



# The Fight Against COVID-19 in the Palestinian Authority (Updated to May 18, 2020)

May 18, 2020

## Overview

►Following are the main developments in the fight against the spread of COVID-19 in Judea and Samaria in the past week (updated to May 18, 2020):

- ◆**The spread of COVID-19 throughout the PA continues to decline.** Five new patients were identified during the week, all from Beit Ula in the Hebron District, **but the number of active cases has dropped and is now 38** (compared with 88 last week).
- ◆At present, there are still COVID-19 patients in two regions in the PA: the Hebron District (30 active cases) and the Arab towns and villages surrounding Jerusalem (eight active cases). The other districts are free of patients. At the same time, **there has been a drop in the number of active cases in the neighborhoods of East Jerusalem, which now stands at 59** (compared with 104 last week).
- ◆The Palestinian government is considering **tightening preventive measures during the Eid al-Fitr holiday** (which begins on the evening of May 23). After the holiday, the government intends to gradually bring life back to normal.
- ◆On the occasion of Eid al-Fitr, **33,000 laborers from Israel are expected to arrive in the PA.** Medical teams and teams from the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Civil Affairs will wait for them at the crossings to process them and perform the appropriate tests.

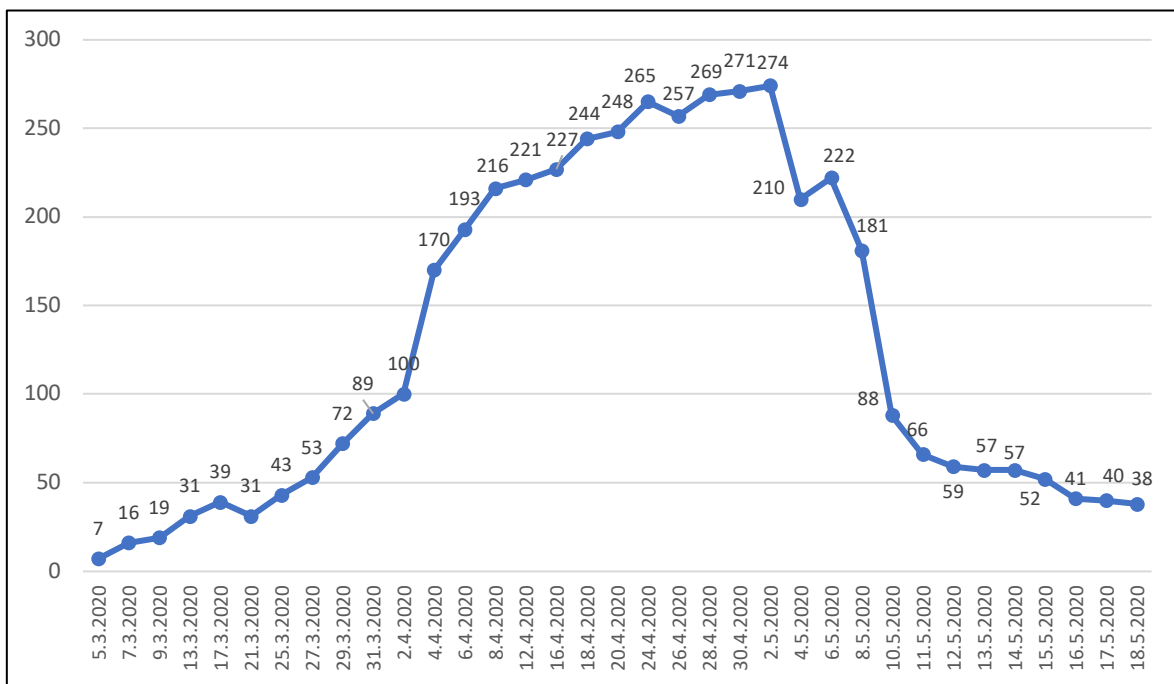
## Morbidity in Judea and Samaria

### Overview

**The downtrend in the spread of COVID-19 in Judea and Samaria continues.** According to reports from the Palestinian Health Ministry, **the total number of people infected with the virus in Judea and Samaria is 361, of whom 38 are active cases** (updated to May 18, 2020). Nearly all the active patients are in good condition. The number of people in self-isolation has risen to 18,298 (compared with 15,146 last week). Up to now, about 45,000 COVID-19 tests have been performed in all the districts (Wafa News Agency, May 17, 2020).

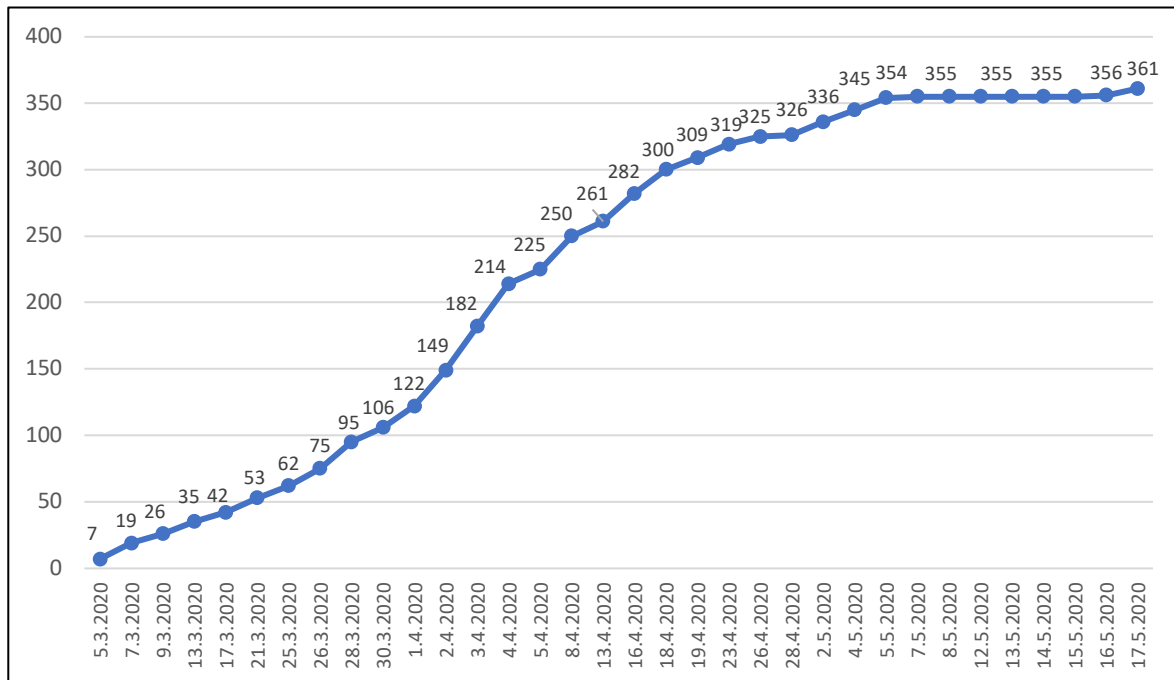
►On May 16, 2020, the Palestinian Health Ministry reported a **new COVID-19 patient from Beit Ula in the Hebron District. This was the first case reported since May 10, 2020.** The next day, the health minister reported that four more people who had come in contact with the patient had also contracted the virus. One of the patients is a three-month-old infant in serious condition in intensive care (Facebook page of the Palestinian Health Ministry, May 18, 2020). The patient who was identified returned from working in Israel on May 14, 2020, came in direct or indirect contact with many people and infected four of them. All those who came in contact with him will reportedly be examined (Dunya al-Watan, May 17, 2020).

### The Number of Active COVID-19 Cases throughout the PA<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Statements by Palestinian Health Minister Dr. Mai Kaileh and Palestinian Government Spokesman Ibrahim Melhem (Wafa News Agency, May 11-17, 2020). Facebook page of the PA Health Ministry, May 18, 2020.

## The Total Number of COVID-19 Patients throughout the PA<sup>2</sup>



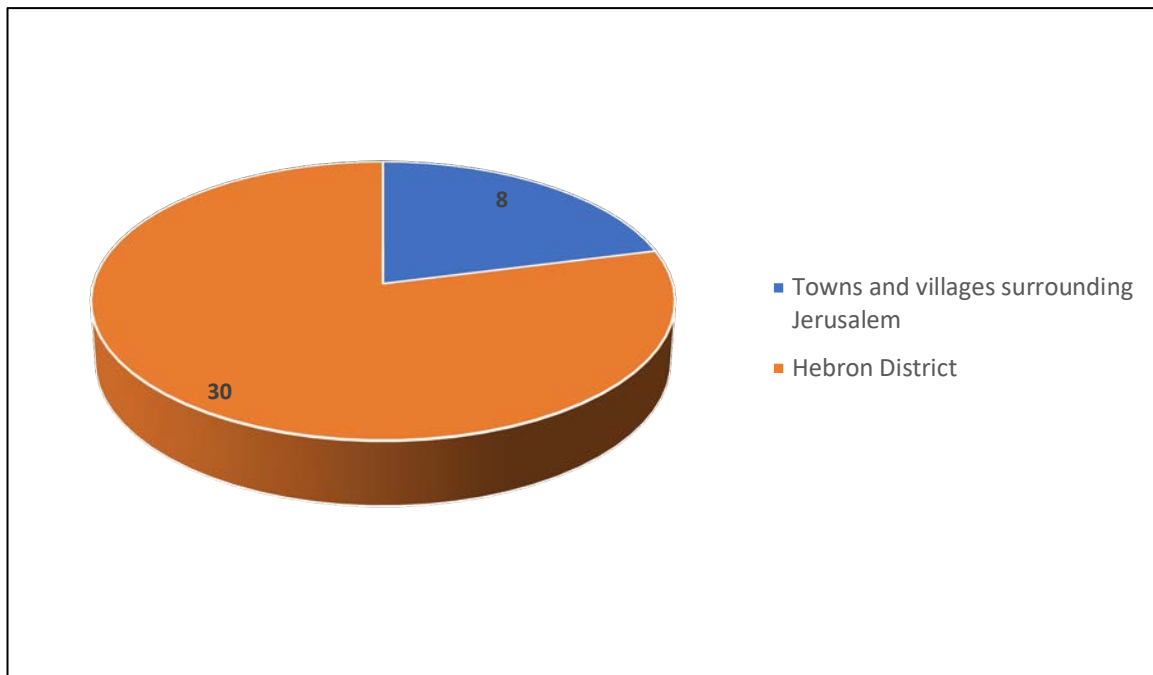
### Geographic Distribution of Morbidity

►The number of active cases in the Hebron District has dropped, but is still the highest in the PA. The number of active cases in the Hebron District is 30 (May 17, 2020), compared with 40 a week ago (May 10, 2020). Eight patients remain in the Arab towns and villages surrounding Jerusalem. All the COVID-19 patients in Ramallah, Tulkarm and Nablus have reportedly recovered. **Thus the number of districts free of the virus has increased to nine:** Ramallah, Tubas, Jericho, Qalqilya, Jenin, Bethlehem, Salfit, Tulkarm and Nablus (Wafa News Agency, May 17, 2020).

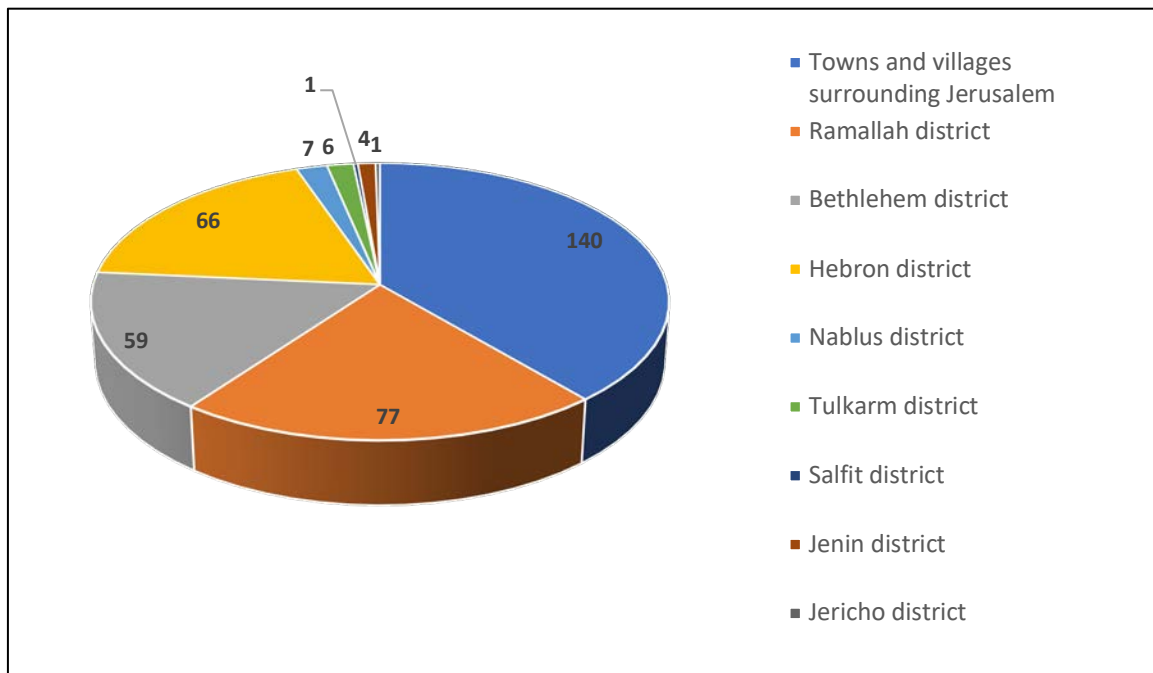
►Speaking at a press conference, Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh said that all the COVID-19 patients had been discharged from several facilities: the medical quarantine center in Bethlehem, the two hotels for COVID-19 patients in Ramallah, and the Hugo Chavez government hospital in Turmus Ayya (north of Ramallah) (Palestinian TV, May 16, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Statements by Palestinian Health Minister Dr. Mai Kaileh and Palestinian Government Spokesman Ibrahim Melhem (Wafa News Agency, May 11-17, 2020). Facebook page of the Palestinian Health Ministry, May 17, 2020.

### Distribution of Active Cases by district<sup>3</sup>



### Distribution of the Total Number of Patients by District<sup>4</sup>



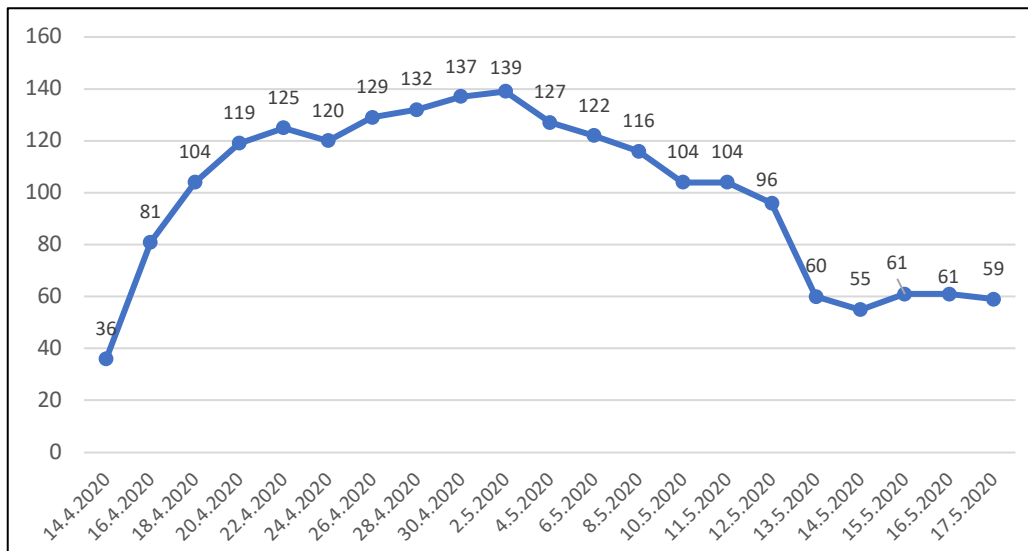
<sup>3</sup>Facebook page of the Palestinian Health Ministry, May 18, 2020

<sup>4</sup>Facebook page of the Palestinian Health Ministry, May 18, 2020

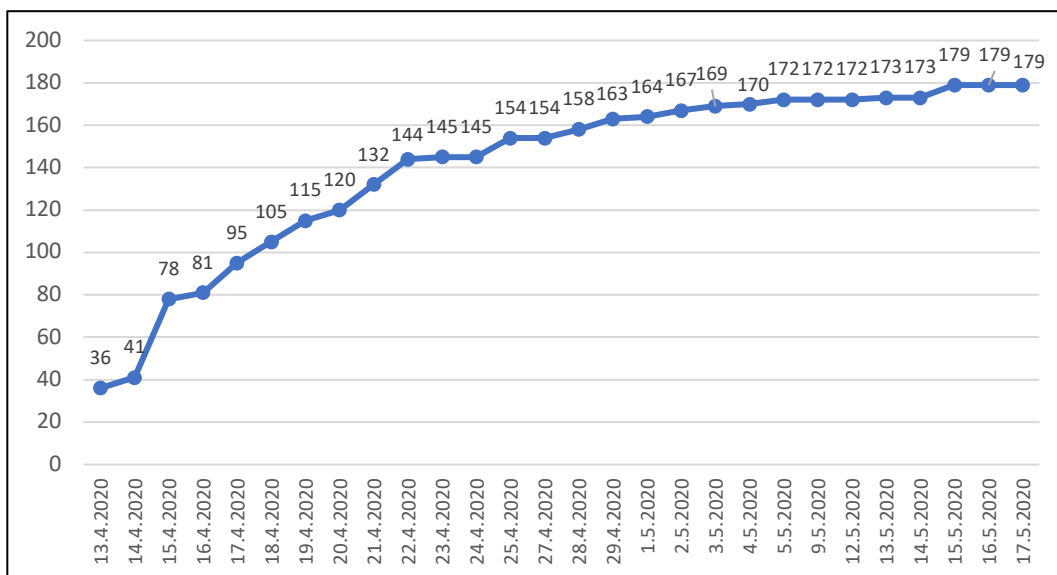
### East Jerusalem neighborhoods

►According to reports from the Palestinian Health Ministry (updated to May 17, 2020), **there has been a drop in the number of active cases in the neighborhoods of East Jerusalem. They now number 59, compared with 104 last week.** A total of 179 people have been infected with COVID-19 in the neighborhoods of East Jerusalem (Wafa News Agency, May 17, 2020).

**Number of Active cases in the Neighborhoods of East Jerusalem<sup>5</sup>**



**Total number of patients in East Jerusalem since the start of the pandemic<sup>6</sup>**



<sup>5</sup> Announcements by Palestinian Health Minister Dr. Mai Kaileh and Palestinian Government Spokesman Ibrahim Melhem (Wafa News Agency, May 11-17, 2020).

<sup>6</sup>According to announcements by Palestinian Health Minister Dr. Mai Kaileh and Palestinian Government Spokesman Ibrahim Melhem (Wafa News Agency, May 11-17, 2020).

## Enforcement of preventive measures by the PA

►Mahmoud Abbas spoke with the heads of the security services and district governors, **ordering them to continue enforcing the preventive measures** in order to prevent the spread of the virus (Wafa News Agency, May 12, 2020). At the same time, the Health Ministry is continuing its public information campaign through its Facebook page, calling on all residents to avoid gatherings and stay home during the month of Ramadan (Facebook page of the Palestinian Health Ministry, May 14, 2020).



### Health Ministry campaign calling on residents to avoid gatherings and stay home during the month of Ramadan (Facebook page of the Palestinian Health Ministry, May 14, 2020)

►The district governors continue to oversee the enforcement of the PA's preventive measures and even step up local preventive measures when necessary. Following the report of the patient in Beit Ula (north of Hebron), Hebron Governor Jabarin al-Bakri ordered a complete lockdown in Beit Ula. All businesses are closed and residents must stay off the streets except for emergencies (Hebron Governor's Facebook page, May 16, 2020).



Civil defense forces disinfecting the home of a Beit Ula resident who was found to be infected with the virus (Beit Ula Facebook page, May 16, 2020)

►Along with the enforcement measures, **instances of non-compliance with the preventive measures continue**. On May 14, 2020, a reporter for the QUDSN Channel reported on **active commercial activity in Hebron** (despite the fact that it has the highest number of patients). **In Ramallah, a crowd reportedly gathered at the entrance to the licensing bureau**, which had been closed to the public for about 60 days (QUDSN Facebook page, May 14, 2020). Following the gathering at the licensing bureau, Yahya Akuba, Director General of the Ministry of Transport's licensing bureau, reported that due to the failure to comply with the required procedures, the Minister of Transport had ordered the immediate closure of the licensing bureaus in Ramallah, Bethlehem and Hebron (Ma'an, May 14, 2020).



**Right: Lively commercial activity in Hebron (QUDSN Facebook page, May 14, 2020). Left: Residents gathering at the entrance to the district licensing bureau in Ramallah (QUDSN Facebook page, May 14, 2020)**

### Continued closure of mosques and the Temple Mount compound

►Sheikh Muhammad Hussein, the mufti of the PA and Jerusalem, **said that worshipers were still forbidden to enter the Temple Mount compound in order to protect the health of all worshipers**. Because of the ban, Muslim worshipers hold prayers in open areas near the entrances and gates of the Temple Mount (Silwan Facebook page, May 15, 2020).



**Right: The Temple Mount plaza last Friday, empty of Muslim worshipers. Left: Muslim worshipers holding prayers in open areas near the entrances and gates of the Temple Mount (Silwan Facebook page, May 15, 2020)**

►The Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs **announced that for the time being, the mosques would remain closed and the ban on gathering in the mosques would remain in effect.** The ministry said that a special government committee had been set up to examine the possibility of holding Friday prayers at mosques with a number of restrictions, but a decision had not yet been made (Filastin Al-Yawm, May 14, 2020).



**Empty mosque in Nablus during the month of Ramadan in accordance with instructions issued by the Palestinian government (QUDSN Facebook page, May 14, 2020)**

## Instructions in advance of Eid al-Fitr and preparations for the post-holiday period

►In light of the decline in morbidity in Judea and Samaria, **the Palestinian Authority is considering easing the restrictions, with the exception of preventive measures to be taken during the days of Eid al-Fitr** (which will begin on the evening of May 23, 2020). Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh reported that during the days of Eid al-Fitr, **a general lockdown would be declared, movement of residents between villages and districts would be banned and all shops except bakeries and pharmacies would be closed.** According to Prime Minister Shtayyeh, **about 33,000 Palestinians who work in Israel are expected to return to the Palestinian Authority** on Friday (May 22, 2020), the eve of the holiday. Medical teams and teams from the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Civil Affairs **will wait for them at the crossings to process them and perform the appropriate tests** (Mohammad Shtayyeh's Facebook page, May 16, 2020).

►According to an announcement by **Dr. Amjad Ghanem, Secretary General of the Palestinian Council of Ministers**, the government is ready to **gradually** bring life back to normal and to provide all services to the residents. According to him, the government's decisions on the new measures would be based on the lessons learned from each stage (Dunya al-Watan, May 13, 2020). **The Ministry of National Economy published a table**



**detailing the steps to be taken by the government after Eid al-Fitr**, with the aim of bringing life back to normal (PALDF Twitter account, May 17, 2020).

## Financial aid

►Speaking at a press conference, Mohammad Shtayyeh reported that the **private sector donors fund that he had set up had raised \$60 million**. He said that the funds would be distributed to the unemployed and needy in Judea, Samaria, East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and refugee camps in Syria and Lebanon. Some of the funds will be used to cover the Health Ministry's expenses. Fund chairman Talal Nasser al-Din said that the distribution of the funds would begin on May 16, 2020. **The money will be distributed to 40,000 workers affected by the COVID-19 crisis, each of whom receiving NIS 700**. The funds will also be distributed to 30,000 needy families, including families in East Jerusalem. Money will also be transferred to the Health Ministry for purchasing medical equipment (Palestinian TV, May 14, 2020).