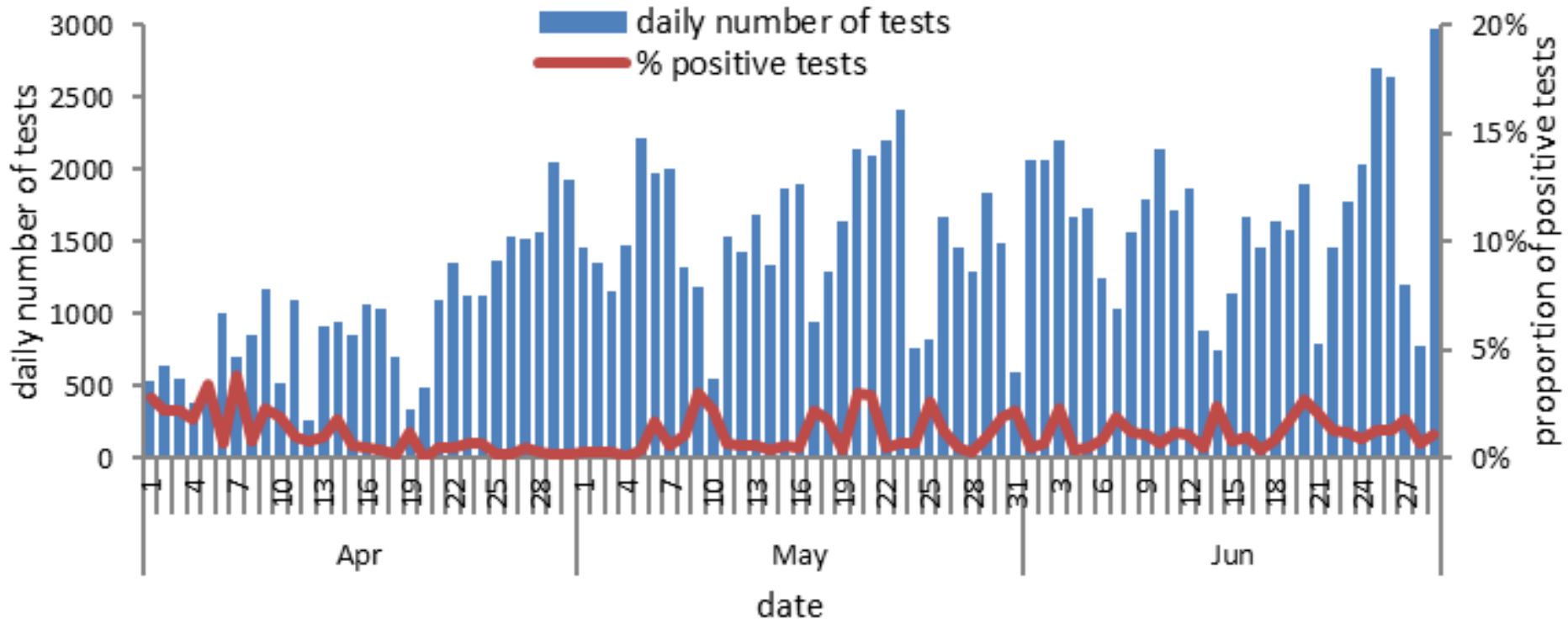
# Number of Tests: Daily and Cumulative

(up to 29 June 2020)

**131997** Total tests performed since 21<sup>st</sup> Feb 2020

**2482.4** Tests per 100000 inhabitants

**1.34%** Positive tests / total tests conducted



# Number of Cases: Daily and Cumulative

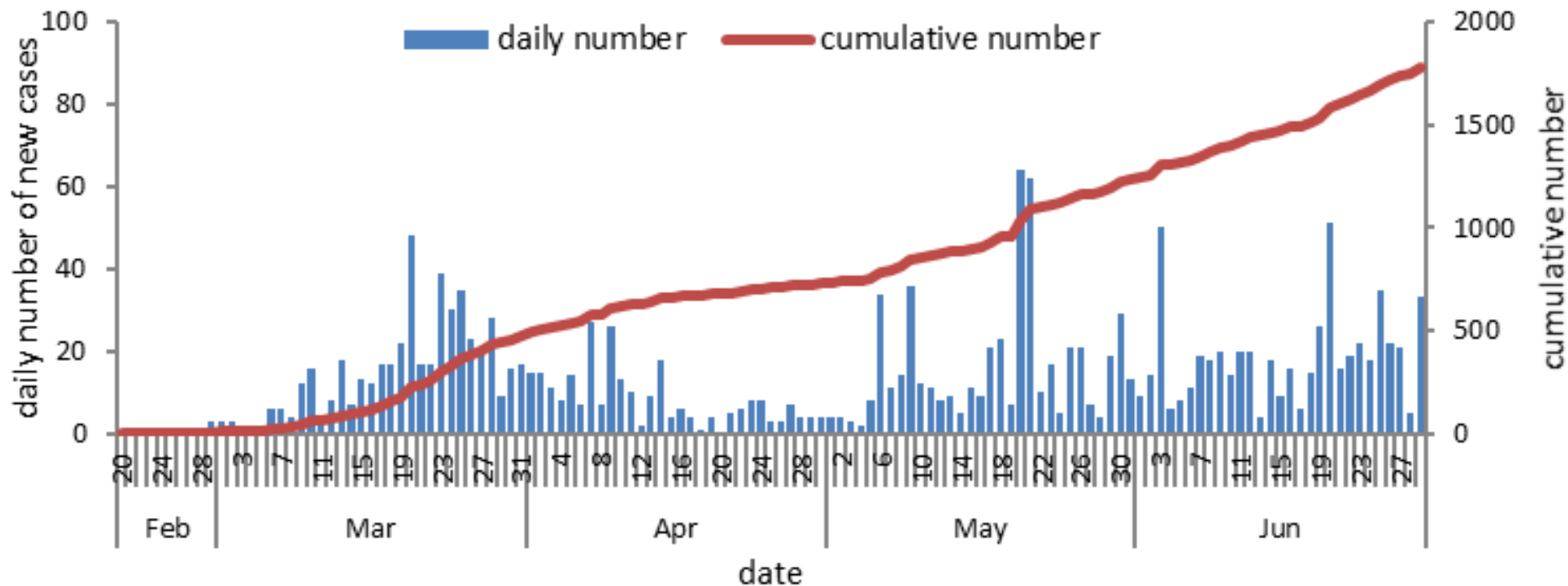
(up to 29 June 2020)

**1778** Total confirmed cases since 21<sup>st</sup> Feb 2020

**507** Travel related cases (28%)

**1199** Local cases (72%)

**33.4** Cases per 100000 inhabitants

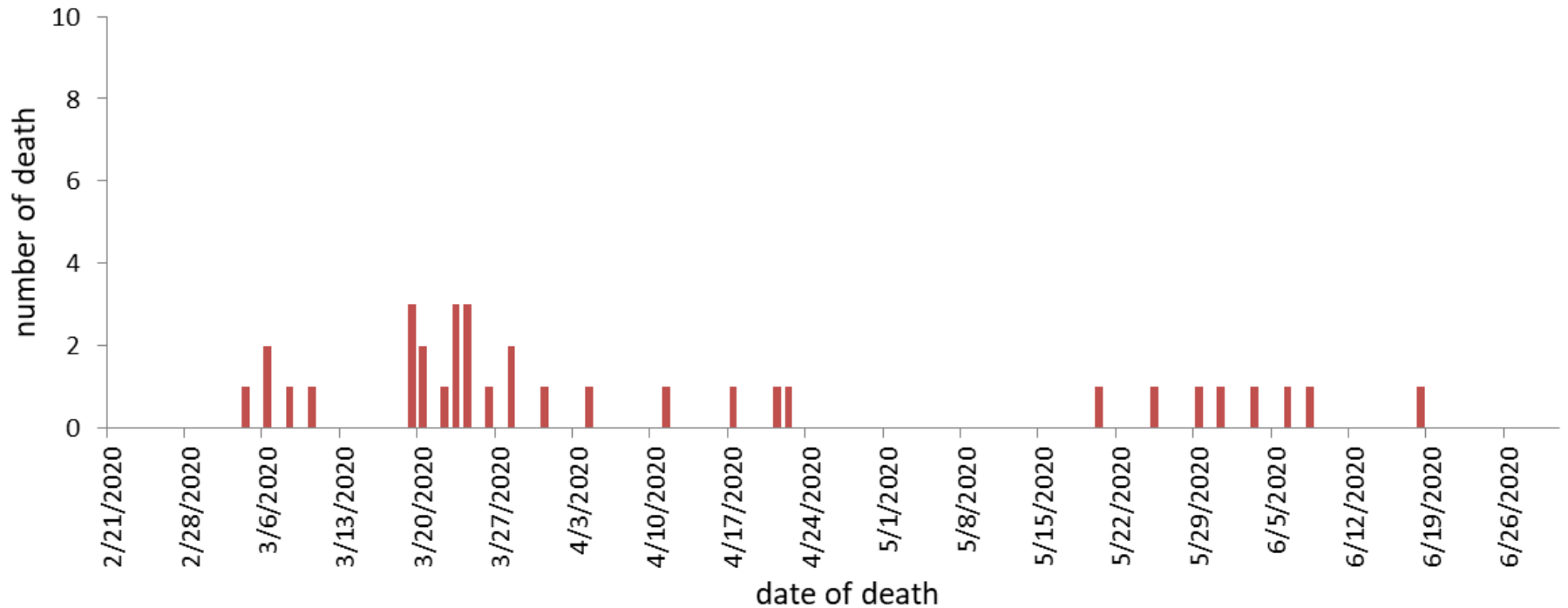


# Number of Deaths: Daily and Cumulative

(up to 29 June 2020)

**34** Total deaths since 21<sup>st</sup> Feb 2020

**1.9%** Case fatality rate (deaths / total cases)

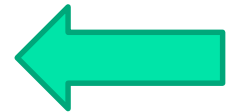


# COVID-19 National Health Strategic Preparedness & Response Plan

- It was developed by Ministry of Public Health in close collaboration with World Health Organization and was published on March 10, 2020
- National plan of action to scale up preparedness and response capacities in Lebanon for prevention, early detection, and rapid response to coronavirus as required under International Health Regulations (IHR)

## Plan sets 4 stages for transmission:

- Stage 1: no cases
- Stage 2: with 1 or more cases, imported or locally detected
- Stage 3: clusters of cases, traceable, with limited community transmission
- Stage 4: larger outbreaks of local transmission (Community transmission)



# Preparedness & Response Interventions

Building on **two important points** of strength:

1- A strong capacity at the Ministry that was built over many years, and a robust surveillance system well versed in preparedness and response

2- A well prepared isolation unit with negative pressure at biggest public hospital in Beirut (the Rafic Hariri University Hospital) which served since 2009 (H1N1 Pandemic)

Ministry of Public Health made the following interventions as part of containment phase:

- On **January 31, 2020**, immediately after WHO declared a PHEIC, MOPH worked on activation of COVID-19 surveillance system
- Consecutive memos were issued regarding case definition, countries affected, follow-up of imported cases up till 14 days from arrival with contact tracing.
- Close coordination with National Ministerial Committee on COVID19 at Prime Minister's office and holding regular meetings involving high level experts and government officials



# Preparedness & Response Interventions

On **February 20, 2020**: Upon notification of authorities about suspicious cases coming from countries in epidemic airport health teams were mobilized for early detection upon arrival

On **February 21, 2020**: First confirmed case of COVID-19 was declared and necessitated a series of measures as follows:

- Obliging all passengers to self quarantine from arrival till 14 days with daily follow-up by MOPH teams
- Admitting all positive cases, even those with mild symptoms, to hospital, and discharging them only after two consecutive negative PCR (this policy changed later)
- Isolating and tracing contacts
- Conducting continuous awareness campaigns
- Developing mobile applications to facilitate self diagnosis and tracing





# Preparedness & Response Interventions

- Increasing number of daily tests to more than 1500 then 2500, through increasing number of accredited labs performing PCR tests to 40 (including 6 in public hospitals)
- Delaying use of Rapid Tests due to its limited benefit for early diagnosis
- Performing targeted testing and case detection campaigns in areas with identified clusters



# Preparedness & Response Interventions

- **Case Detection**
- Notification by Healthcare Facilities
  - Case Definitions
  - From Hospitals, Laboratories, medical centers...
- Reporting by Public
  - Covid Call Center
- Via Case Investigation and Contact Tracing
  - Contact testing referred to hospitals
  - Contact testing during field activities
- Point of Entry Screening
  - Airport
  - Ground crossings



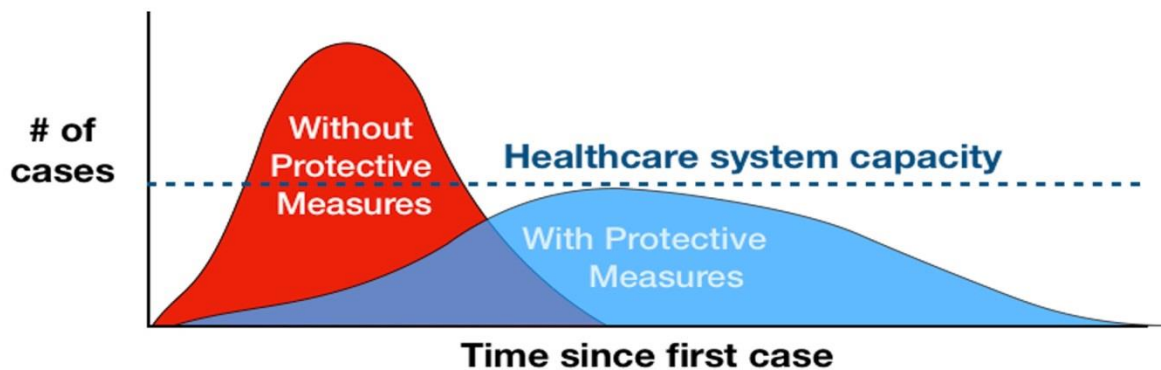
# Preparedness and Response at Government Level

- **February 22:** Banning all travels from and to epidemic countries
- **February 29:** Closing all schools and universities
- **March 11:** Closing all gyms, pubs, restaurants and crowd-prone areas
- **March 15:** Declaring a country-wide state of emergency (extended till August 2) with complete lockdown
- **March 26:** Issuing a schedule for working hours of institutions (with curfew between 7pm and 5 am then adjusted from 12am till 5am)
- **April 5:** Issuing a memo to organize means of transport based on odd-even car plates
- Government then decided to ease the measures starting April 27 and reopen economical institutions
- Opening of Airport with Capacity of 10% on July 1, 2020



# Our Efforts was focused on Slowing Transmission and Flattening Curve

- COVID-19 cases were expected to increase in Lebanon; like in other infected countries, **rate of transmission** depends on extent of **preventative measures** and extent to which **public adheres** to such measures as well as availability of care and testing



*Adapted from CDC / The Economist*

# Preparedness of Hospitals Capacities to Respond to COVID-19

- **MoPH set Four Lines of Preparedness of Hospitals:**
- **First line:** 10 Public Hospitals to be ready to designate specific sections/beds for corona
- **Second Line:** to designate 8 additional Public Hospitals to receive corona cases
- All Hospitals were equipped with PPEs, ventilators, lab reagents & Consumables through world bank loan and donations from other organizations like WHO
- **Third Line:** Activation of contingency plans at Private Hospitals that are classified as T1 (Tertiary Hospitals) to be ready to receive corona cases
- Private Hospitals are economizing on use of infection prevention and control measures; this has a serious effect in context of CoVID 19 outbreak
- Set a coverage plan with **UNHCR & UNRWA** for testing and treatment of refugees



# Repatriation Plan during COVID19 crisis

- Repatriation was done over 4 stages, last stage started from April 5 and was extended till early June
- The MOPH was cooperating with many stakeholders:
  - Other Ministries: Foreign Affairs, Transport, Interior, Defence, Tourism
  - Rafic Hariri International Airport and Middle East Airlines
  - Various NGOs and volunteers to receive passengers and do daily follow up
- PCR tests were done at airport for all passengers coming from areas where no PCR tests were performed and they were asked to stay at a hotel overnight until PCR test was out
- Negative test results will asked to remain in their homes for isolation for 14 days, passengers with positive results were transferred to hospitals with the help of the Lebanese Red Cross
- More than 20,000 passengers returned; 1.48% were positive



# Opening of Airport

- Regarding reopening of airport on July 1, 2020 with only 10% of the airport daily capacity, and adopting **Double PCR Policy** with no 14 days isolation to be requested as follows:
- It was decided that about 80% of total arriving passengers shall be from countries where PCR test is available and 20% from countries where the test is not available (or reliable)
- Passengers arriving from countries with PCR should do the test latest 96 hours before departure and to show results at check in counters (passengers with positive results will not be allowed on board)
- All passengers arriving to Lebanon should do PCR at airport upon arrival by authorized labs and passengers will be informed of results within 24-48 hours from their arrival date, during that time they shall stay in the



# Opening of Airport

- For passengers arriving from non-PCR countries; they should do PCR test first at the airport upon arrival and are subject to another PCR test 72 hours after their arrivals by an authorized lab to be designated by MOPH medical team at the airport; passengers should stay at their residential places waiting for the two results of PCR
- All passengers shall possess an insurance policy issued by local or international insurance company covering all costs of COVID-19 treatment throughout duration of their stay in Lebanon
- Passengers with positive PCR tests shall follow directives of MOPH in Lebanon until they recover
- All passengers must fill a health declaration form issued by MOPH before arrival to Lebanon that is electronically available





# Future Plans

- Keep a steady state of low transmission and remain ready to control sporadic cases and clusters after lifting of lockdown measures and opening of airport
- Close observation of transmission especially in: health care facilities, prisons, elderly homes and refugees camps
- Emphasize importance of Personal precautions and risk reduction at workplace
- MOPH continues following on a daily basis the epidemic curve, cases characteristics and the evolution of chains of transmission and clusters
- MOPH capacity should be scaled-up while maintaining the number of travelers within its limits



# Thank You



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