



The fight against COVID-19 in the Gaza Strip

(updated to March 31, 2020)

March 31, 2020

Overview

The ministry of health in the Gaza Strip announced another case of COVID-19 among the people quarantined in the Gaza Strip. **This brings the number of COVID-19 patients in the Gaza Strip to 10**, all in stable condition. According to the ministry's statement, the newly identified patient arrived from the Rafah crossing. He entered quarantine immediately upon arrival and did not come in contact with anyone (the Hamas administration's Al-Ra'i News Agency, March 31, 2020). According to the spokesman for the health ministry in the Gaza Strip, **there are 1,769 people in 25 quarantine centers**, including 1,006 patients with background illnesses (Al-Ra'i News Agency, March 30, 2020).



Daily briefing for reporters by the spokespersons of the ministries leading the fight against COVID-19. From left to right: Gaza City Mayor Dr. Yahya al-Sarraj; health ministry spokesman Dr. Ashraf al-Qidra; and interior ministry spokesman Iyad al-Buzum (Al-Ra'i News Agency, March 29, 2020)

- ▶ Dr. Ashraf al-Qidra, spokesman for the health ministry in the Gaza Strip, **again warned of a severe shortage of medical equipment**. He also **claimed that Israel was fully responsible for the deterioration of the health and humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip**. The spokesman called on international organizations and aid organizations to provide \$23 million to help the Gaza Strip health system (Gaza Strip health ministry website, March 29, 2020).
- ▶ Dr. Al-Qidra noted **the lack of ventilators**, intensive care beds, medicines, biodegradable medical supplies, laboratory equipment, blood bank equipment, lab test materials, protective

gear, and more. This medical equipment is **urgently needed in order for the health ministry to deal with the possible spread of COVID-19**. Dr. Al-Qidra added that the health ministry is extremely concerned about international reports “**confirming the catastrophic level of health and humanitarian situation** in the Gaza Strip as a result of the ongoing Israeli blockade” (Gaza health ministry website, March 29, 2020; Al-Ra’i News Agency, March 30, 2020).

Preventive measures by the Hamas administration

► Following are other preventive measures taken by the Hamas administration in dealing with COVID-19:

◆ **Health Ministry Spokesman Dr. Al-Qidra** said that he had increased the number of COVID-19 lab tests for those returning to the Gaza Strip and those who came in contact with them in the quarantine centers (the health ministry has carried out 346 tests since March 27, compared with 339 COVID-19 tests carried out up to that time). The health ministry has allocated five schools near the main hospital in each district to serve as medical centers for testing and monitoring respiratory patients. In addition, 339 medical jobs and 300 additional temporary jobs have been filled (health ministry website, March 29, 2020).

◆ **Interior Ministry Spokesman Iyad al-Buzum** called on Gaza Strip residents to limit their movements outside their homes and only when necessary (but so far the Hamas administration has refrained from imposing a complete lockdown). Al-Buzum said that the interior ministry had provided security and police personnel stationed in the quarantine centers with protective suits and that police had finished training special teams to deal with cases of COVID-19 and the evacuation of patients to the quarantine centers. Al-Buzum also emphasized that the interior ministry continues to employ stringent measures at the border crossings, which include disinfecting goods and trucks, and taking precautions for all workers, including truck drivers coming from the Egyptian side (Al-Ra’i News Agency, March 29, 2020).



Force in charge of maintaining order in the northern Gaza Strip, which has been assigned to transfer people in quarantine (Facebook page of the Northern Gaza District Emergency Committee, March 29, 2020)

◆ **Gaza City Mayor Dr. Yahya al-Sarraj, who also serves as head of the Municipalities Association in the Gaza Strip**, said that the municipalities had drafted an emergency plan ensuring the continued provision of basic services to residents: water, sewerage, and garbage collection. The municipalities will also step up the disinfection of public facilities. Al-Sarraj complained that the municipalities were suffering from a lack of resources due to the “blockade” and due to the residents’ inability to pay their bills. He expressed concern that they would collapse and called on institutions, organizations in the Gaza Strip and international institutions to **provide urgent aid to the municipalities in the amount of \$3 million** (Al-Ra’i News Agency, March 29, 2020; Anatolia News Agency, March 29, 2020).



**New marketing venues opened by the Khan Yunis municipality to prevent people from gathering
(journalist Hassan Aslih's Twitter account, March 31, 2020)**