

# Iraq detects new UK-based strain, reimposes partial lockdown

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Iraq will re-impose partial lockdown measures until early March after detecting a new strain of the coronavirus, including among children, its health minister announced on Monday.

"Unfortunately, government labs showed [genetic mutations](#) in the

COVID-19 strain, detecting the new fast-spreading strain in Iraq," Hassan al-Tamimi told reporters.

He referred to the strain as the one "which spread in the UK," and said it had been detected in some Iraqi children, but did not give a total number of people who had been diagnosed with the new variant.

It emerged in southern England in December and is thought to be more contagious than earlier forms.

Iraq has been among the countries hardest-hit by coronavirus in the Middle East, with more than 640,000 reported cases and over 13,000 deaths.

After peaking in September at around 5,000 new cases per day, Iraq saw a remarkable drop with around 800 new cases a day in December but the numbers have been on the rise since then.

On Monday, Iraq announced more than 2,700 cases confirmed cases, a record since the start of the year.

The daily deaths have remained relatively low, with only six confirmed deaths on Monday—compared to a peak in September of around 70 deaths per day.

The rise in [cases](#) prompted authorities to re-impose a series of measures to tackle the virus until March 8.

Masks will be obligatory in [public places](#), with a fine of 25,000 Iraqi dinar (\$17) for any violators.

From Thursday an overnight curfew will be in place from 8:00 pm until 5:00 am while Iraqis will be subjected to full lockdowns on Fridays,

Saturdays and Sundays.

The measures will still be in place during Pope Francis' historic visit from March 5-8, which will include trips to Baghdad, the city of Mosul in the north and a meeting with the country's top Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani.

Iraqi officials told AFP on Monday they were still proceeding with the visit as planned.

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