

As of 28 October, 2020

Coronavirus Cases

	Overall	New This Month
Total Cases	4164	2776
Deaths	119	58
Recoveries	693	296

Key Developments

- October sees as many deaths and twice as many cases as rest of year combined as partial quarantine reintroduced
- Exponential growth through September and October with daily cases increasing ten-fold, capacity to be exceeded before virus peaks in 2021
- NES currently has 59 beds for severe cases, not all of which have ventilators, and faces “acute shortages” of testing kits, medical supplies and protective equipment
- Multiple confirmed cases in Hol and Areesha Camps, while other IDP camps still lack any isolation facilities or trained staff

In Depth

NES faces shortages and lack of capacity as virus spreads exponentially

North and East Syria is experiencing record rates of new cases and deaths, with October seeing almost as many deaths (58) and twice as many cases (2776) as the rest of the year combined, and new daily cases increasing tenfold in the past two months.

Increases in case numbers may partly be attributable to increased testing, but there remain severe shortfalls in this area too. The sole testing laboratory in the contiguous regions of NES has capacity to conduct just 120-180 tests per day, and is struggling with “acute shortages” of PCR testing kits and other diagnostic and hygiene supplies.

There are currently 59 beds available for severe cases across all of NES, not all of them equipped with ventilators – around a third of the internationally-recommended minimum, and far too few to serve a population of millions. Health professionals expect



capacity to be exceeded in the coming weeks, at which point hospitals will be requisitioned and given over solely to dealing with coronavirus cases.

The rate of transmission/infection is expected to increase in final months of 2020, due to several factors including the drop in temperature prompting people to spend more time inside in closed spaces, children returning to schools, and the fact that using masks and social distancing and still not being enforced. The virus' spread will not peak in NES until 2021.

New quarantine aims to combat spread of virus

A new ten-day quarantine aims to halt the increase in cases, after months with virtually no limitations on public life. Shops will close and public gatherings are banned, though food markets, bakeries, NGOs, medical facilities and the region's border crossings will remain wholly or partially open.

The decision does not include any curfew or restrictions on movement, however, as authorities struggle to balance containing the virus with the need to keep the local economy functioning in the midst of a financial crisis. Fear and stigma around the disease mean many individuals are not reporting symptoms or failing to self-isolate.

Crisis in IDP camps

There are multiple confirmed cases in Hol and Areesha camps, while camps around Manbij and for IDPs from Sere Kaniye still do not have any coronavirus isolation areas whatsoever. Hol Camp is high-risk, but has the most services in place, with a field hospital alongside its isolation ward. Areesha Camp is struggling with shortages of trained staff, while there are also shortages of staff and capacity in Mahmoudli, Abu Khashab, Washokani, Newroz, Roj camps. Detected cases among health workers and camp staff have also reached double digits.

In general, the situation in the camps remains dire due to lack of screening at camp entrances; camp residents' reluctance to report symptoms or get tested; preventative measures being ignored; inability to conduct sufficient contact tracing; and insufficient isolation wards within the camps.