



## The Fight Against COVID-19 in the Palestinian Authority (PA) (Updated to May 10, 2020)

May 11, 2020

### Overview

► The main developments in the fight against the spread of COVID-19 in Judea and Samaria are the following:

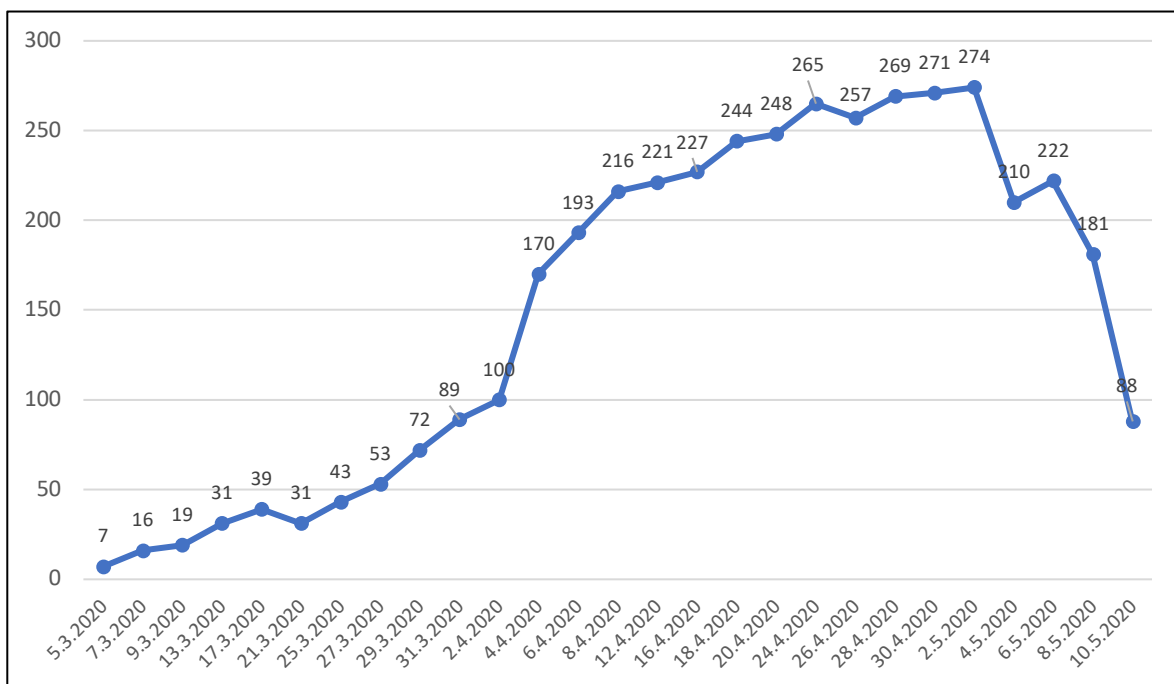
- ◆ **The spread of COVID-19 in Judea and Samaria is trending downward,** and the reported number of active cases has decreased to 88. The PA minister of health reported that for the past three days no new case of COVID-19 had been diagnosed.
- ◆ An exception to the trend is the **Hebron district, where the number of cases is rising**, and Hebron has become the district with the largest number of reported active cases. In ITIC assessment that is due to a combination of factors, primarily the lack of social distancing within the district's population, which is clan- and tribal-based, and infection from workers employed in Israel (including those who stayed in Israel illegally).
- ◆ **In the neighborhoods of east Jerusalem the number of reported active cases is also trending upwards** (104 cases as of May 10, 2020, according to PA reports). However, the lack of social distancing during Ramadan can **potentially spike a new outbreak** of the virus in those neighborhoods.
- ◆ In view of the encouraging statistics regarding the incidence of the disease, PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh declared **the lifting of some preventive measures in Judea and Samaria**. However, public prayers are still forbidden, kindergartens, schools and universities have not reopened and the ministry of Muslim ministry still forbids worshippers to enter the Temple Mount.

## COVID-19 Infection in Judea and Samaria

### Overview

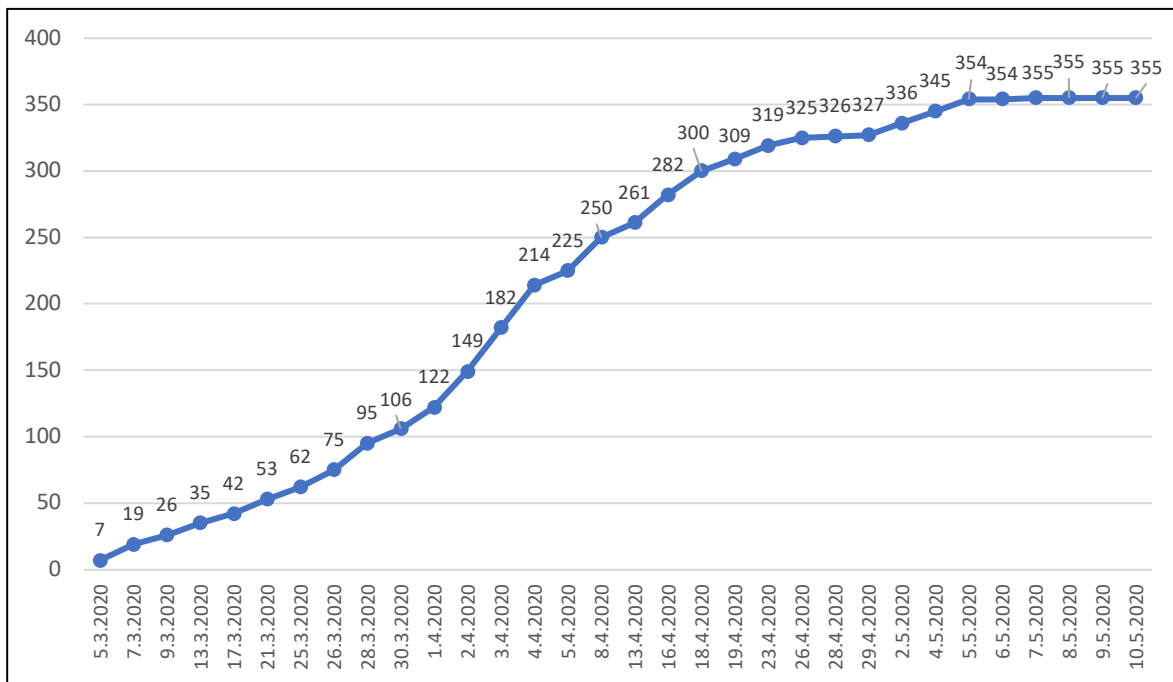
According to the PA ministry of health **the overall number of reported COVID-19 cases is 355, 88 of them active** (May 10, 2020). On May 10 the PA minister of health **said it was the third consecutive day without reports of new COVID-19 patients**. She said the number of PA districts that were " coronavirus-free" had risen to five (i.e., Bethlehem, Qalqilya, Jenin, Jericho and Tubas). **Still quarantined at home were 15,146 Palestinians** (Facebook page of the PA ministry of health, May 9, 2020). **Thus the spread of coronavirus has been contained in Judea and Samaria, and with the exception of the Hebron district the numbers of reported active cases are trending downward.**

### The reported number of active COVID-19 cases in Judea and Samaria<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> According to Muhammad Shtayyeh's Facebook page, May 10, 2020

### The overall reported number of COVID-19 cases in Judea and Samaria<sup>2</sup>

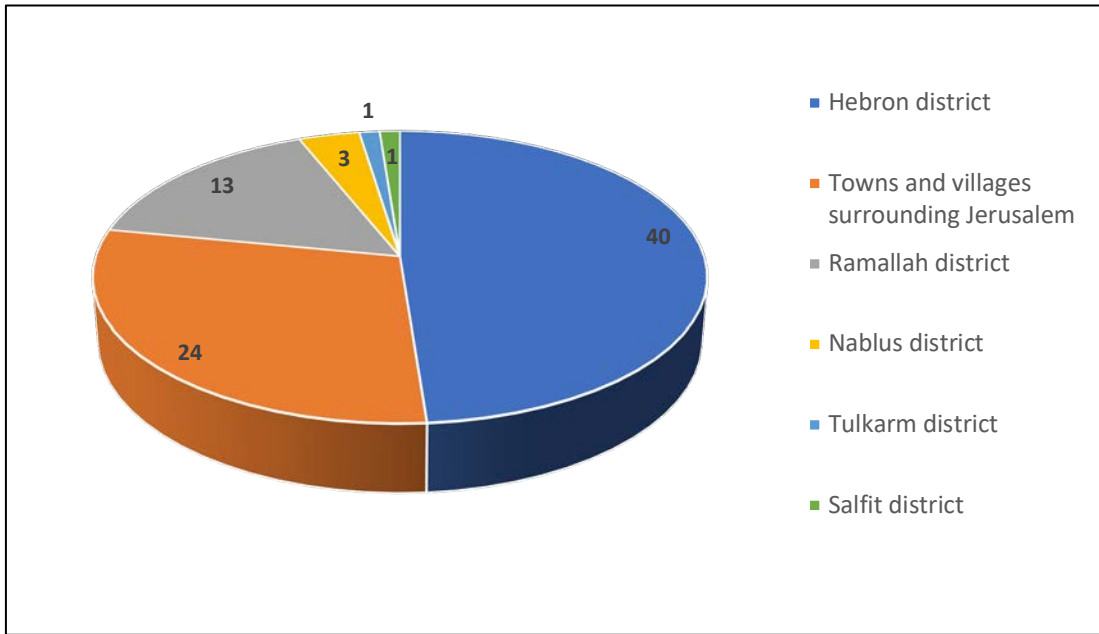


### Geographical distribution of COVID-19 cases

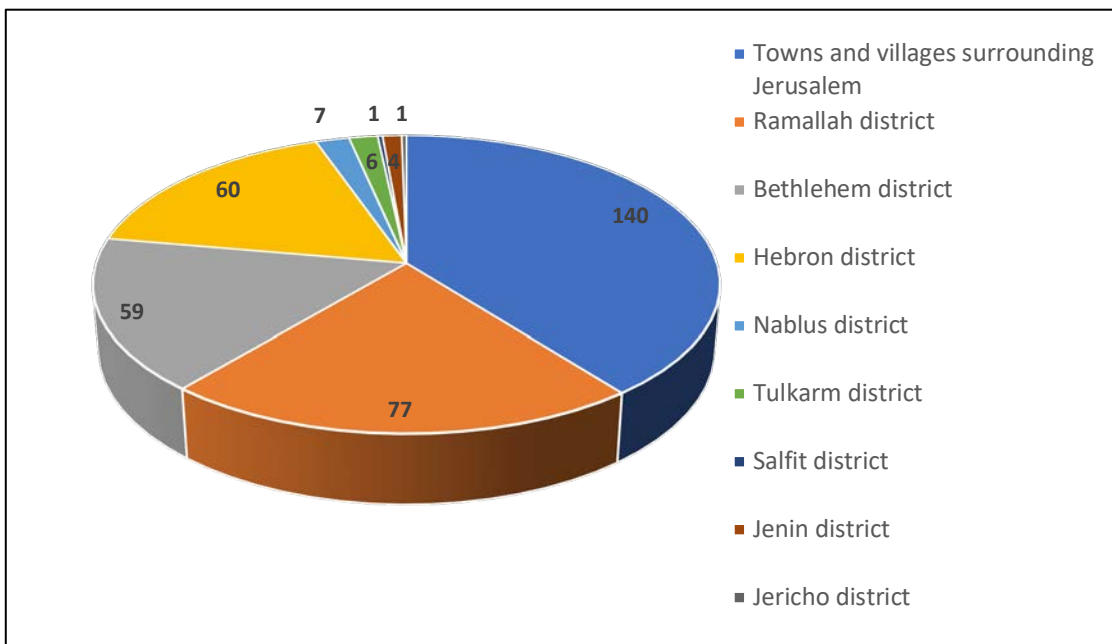
► The number of reported active cases of COVID-19 is currently centered **in Hebron (40 cases), the towns and villages surrounding Jerusalem (24) and the Ramallah district (13)**. The distribution of the infection in the other districts is Nablus (3), Tulkarm (1) and Salfit (1) (Muhammad Shtayyeh's Facebook page, May 9, 2020). The districts of Bethlehem, Qalqilya, Jenin, Jericho and Tubas have been declared "coronavirus-free" by the minister of health.

<sup>2</sup> According to Ibrahim Melhem's Twitter account, May 5-10, 2020

**Distribution of reported active cases by district<sup>3</sup>**

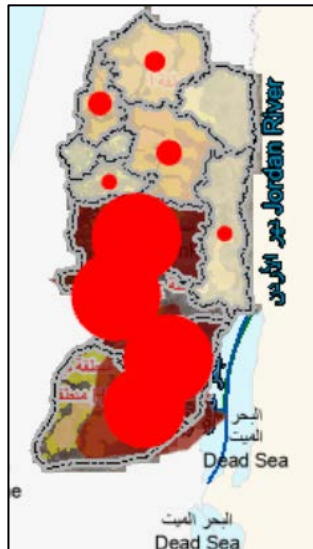


**Distribution of overall reported cases by district<sup>4</sup>**



<sup>3</sup> According to Muhammad Shtayyeh's Facebook page, May 10, 2020

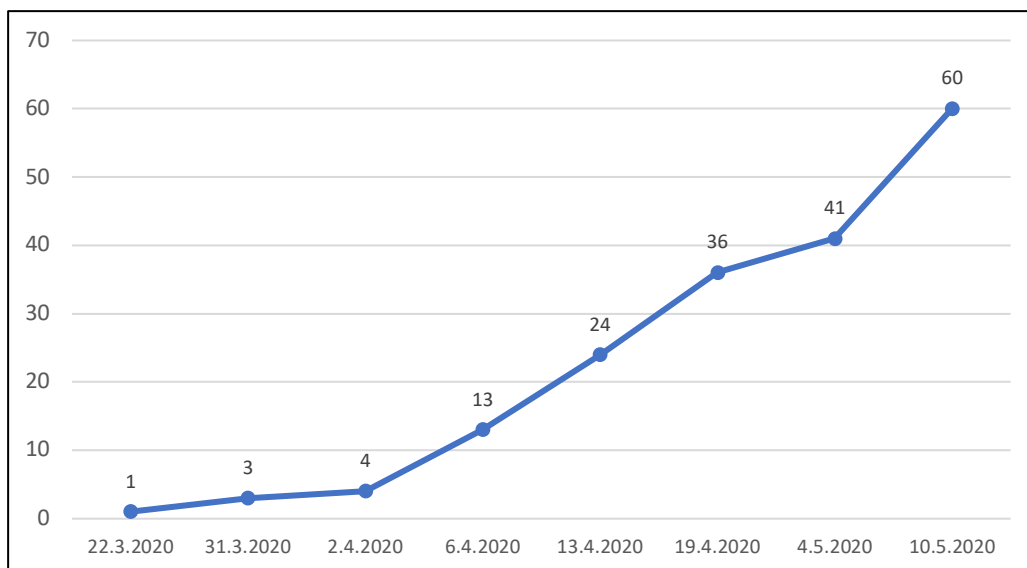
<sup>4</sup> According to Ibrahim Melhem's Twitter account, May 5-10, 2020



COVID-19 hotspots in Judea and Samaria  
(Corona Map portal, May 10, 2020).

► **The rise in the number of cases in the Hebron district is significant** (43% of all active cases and 17% of the overall number of cases since the outbreak of the disease are in Hebron). The **Hebron district has gone from having the fourth largest number of cases to having the most**. In ITIC assessment that is due to the clan- and tribal-based nature of society in Hebron, which contributes to its lack of social distancing. Hebron is also a commercial district which interacts closely with other districts, and infection may also come from workers who are employed in Israel, including those who stayed in Israel illegally.

#### Rate of COVID-19 spread in Hebron<sup>5</sup>

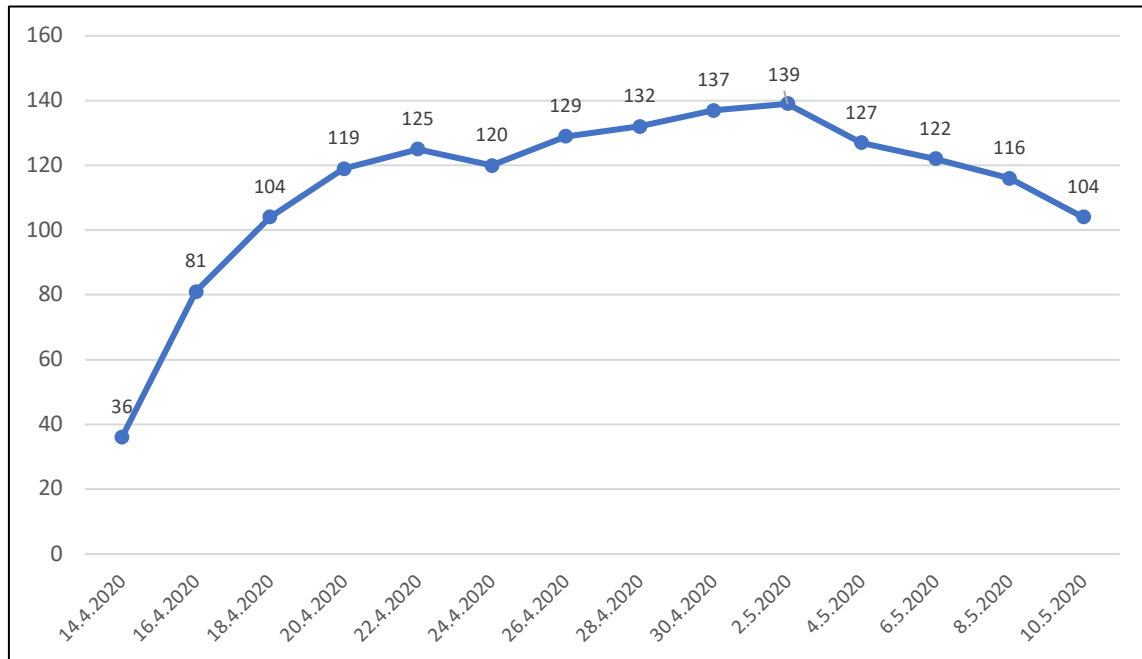


<sup>5</sup> According to Ibrahim Melhem's Twitter account, May 5-10, 2020. The graph relates to the total number of Palestinians who tested positively and not to active cases.

## East Jerusalem neighborhoods

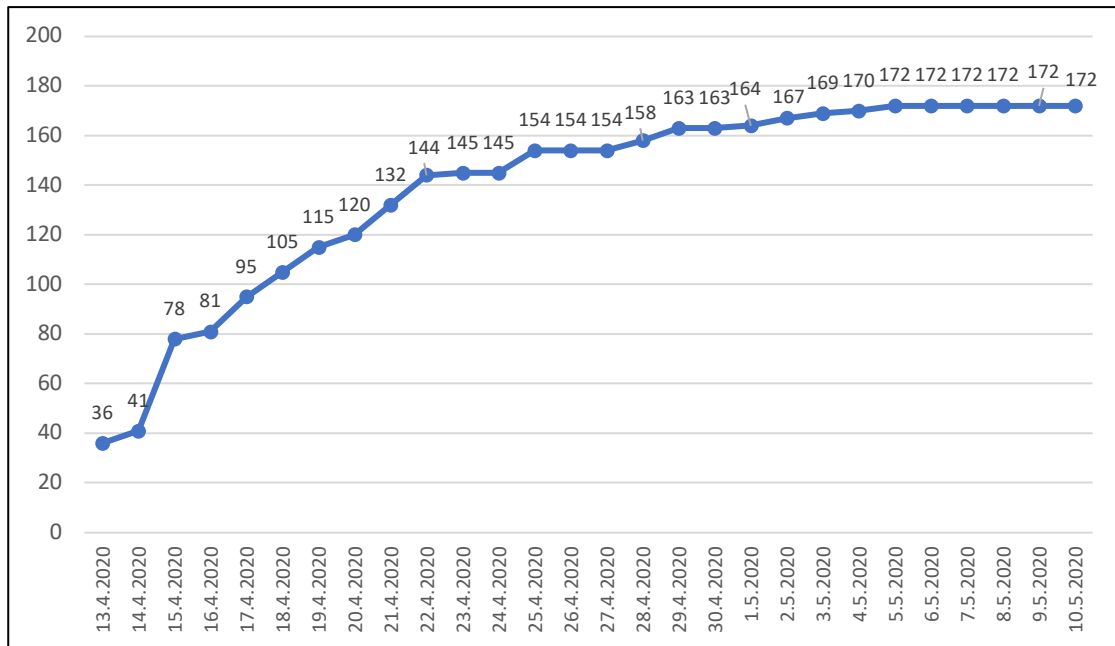
► According to the PA ministry of health **the number of reported active cases in the east Jerusalem neighborhoods has declined** and currently **stands at 104**. The overall number of COVID-19 cases diagnosed since the outbreak of the disease is **172** (as of May 10, 2020). **Two fatalities were reported in east Jerusalem neighborhoods**. However, **the number may potentially rise**, especially due to the lack of social distancing during Ramadan.

### Number of reported active cases of COVID-19 in east Jerusalem neighborhoods<sup>6</sup>



<sup>6</sup> According to Muhammad Shtayyeh's Facebook page, May 10, 2020

### Overall number of COVID-19 cases reported in east Jerusalem since the onset of the pandemic<sup>7</sup>



► The following are statements from two local activists from **Silwan in east Jerusalem** who are helping fight the virus:

◆ **Munir al-Ghoul** is a social activist in Silwan who belongs to the **emergency support committee**, a local body composed of village leaders and social activists who help Silwan's doctors to fight COVID-19. Interviewed by Voice of Palestine radio, he warned that the coronavirus was a time bomb because residents do not obey the call to be tested and crowd into markets and businesses (Dunia al-Watan, May 10, 2020). **He also criticized the Israeli ministry of health because of the low number of tests it conducts** in east Jerusalem (Munir al-Ghoul's Facebook page, May 9, 2020).

◆ **Dr. Samer al-A'war**, who belongs to a local body called the **Silwan Doctor's Committee**, criticized Israel and the Israeli ministry of health. He alleged that Israel does not prevent residents from walking around the streets, there is no contact tracing of east Jerusalem residents, no information has been provided about the number of cases, and testing in the medical centers in east Jerusalem is delayed. He claimed Israel does not pay enough attention to the east Jerusalem neighborhoods and at the same time prevents the PA from operating in them. He said **Silwan was the neighborhood with the greatest number of COVID-19 cases**, which have risen to 56.

<sup>7</sup> According to Ibrahim Melhem's Twitter account, May 5-10, 2020

He also criticized the conduct of local residents, saying they disregard the pandemic, only a few stay at home, there is a lack of awareness of the importance of being tested and some people feel stigmatized if they are tested (Safa, May 7, 2020).

## PA Inspection of the Implementation of Preventive Measures

► Governors of the various districts and their teams **continue to inspect the implementation of the ministry of health's preventive measures:**

◆ **The Hebron district:** The "public health teams" continued visiting factories and private businesses to inspect the implementation of the preventive measures (Facebook page of Hussein al-Araj, Hebron district governor's Facebook page, May 9, 2020).



**Public health teams visit factories and private businesses (Facebook page of Hussein al-Araj, May 9, 2020).**

◆ **The Bethlehem district:** Bethlehem district governor Kamal Hamid visited the tents set up in Bethlehem as testing centers by the PA ministry of health and the Palestinian Red Crescent (Kamal Hamid's Facebook page, May 7, 2020).



**Kamal Hamid, the governor of the Bethlehem district visit the testing tents (Kamal Hamid's Facebook page, May 7, 2020).**



◆ **The Ramallah district:** Laila Ghannam, the governor of the Ramallah district, accompanied by the heads of the security apparatus in Ramallah, visited markets to inspect the implementation of the ministry of health's preventive measures (Laila Ghannam's Facebook page, May 6, 2020). However, she attended the funeral held in Ramallah for Bashar al-Barghouti, the deputy police chief, where mourners did not practice social distancing (Laila Ghannam's Facebook page, May 7, 2020).



**Right:** Laila Ghannam, the governor of the Ramallah district, visits markets. **Left:** Laila Ghannam attends the funeral held in Ramallah for the deputy chief of police, where crowds gathered without social distancing (Layla Ghanem's Facebook page, May 7, 2020).



**The PA ministry of health calls for social distancing in shopping centers (ministry of health Facebook page, May 9, 2020).**

## Relaxation of Preventive Measures

► Given the encouraging state of the COVID-19 statistics in Judea and Samaria, **the PA is relaxing its preventive measures.** On May 5, 2020, PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh

announced additional relaxations.<sup>8</sup> He added they might be cancelled at any moment, depending on the situation and developments.

► The main changes are that Palestinians may now move between the villages in each district and can now drive in their own cars between districts where there are no active COVID-19 cases. University administrators can return to work in their own districts, beauty salons and barbershops can open on Fridays and Saturdays, and activity in the construction center can be renewed. However, **public prayers are still banned, and kindergartens, schools and universities remain closed** (Muhammad Shtayyeh's Facebook page, May 5, 2020).



**PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh announces relaxations (Muhammad Shtayyeh's Facebook page, May 5, 2020).**



**Right: Renewal of public transportation in Nablus after preventive measures were relaxed (Wafa, May 6, 2020), Left: Barbershops reopen in Nablus (Wafa, May 9, 2020).**

► The ministry of Muslim endowments has continued the ban on the entrance of worshippers into the Temple Mount compound. The Temple Mount gates will remain locked. However, they warned that **if Israel allows visitors to enter the Temple Mount, the ministry of Muslim endowments will open all the gates to Muslim worshippers and Israel will be responsible for the consequences** (Wafa, May 10, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> For further information, about lifting restrictions, see the May 5, 2020, bulletin, "The Fight Against COVID-19 in the Palestinian Authority (PA) (Updated to May 4, 2020)."

## Foreign Aid

► Mai al-Kayla, the Palestinian minister of health, Riyad al-Maliki, Palestinian foreign minister, and the Turkish ambassador to the PA attended **a ceremony in Ramallah for the receipt of aid from Turkey to fight the coronavirus**. Turkey sent 40 thousand COVID-19 testing kits, 100 thousand N95 face masks, 40 thousand protective suits, 20 thousand protective goggles, 20 thousand liters (5283 gallons) of disinfectant, and four PCR antigen test kits (PA ministry of health Facebook page, May 5, 2020).