

# Mideast's confirmed coronavirus death toll goes over 50,000

September 3 2020

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In this April 19, 2020 file photo, people attend evening prayers while maintaining a level of social distancing to help avoid the spread of the coronavirus, at a mosque in Karachi, Pakistan. The confirmed death toll from the coronavirus has gone over 50,000 in the Middle East as the pandemic continues. That's according to a count Thursday, Sept. 3, 2020, from The Associated Press, based on official numbers offered by health authorities across the region. (AP Photo/Fareed Khan, File)

The confirmed death toll from the coronavirus passed 50,000 in the Middle East on Thursday, according to a count from The Associated Press based on official numbers provided by health authorities.

Those numbers still may be an undercount, though, as testing in war-torn nations like Libya and Yemen remains extremely limited.

The top U.N. official for Libya on Wednesday warned the coronavirus pandemic in the war-ravaged country appears to be "spiraling out of control." Yemen's Houthi rebels, who control the capital, Sanaa, and much of the north, have refused to release virus statistics.

The hardest-hit nation remains Iran, which saw the region's first major outbreak. Over 21,900 people have died there from the virus, with over 380,000 confirmed cases and 328,000 recoveries.

Also Thursday, Israel announced plans to impose strict lockdowns on cities with major outbreaks after it reported a record 3,000 new cases in a single day. The country had largely contained its outbreak last spring after imposing strict lockdown measures. But infections have skyrocketed since the economy was abruptly reopened in May.

The government, which has faced widespread criticism for its handling of the pandemic, said new lockdowns would be imposed in so-called "red" cities. Israeli media say several cities and towns, including many Arab and ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities, are on the list.



In this April 26, 2020 file photo, a commuter wearing a face mask to help curb the spread of the coronavirus, sleeps aboard the driverless Metro as it passes the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The confirmed death toll from the coronavirus has gone over 50,000 in the Middle East as the pandemic continues. That's according to a count Thursday, Sept. 3, 2020, from The Associated Press, based on official numbers offered by health authorities across the region. (AP Photo/Jon Gambrell, File)

"We've decided to impose closures on red cities," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a video statement Thursday. "I ask for the cooperation of all citizens to put the brakes on the spread of the sickness."

The exact details of the plan were not yet known, but the lockdowns are



expected to resemble those imposed countrywide in the spring, when schools and most businesses were closed, and people were only allowed to leave home to buy food and medicine.

Israel has reported more than 120,000 cases and 985 deaths.

The United Arab Emirates, which has embarked on a mass testing campaign, saw its highest daily number of new cases in over three months. That came as schools have reopened in the country and Dubai has offered itself as a tourist destination. The federation has reported more than 72,000 cases, including 387 deaths.



In this Sunday, Aug. 30, 2020 file photo, people wearing protective face masks to help prevent spread of the coronavirus mourn during an annual ceremony commemorating Ashoura in Tehran, Iran. The confirmed death toll from the

coronavirus has gone over 50,000 in the Middle East as the pandemic continues. That's according to a count Thursday, Sept. 3, 2020, from The Associated Press, based on official numbers offered by health authorities across the region. (AP Photo/Ebrahim Noroozi, File)



In this March 6, 2020 file photo, Saudi policemen guard the the Kaaba, the cubic building at the Grand Mosque, in the Muslim holy city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia. The confirmed death toll from the coronavirus has gone over 50,000 in the Middle East as the pandemic continues. That's according to a count Thursday, Sept. 3, 2020, from The Associated Press, based on official numbers offered by health authorities across the region. (AP Photo/Amr Nabil, File)



In this June 3, 2020 file photo, workers make protective face masks to be used to help curb the spread of the coronavirus at a factory in Kabul, Afghanistan. The confirmed death toll from the coronavirus has gone over 50,000 in the Middle East as the pandemic continues. That's according to a count Thursday, Sept. 3, 2020, from The Associated Press, based on official numbers offered by health authorities across the region. (AP Photo/Rahmat Gul, File)





In this Aug. 6, 2020 file photo, Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, left, and Khalid Al-Mishri, Head of the Libyan High Council of State, pose for a photo before their talks, in Tripoli, Libya. The confirmed death toll from the coronavirus has gone over 50,000 in the Middle East as the pandemic continues. That's according to a count Thursday, Sept. 3, 2020, from The Associated Press, based on official numbers offered by health authorities across the region. Those numbers still may be an undercount, though, as testing in war-torn nations like Libya and Yemen remains extremely limited. (Fatih Aktas/Turkish Foreign Ministry via AP, Pool, File)



In this Thursday, Aug. 27, 2020 file photo, a Palestinian girl wear a face mask during a lockdown imposed following the discovery of locally transmitted coronavirus cases in the Gaza Strip. The confirmed death toll from the coronavirus has gone over 50,000 in the Middle East as the pandemic continues. That's according to a count Thursday, Sept. 3, 2020, from The Associated Press, based on official numbers offered by health authorities across the region. (AP Photo/Hatem Moussa, File)





In this March 30, 2020 file photo, the Ministry of Antiquities lights up the pyramids of Giza in an expression of support for health workers battling the coronavirus outbreak, in Giza, Egypt. The confirmed death toll from the coronavirus has gone over 50,000 in the Middle East as the pandemic continues. That's according to a count Thursday, Sept. 3, 2020, from The Associated Press, based on official numbers offered by health authorities across the region. (AP Photo/Nariman El-Mofty, File)



In this July 16, 2020 file photo, a patient is comforted by a relative, at Family Medical Center, in Majdalaia village, north Lebanon. The confirmed death toll from the coronavirus has gone over 50,000 in the Middle East as the pandemic continues. That's according to a count Thursday, Sept. 3, 2020, from The Associated Press, based on official numbers offered by health authorities across the region. (AP Photo/Hussein Malla, File)

Beyond the Middle East, Pakistan's numbers have continued to decline—befuddling expectations in mid-June, when even the authorities were anticipating a massive increase in cases. Pakistan has reported more than 297,000 infections and 6,328 deaths.

And in Afghanistan, the government has opened up recreational facilities and most businesses. But experts fear the real numbers are likely far

higher than officially reported number of over 38,000 infections and 1,409 deaths.

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