

# Iraq launches vaccine program after arrival of China doses

March 2 2021, by Qassim Abdul-Zahra

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An Iraqi medical worker holds a vial of the Sinopharm coronavirus vaccine before starting the vaccination of health personnel, at a clinic in Baghdad, Iraq, Tuesday, March 2, 2021. (AP/Photo/Hadi Mizban)

Iraq launched its coronavirus inoculation program Tuesday just hours after the first doses of vaccine arrived from China, a Health Ministry

spokesman said.

The program kicked off as Iraq comes to grips with a second wave of the [coronavirus](#).

At dawn, a C-130 military plane arrived in Baghdad with 50,000 Sinopharm [vaccine doses](#) gifted by China. More were expected as Iraq's government has allocated funds to secure 1.5 million vaccines from Pfizer and signed a contract for 2 million more from AstraZeneca.

Health Minister Hasan al-Tamimi was the first to receive the [vaccine](#). He was followed by other ministry staff and essential frontline health care workers, said ministry spokesman Saif al-Badr.

A health center close to Al-Mustansiriya University will provide vaccines to the elderly, al-Badr said.

This week, the Health Ministry also made available electronic forms online for Iraqis to make an appointment to receive the vaccine.

Health care worker Mohammed Khudeir was among the first to receive a jab Tuesday in Baghdad's al-Qif hospital.

"We were the first who were vaccinated and after half an hour I am still in [good health](#)," he said. "I am calling upon the citizens not to be afraid of this vaccine."



An Iraqi medical worker holds a vial of the Sinopharm coronavirus vaccine before starting the vaccination of health personnel, at a clinic in Baghdad, Iraq, Tuesday, March 2, 2021. (AP/Photo/Hadi Mizban)



An Iraqi medical worker prepares a shot of the Sinopharm coronavirus vaccine to administer to health personnel, at a clinic in Baghdad, Iraq, Tuesday, March 2, 2021. (AP/Photo/Hadi Mizban)



An Iraqi medic administers a shot of the Sinopharm coronavirus vaccine to a man giving a thumbs up, during vaccination of health personnel, at a clinic in Baghdad, Iraq, Tuesday, March 2, 2021. (AP/Photo/Hadi Mizban)



Iraqi health personnel wait to receive a coronavirus vaccine at a clinic in Baghdad, Iraq, Tuesday, March 2, 2021. (AP/Photo/Hadi Mizban)

Some Iraqis have expressed mistrust of the vaccines, their procurement and their effectiveness.

Rollout will unfold similar to programs in other countries and prioritize the elderly and those with [chronic diseases](#) first, according to the ministry.

Iraqi officials are in a race against time as the country grapples with a second wave of the virus, spurred by the more infectious strain first

discovered in the United Kingdom.

On Tuesday, Iraq recorded over 4,600 new cases over the previous 24 hours, inching closer to a September peak of over 5,000 new infections within a 24-hour period. A total of 703,000 Iraqis have been infected and 13,450 have died of the virus.

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