

# Around 1 percent vaccinated for coronavirus in Mideast: WHO

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The World Health Organization said Monday that only around one percent of the wider Middle East region's population had received a first coronavirus vaccine shot.

The UN body released its data for what it calls the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMRO) of nearly 600 million people, stretching from Morocco to Pakistan—but excluding Israel.

"So far, more than 6.3 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been given to people in 12 countries," Ahmed al-Mandhari, the Cairo-based WHO's regional chief, told reporters.

WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMRO) comprises 21 member states and is home to some 583 million people.

But while it includes the Palestinian Territories, it does not include Israel, the country in the region with the biggest mass vaccination campaign.

Israel reports that 3.8 million people have received a first dose, while 2.4 million have received a second shot.

Mandhari did not name the 12 countries where people have been already vaccinated.

But he said that vaccines distributed through the Covax programme are due to reach Tunisia and the Palestinian Territories in coming weeks.

Tunisia is expected to receive around 37,000 doses, while 94,000 doses will go to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, he said, without specifying the brands.

The remaining countries in WHO's region are due to receive "an estimated 46 million to 56 million doses of the AstraZeneca-Oxford [vaccine](#)... during the first half of this year," Mandhari said.

Since the start of the pandemic, there have been more than six million

confirmed cases of the virus across the EMRO region, including 140,000 deaths, Mandhari said.

Thirteen countries are affected by variants of the [coronavirus](#), he added.

Mandhari also warned of the "unequal distribution of the vaccine roll-out" globally, and said it was "difficult to predict" how many vaccines were available.

"A number of countries in the region have entered into bilateral agreements with manufacturers," he said, but predicting that "the pace of these agreements will accelerate".

Lebanon was the latest country to launch its vaccination drive on Sunday.

Bed occupancy in COVID-19 intensive care units in Lebanon, which saw a spike in cases after the December holidays, stood at more than 89 percent on Friday.

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