

Turkey launches polio vaccination at Syria border

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Turkey on Monday announced a mass vaccination campaign against an outbreak of polio in areas near neighbouring Syria.

"We are planning to vaccinate about one million children under five years old," public health agency vice president Mehmet Ali Torunoglu told private NTV television.

The United Nations said this month that emergency plans were under way to vaccinate more than 20 million children in the Middle East including Turkey, in the region's largest-ever polio campaign.

Its initiative was announced after the World Health Organisation reported that [polio](#) had reemerged in war-torn Syria for the first time in 14 years, leaving 10 children paralysed.

Polio was eradicated in Turkey 15 years ago but the country, which is home to more than 600,000 Syrian refugees, could be at risk from the outbreak of the disease in its neighbour.

Vaccinations began on Monday in Gaziantep province and will also be carried out in six other provinces on or near the border that shelter Syrian refugees.

Polio is caused by a highly infectious virus that invades the nervous system through the mouth and can cause irreversible paralysis within a matter of hours.

Children under the age of five are those most at risk.

There is no cure, but there are highly effective vaccines to prevent the disease.

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