The Fight Against COVID-19 in the Palestinian Authority (PA)
(Updated to June 8, 2020)

June 8, 2020

Overview

▶ The following are the main developments in the fight against the spread of coronavirus in the PA territories:

◆ **This past week 14 new cases were detected, four in the Jenin district** (which until now had been coronavirus-free), eight in the Hebron district and two in the Qalqilya district. The number of **active cases in the PA territories has now increased to 38** (22 last week).

◆ About three hundred Palestinians, stuck in Jordan with no way of returning to the PA, are expected to enter through the Allenby Bridge. They will immediately be quarantined.

◆ Mahmoud Abbas ordered an extension of the state of emergency in the PA for an additional 30 days (until the beginning of July). **The guidelines and preventive measures issued by the PA have not been observed everywhere**. **Precautionary measures were not taken** at the mass prayers held on the Temple Mount and demonstrations in Hebron and Nablus held to protest the annexation.
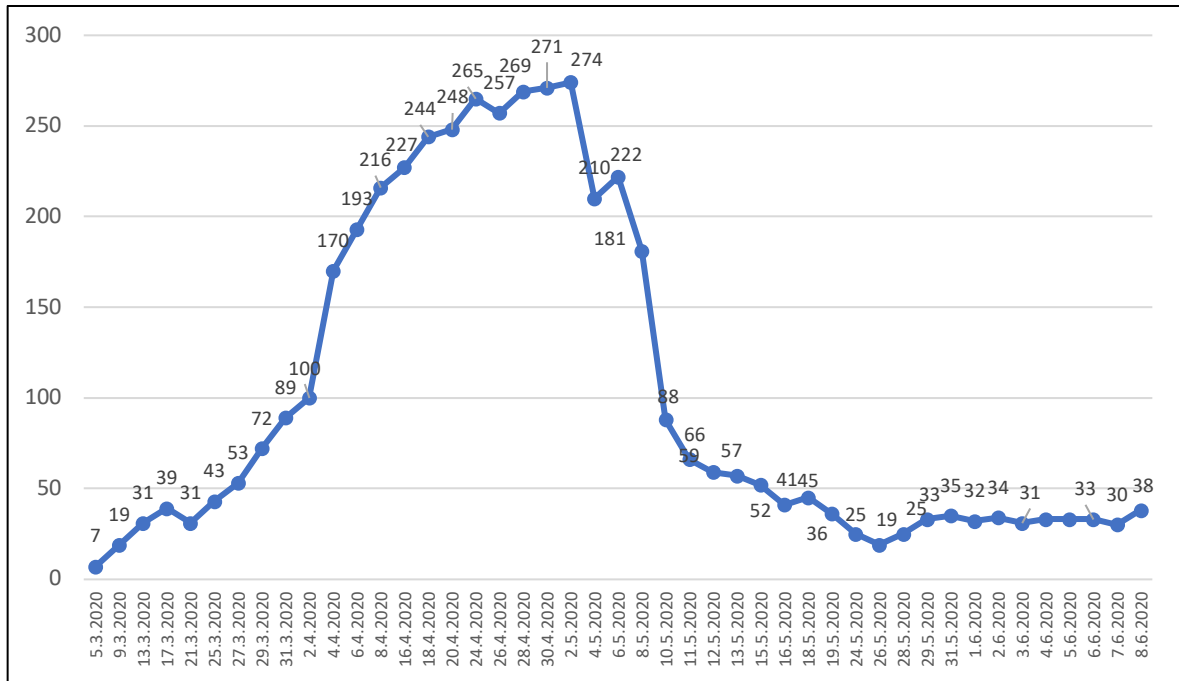
The Extent of the Infection in Judea and Samaria
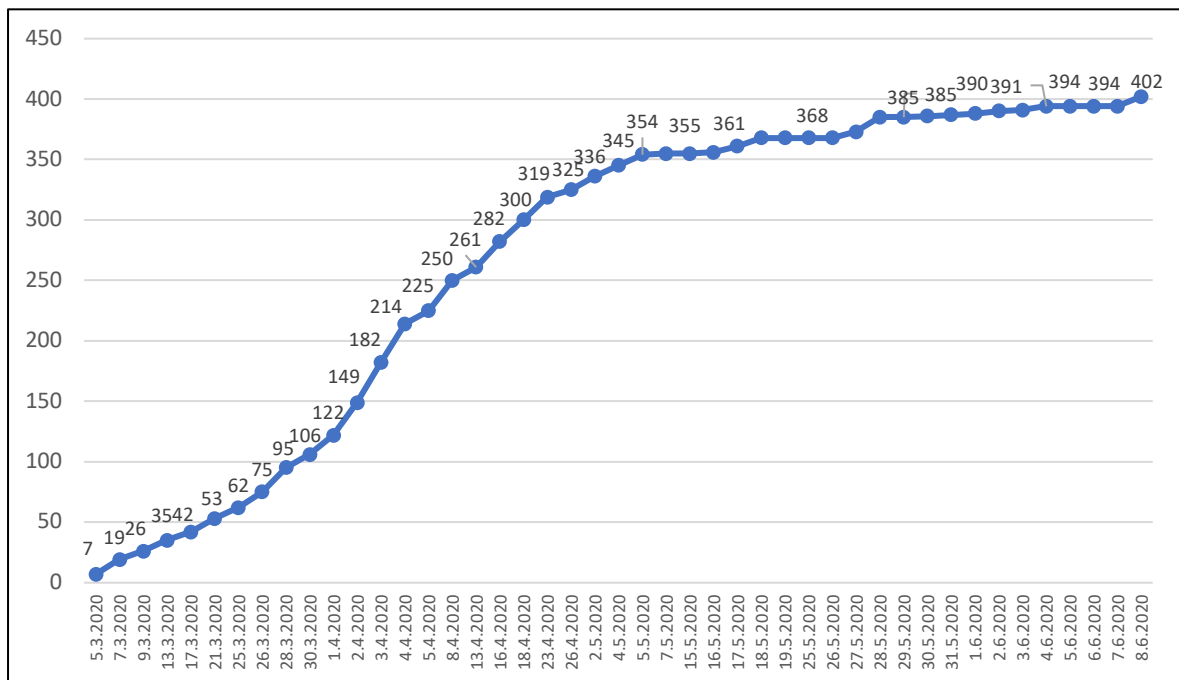
Overview

During the past week (since June 2, 2020) **14 additional cases of COVID-19** were detected in Judea and Samaria, and there are now **38 active cases**. The geographical distribution according to districts is the following: **17 cases in Hebron, 16 in Qalqilya**, four in Jenin and one in a village near Jerusalem. **There was no change** in the number of active cases in the neighborhoods of **east Jerusalem**. The total number of COVID-19 cases in Judea and Samaria since the outbreak of the disease began is **currently 402** (388 last week). So far, 94,777 Palestinians have been quarantined, with **2,538 of them still in isolation**. So far about 63,000 Palestinians have been tested for the disease (Facebook page of the Palestinian ministry of health, updated to June 8, 2020).

▶ On June 2, 2020, PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh told a conference of donor states that the **PA had successfully handled the coronavirus outbreak**. He said the incidence of infection in the PA territories was low and so far the PA had the situation under control (Wafa, Sawa, June 2, 2020).

The number of active COVID-19 cases in the PA territories

The overall number of cases since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the PA territories

Geographical Distribution of the Active Cases

Of the 38 active cases, 17 are in the Hebron district, 16 in the Qalqilya district, four in the Jenin district and one in a village near Jerusalem. The districts of Hebron and Qalqilya continue to have the largest number of active cases. This past week the Jenin district lost its coronavirus-free status when four cases were detected. There had been no change in the number of active cases in the neighborhoods of east Jerusalem.

Hebron district

▶ **The number of COVID-19 cases in the Hebron district continues trending upward**. On the evening of June 7, 2020**, eight new cases were detected in Halhul** (north of the city of Hebron). The number of active cases in the Hebron district now stands at 17. The Palestinian media claimed the new cases had come into contact with an Israeli driver [who drove Palestinian workers] (Wafa, June 8, 2020).

▶ In response to the rise in the number of cases, the district governor ordered a full lockdown of Halhul and the closing of all public facilities until further notice. That includes mosques, coffee houses and reception venues (Facebook page of the Hebron district governor, June 8, 2020).
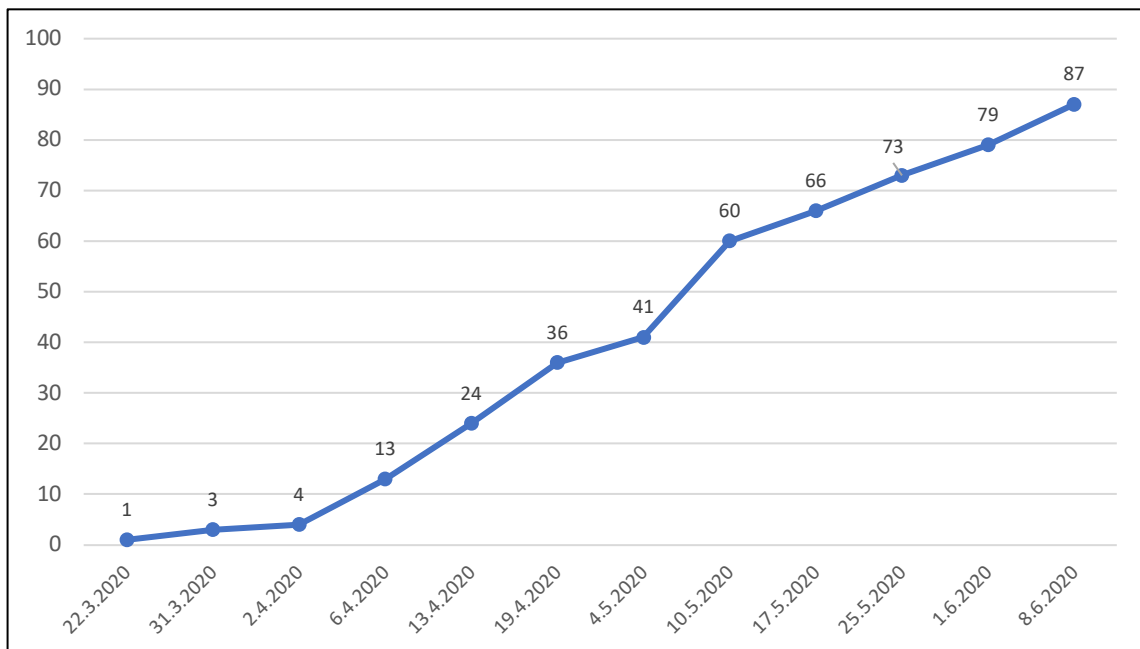
Qalqilya district

▶ There are currently 16 active cases in the Qalqilya district (14 last week). According to the district governor, all the patients are in stable condition and under medical supervision in the hospital in Azoun (Facebook page of the Qalqilya district governor, June 7, 2020).

▶ Rafi' Rawajba, Qalqilya district governor, is supervising the observance of the guidelines and preventive measures. He visited a *bagrut* (matriculation) examination room in Azoun Atmeh after the renewal of the exams (Facebook page of the Qalqilya district governor, June 5, 2020).

The governor of the Qalqilya district visits one of the *bagrut* examination rooms in Azoun Atmeh (Facebook page of the Qalqilya district governor, June 5, 2020). Right: An oversight committee sent by the Qalqilya district visits a coffee house in the city (Facebook page of the Qalqilya district governor, June 3, 2020).
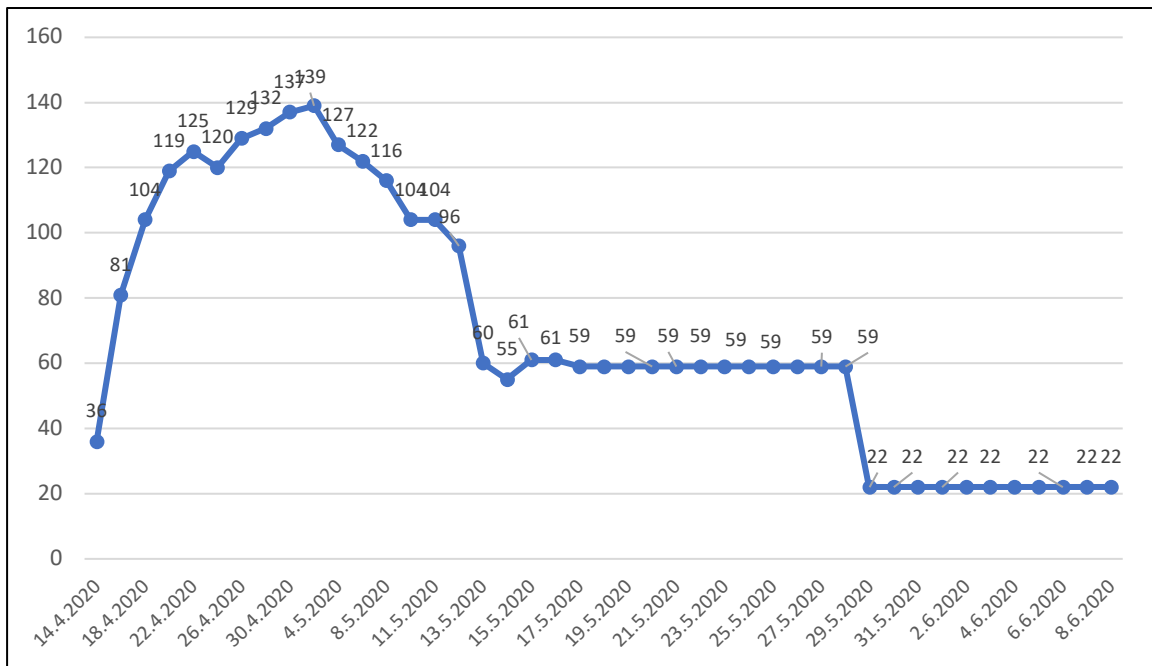
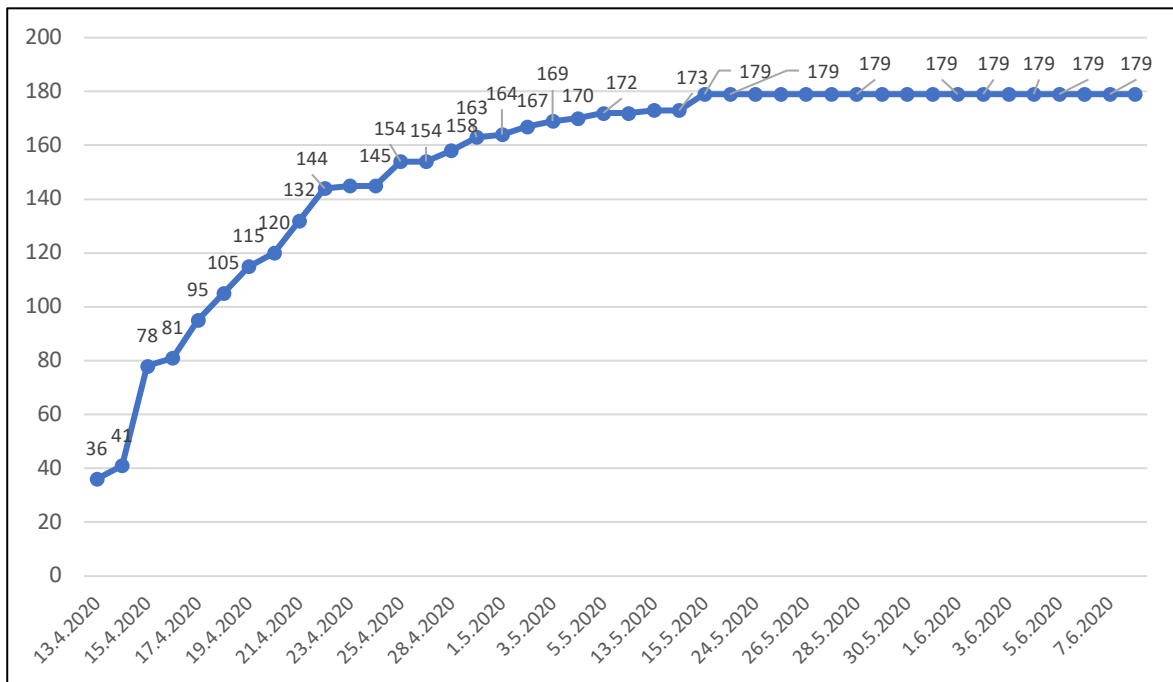## The rate of the spread of coronavirus in the Hebron district

The east Jerusalem neighborhoods

▶ According to reports from the Palestinian ministry of health, since May 22, 2020, **there has been no change in the number of active COVID-19 cases in east Jerusalem. The total number of active cases today is 22**. The total number of cases in east Jerusalem is 179.

The number of active COVID-19 cases in east Jerusalem

The total number of COVID-19 cases in east Jerusalem since the outbreak of the virus

Implementing Preventive Measures

▶ On June 3, 2020, Mahmoud Abbas issued an edict extending the state of emergency in the PA for **an additional 30 days**. The new edict went into force on June 4, 2020 (Mahmoud Abbas' Facebook page, June 3, 2020).

▶ Despite the guidelines and preventive measures announced, **they are not obeyed everywhere**. For example:

◆ On June 5, 2020, **a demonstration was held in Hebron** to show support for Mahmoud Abbas and opposition to Israel's intentions to annex territories. Present at the demonstration were district governor Jibrin al-Bakri and senior Fatah figure Abbas Zaki. Pictures show that **the demonstrators, including the senior figures, did not take precautionary measures**. They marched without masks and without observing social distancing. In addition, at a demonstration to protest the annexation held in the center of Nablus, a large crowd can be seen of people not taking precautionary measures (Wafa, June 3, 2020).

Right: A demonstration in support of Mahmoud Abbas in Hebron. The demonstrators did not follow the social distancing guidelines or wear masks (Facebook page of the Hebron district governor, June 5, 2020). Left: A demonstration in the center of Nablus to protest the annexation. There is crowding and no social distancing (Wafa, June 3, 2020).

◆ The Palestinian media reported that on June 5, 2020, at the first Friday prayer held on the Temple Mount in two months, there were **more than 50 thousand people** (Wafa, June 5, 2020). Pictures show that **the precautionary measures announced before the opening of the Temple Mount compound were not observed** and that worshippers crowded together, with many not wearing masks.

Mass attendance at the Friday prayer on the Temple Mount, with no social distancing (Wafa, June 5, 2020).

The Influence of the COVID-19 Crisis on the Palestinian Economy

The crisis in tourism

▶ Azzam al-Shawwa, chairman of the Palestinian monetary authority, and Rula Maayah, Palestinian minister of tourism, **met with representatives of the tourism industry at the ministry of tourism's office in Bethlehem to find ways to help the industry, which was hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis** (Bethlehem was the first Palestinian city where COVID-19 cases were reported). They discussed ways to rehabilitate the tourism industry and support its workers, including postponing the repayment of loans and receiving help from the Palestinian monetary authority (Facebook page of the Palestinian ministry of tourism, June 3, 2020).

Azzam al-Shawwa, chairman of the Palestinian monetary authority, and Rula Maayah, Palestinian minister of tourism, meet in Bethlehem with representatives of the tourism industry (Facebook page of the Palestinian ministry of tourism, June 3, 2020).

Taxi drivers in Bethlehem on strike

▶ **On June 7, 2020, the taxi drivers in Bethlehem went on strike** because of the severe damage they have incurred by the halting of taxi rides, the result of the coronavirus crisis. Among their demands are exemptions from income tax and VAT, taxi license registration and insurance for 2020; stopping the harm done to them by private vehicles [charging people for rides]; and support from the Palestinian monetary authority (Ma'an, June 7, 2020).

Taxi drivers strike against the Palestinian ministry of transportation because of the COVID-19 crisis (Ma'an, June 7, 2020).

Foreign Support for the PA

Medical aid from UNICEF

▶ Mai al-Kayla, PA minister of health, attended the delivery of **medical aid provided by UNICEF**. It included 3,500 swabs for COVID-19 testing and other medical equipment. She thanked the agency for its support of the Palestinian ministry of health (Facebook page of the Palestinian ministry of health, June 2, 2020).

The Palestinian minister of health receives medical aid from UNICEF (Wafa, June 2, 2020).

Other aid

▶ Talal Nasser al-Din, the chairman of the **fund of private sector donors** established by Muhammad Shtayyeh, announced that in the coming days the fund would transfer 15 million shekels (about $4.3 million) to 30 thousand families who had been harmed by the spread of the coronavirus, 500 shekels (about $145) per family. He said that so far the fund had raised 61 million shekels (about $17.7 million), although they had hoped to raise 80 million shekels (about $23 million). Funds will also be transferred to hospitals in east Jerusalem (Sawa, June 2, 2020).

▶ Laila Ghannam, governor of the Ramallah district, met with Muhammad Mustafa, chairman of the **Palestinian investment foundation** (subordinate to Mahmoud Abbas' office). She thanked him for the foundation's support of her district during the coronavirus crisis and for turning the Grand Park Hotel into a hostel for Ramallah district COVID-19 patients (Facebook page on Laila Ghannam, governor of the Ramallah district, June 4, 2020).

Laila Ghannam, the governor of the Ramallah district meets with the chairman of the Palestinian Investment Fund (Facebook page of Laila Ghannam, June 4, 2020).

▶ Mai al-Kayla, PA minister of health, spoke with **the director of the regional W.H.O. office about establishing an emergency crisis management center**. She said the center would formulate a program for coordination between agencies providing medical services and the various sectors during crises, adding it would be established in the ministry of health in Ramallah, with branches in all the West Bank and Gaza Strip districts (Wafa, June 4, 2020)