



The Spread of Covid-19 in Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria (Updated to January 11, 2021)

Overview

► The situation in the Gaza Strip:

- ◆ **The Covid-19 numbers continue to decline.** Between January 5 and 11, 2021, 2,936 new cases were detected. **The number of active cases currently stands at 7,907, down from 9,784 a week ago.** There have been 447 deaths, up from 398 a week ago. There are 213 hospitalized patients, 117 in serious condition (down from 245 and 141 a week ago).
- ◆ **Spokesmen in the Gaza Strip explain the decline as the result of the general lockdowns imposed over the weekends and in the evenings.** However, they warn that **the Gaza Strip is not yet out of danger**, and appeal to the public to continue taking preventive measures.
- ◆ Given the trend to halt the spread of the virus and the decline in the number of active cases, the ministry of health in Gaza announced **the easing of the strict preventive measures.** Measures include the shortening of nightly curfews, the opening of the mosques on weekdays and the reopening of elementary schools.

► The situation in Judea and Samaria:

- ◆ **The rate of infection continues to decline, but the number of active cases in the Palestinian Authority (PA) is still high.** There are **currently 6,496 active cases, down from 7,978 a week ago.** Of the daily tests administered, **about 15% were positive**, down from 17.9% a week ago. The **Nablus district** remains the district with the **highest number of cases, followed by the Ramallah-al-Bireh district.**
- ◆ In the **neighborhoods of east Jerusalem** the decline continues. According to the PA, in **the east Jerusalem neighborhoods the number of active cases is 1,319, down from 1,437 a week ago.** According to the Jerusalem municipality, there are **1,094 active cases**, down from **1,253** a week ago. The highest numbers of cases are in

the **Beit Hanina and Old City** neighborhoods. The rate of active test results in most neighborhoods is about 10.6%

- ◆ **In the meantime, the PA's effort to acquire vaccines continues.** The PA is in contact with four companies that manufacture the vaccine. According to reports, the W.H.O. will also provide them. **The PA continues its propaganda campaign against Israel**, and exploits the attention given to the Covid-19 crisis to accuse it of "medical apartheid." According to the PA foreign ministry, as an "occupying power" Israel has a commitment to provide vaccines to the Palestinian population. The ministry of health in Ramallah called on the international community to exert pressure on Israel to supply the vaccine.

- ◆ Despite the restrictions of the lockdown and instructions from the PA, **weddings and other mass gatherings continue in the districts**, including the villages around Jerusalem (some of them, in ITIC assessment, held by residents of the east Jerusalem neighborhoods).

The Gaza Strip

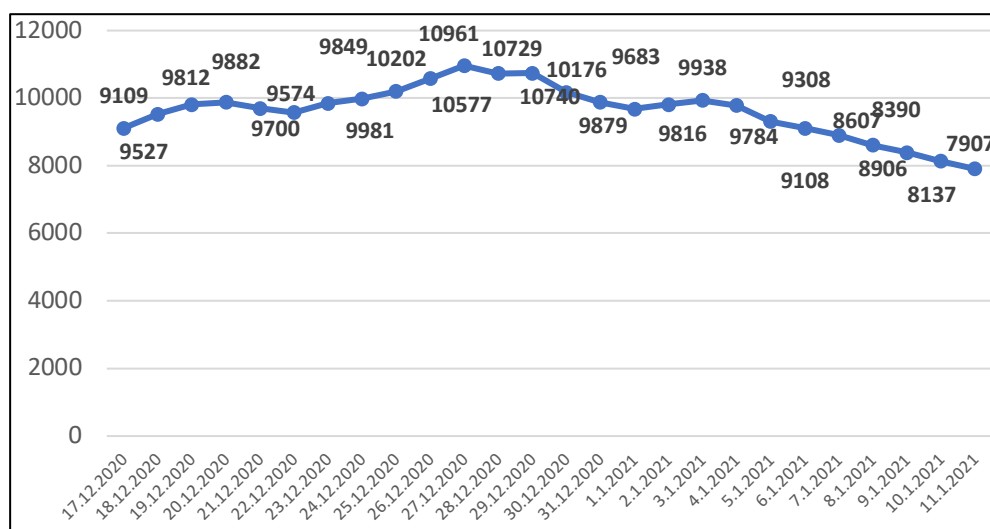
Extent of the Covid-19 infection

The number of new active cases in the Gaza Strip **continues to decline**. Between January 5 and 11, 2021, **2,936 new cases were detected**, down from 4,123 a week ago. **The number of active cases is currently 7,907**, down from 9,784 on January 4, 2021. There have been **447 coronavirus-related deaths**, up from **398 a week ago**. **The number of hospitalized patients has also declined**, including those in serious or critical condition. **There are currently 213 patients in ICUs, 117 in serious condition**. **Khalil al-Haya**, a member of Hamas' political bureau, recently tested positive for the coronavirus (Amad, January 5, 2021), **joining the list of senior Hamas figures who have been infected**.

Rate of Covid-19 infection in the Gaza Strip during the past week

Date	New active cases	Active cases	Total deaths	Active cases since the outbreak	Number of tests and percentage of positive results	Hospitalized / In serious condition
5/1	396	9,308	404	43,134	1,646 (24.06%)	240 hospitalized; 139 in serious condition
6/1	610	9,108	409	43,744	2,436 (25.04%)	247 hospitalized; 137 in serious condition
7/1	535	8,906	416	44,279	2,153 (24.85%)	246 hospitalized; 138 in serious condition
8/1	499	8,607	424	44,778	2,055 (24.28%)	246 hospitalized; 131 in serious condition
9/1	347	8,390	433	45,125	1,863 (18.62%)	260 hospitalized; 133 in serious condition
10/1	232	8,137	441	45,357	1,482 (15.65%)	259 hospitalized; 139 in serious condition
11/1	317	7,907	447	45,674	1,583 (20.02%)	213 hospitalized; 117 in serious condition

The change in active cases in the Gaza Strip over the past month



The overall situation in Covid-19 infection

► Spokesmen in the Gaza Strip ascribe the decline in the number of active cases to the **preventive measures implemented, especially the lockdowns imposed over the weekends and the nightly curfews**. However, they warn that the Gaza Strip is not yet out of danger, and **appeal to the public to continue following the guidelines**:

- ◆ **Dr. Iyad Abu Kirsh**, head of the department of emergency medicine in the ministry of health in Gaza, said the number of Covid-19 cases had peaked **between the second half of December and the beginning of January**, when the rate of serious and critical cases was 40% and later rose to 60%. He said when 2021 began **the number of active cases and hospitalized patients stabilized, which proved the measures instituted had borne fruit**. He said that despite the relative stability, **seriously and critically ill patients still make up between 55% and 60% of all active cases** (Palestine Online, January 4, 2021).

- ◆ **Salameh Maarouf**, head of the government information office, said the random sampling carried out by the ministry of health in collaboration with the W.H.O. in all the neighborhoods¹ indicated a decline in the rate of infection (Dunia al-Watan, January 4, 2021).

- ◆ **Dr. Fathi Abu Warda**, advisor to the minister of health in Gaza, reported that the epidemiological situation had improved and that **the curve in the Gaza Strip had begun flattening**. However, he stressed that they had not yet reached the stage of recovery and Gazans were asked to continue taking preventive measures and implementing guidelines (Dunia al-Watan, January 5, 2021).

- ◆ **Dr. Midhat Muheisen**, aide to the deputy minister of health in Gaza, said the **slight flattening of the curve was the result of the general lockdown over the weekends**, closing stores in the evening and preventing movement during the night (Palestine Online, January 9, 2021).

- ◆ **Dr. Ashraf al-Qidra**, spokesman for the ministry of health in the Gaza Strip, said the preventive measures had flattened the curve of Covid-19 infection. He added that the data indicate **a decline of 57% in the number of seriously ill patients**, and a

¹ According to the W.H.O.'s Facebook page, a serological survey was carried out to examine the prevalence of the disease within the population.

decline of 20% in the overall number, noting that the general lockdowns over the weekends had proved themselves. He called on local residents to continue strictly employing preventive measures (Twitter account of Radio Sawt al-Aqsa, January 9, 2021; al-Quds, January 9, 2021).

The condition of the public health system

- ▶ According to the W.H.O.'s periodic report (January 6, 2021), **46% of the hospital beds allotted to Covid-19 patients are occupied** (247 of 540), as are 26% of the beds in ICUs (23 of 90) (W.H.O. website, January 6, 2021). Dr. Rami Abadla, director of the infection prevention and control department in the ministry of health in Gaza, said there was a chronic shortage of beds and ICU equipment, and that they had recently been forced to use ordinary beds. He said they had asked for aid from a number of international agencies and donors and hoped the necessary equipment would be provided (Dunia al-Watan, January 8, 2021).
- ▶ The **W.H.O.** reported it had purchased 30 kits for RNA production and transferred them to the ministry of health in Gaza. The kits are sufficient for the administration of 60,000 tests (W.H.O. website, January 6, 2021). Majdi Dheir, head of the preventive medicine department in the ministry of health, said there was currently no shortage of Covid-19 test kits (al-Masdar News, January 10, 2021). However, Dr. Midhat Muheisen, aide to the deputy minister of health in Gaza, reported a shortage of manpower to administer the tests. He said the central laboratory could process between 2,500 and 3,000 samples per day, but the lack of equipment and manpower increased the burden on the medical staffs (Palestine Online, January 9, 2021).
- ▶ The Palestinian Medical Relief Society (PMRS) opened a laboratory in the Gaza Strip for PCR coronavirus-detection tests in return for a nominal fee. It is the first laboratory not belonging to the ministry of health to provide the service in Gaza. Currently the laboratory can process 100 tests per day, primarily for those requiring a PCR test for purposes of travel or for people who prefer to be tested privately (W.H.O. website, January 6, 2021).

Continuing preventive measures in Gaza

- ▶ **The general lockdowns over the weekends and the nightly curfews continue for the fifth consecutive week.** On January 7, 2021, Iyad al-Buzum, spokesman for the ministry of the interior in Gaza, announced that after an epidemiological evaluation had been carried out, it had been decided to ease the situation, beginning on January 10, 2021. The nightly

curfew would begin at 20:00 (instead of 18:30); the mosques would open on weekdays as soon as the sun set, with the implementation of preventive measures, but would remain closed over the weekend. It is also possible that the elementary schools will open. However, the weekend lockdowns will continue and gatherings, weddings and mourning tents will remain banned. It was stressed that the police and security forces will continue to monitor the strict implementation of preventive measures (ministry of the interior in Gaza website, January 7, 2021).



Enforcing the lockdown in the Gaza Strip for the fifth consecutive week (ministry of the interior in Gaza Twitter account, January 8 and 9, 2021).

► Following the ministry of the interior's announcement about easing measures, the ministry of Muslim endowments announced the renewal of prayers in the mosques on Sundays through Thursdays, subordinate to the implementation of preventive measures (website of the ministry of Muslim endowments in Gaza, January 7, 2021). In the meantime the ministry announced that to prevent crowding, funeral prayers would not be held in the mosques but in public squares, and issued a reminder that mourning tents were banned (website of the ministry of Muslim endowments in Gaza, January 10, 2018).



The mosques reopen in Gaza (Right: Shehab Twitter account, January 10, 2021; Left: Palestine Post Twitter account, January 10, 2021).

► **The ministry of education announced the renewal of school for the first through sixth grades, beginning on January 13, 2021.** The students be divided into groups and each group will study at school for two days per week (Facebook page of the ministry of education in Gaza, January 7, 2021). Despite the announcement, Farid Abu 'Athra, chief of UNRWA's education program in Gaza, said the epidemiological situation in Gaza did not permit the renewal of studies in UNRWA schools (Palestine Online, January 9, 2021).

Storeowners demand the opening of the popular markets

► **Dozens of owners of stalls in the markets in the Gaza Strip** (which have been closed since August 2020) **demonstrated in front of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) building**, demanding the markets be reopened and their source of income restored (Masdar News, January 10, 2021). Hamas security force operatives dispersed the demonstration (Amad, January 10, 2018). Later, a delegation of representatives of the markets met with members of the PLC's economic committee. They received promises that the PLC would hold meetings with all the relevant agencies to formulate their position regarding the popular markets and that as the number of coronavirus patients declined, the opening of the population markets would be considered (PLC website, January 10, 2021).



Stall-owners demonstrate in front of the PLC building in Gaza (Amad, January 10, 2021).

Foreign aid for Gaza

► On January 10, 2021, **the second convoy of medical aid from the UAE** entered the Gaza Strip through the Rafah Crossing. It included a station with high capabilities for generating liquid oxygen and filling canisters, the first of its kind in the Gaza Strip. It will be installed in the European Hospital. It also included three ventilators, ten large oxygen tanks (90 more will be sent later), 2,000 PCR kits for Covid-19 testing and other equipment (Paltoday, January 10, 2018)



**The UAE oxygen station arriving in the Gaza Strip
(Twitter account of journalist Hassan Aslih, January 10, 2021).**

Judea and Samaria

Extent of Covid-19 infection in Judea and Samaria

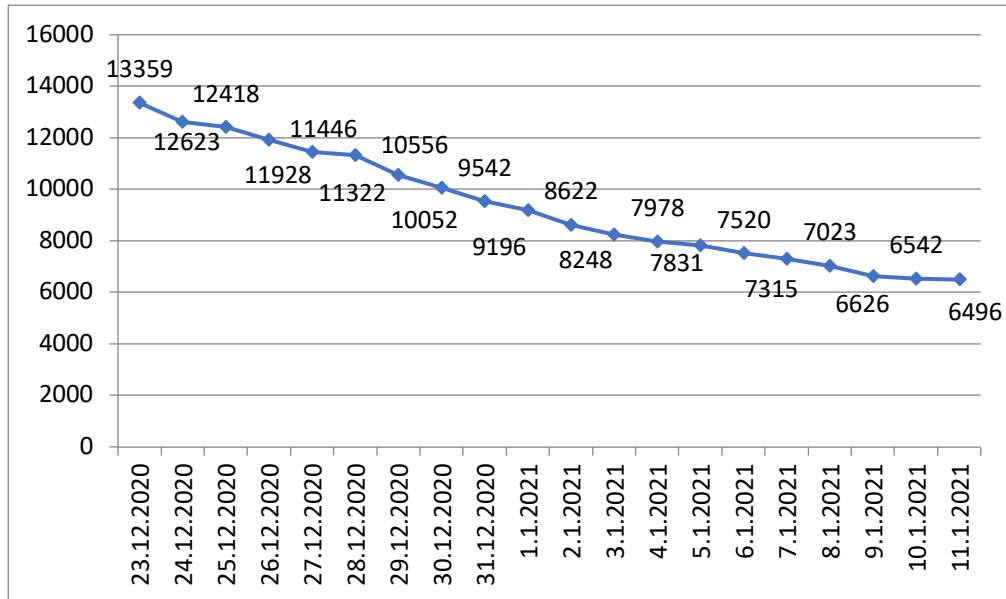
This past week the number of active cases in Judea and Samaria continued to decline; 3,007 new cases were detected, down from 3,794 a week ago. **The number of active cases is 6,496, down from 7,978 a week ago.** There are 95 patients in ICUs, 21 on ventilators. During the past week 75 people died, down from 100 a week ago, bringing the total number of deaths to 1,167. **The PA reported 800 new cases in east Jerusalem.** This past week an average of 2,228 tests were administered per day, and the rate of positive results was an average of 20%. The number of **active cases in east Jerusalem is 1,319**, down from **1,437** a week ago. According to the Jerusalem municipality, the number of active cases is 1,094, down from 1,253 a week ago.

- ▶ **Mai al-Kayla**, PA minister of health, **reported the decline in Covid-19 infection.** She said that despite the decline she would recommend that the government continue the lockdown over the coming days. She called on the public to implement preventive measures until the curve had flattened (Facebook page of the ministry of health in Ramallah, January 9, 2021).
- ▶ **Dr. Usama al-Najar**, director medical services in the ministry of health, also noted the decline in coronavirus infection. However, he said that despite the decline **more than 80% of the beds allotted for Covid-19 patients were occupied.** He noted that the public avoided being tested, which endangered those around them. He called on the public to observe the preventive measures until the curve had been flattened (Facebook page of the ministry of health in Ramallah, January 7, 2021).

Testing for the presence of the mutated coronavirus

► Dr. Usama al-Najar, director medical services in the ministry of health, said 200 samples had been taken in Hebron and Jenin (cities from which a large number of Palestinian workers exit to Israel) to see if the mutated coronavirus had entered the PA territories (Facebook page of the ministry of health in Ramallah, January 7, 2021).

Covid-19 infection in Judea and Samaria (according to the PA)



The spread of Covid-19 infection (according to the PA)

Date	New active cases	Active cases	Active cases since the outbreak	Total deaths	Active cases in the Nablus district	Total number of tests and percentage of positive results	Active and total cases in east Jerusalem
5/1	545	7,831	100,035	1,101	2,262	2,565 (21.24%)	1,427/ 18,065
6/1	478	7,520	100,513	1,110	2,099	2,668 (17.9%)	1,472/ 18,321
7/1	460	7,315	100,973	1,120	2,042	2,428 (18.9%)	1,472/ 18,321

8/1	323	7,023	101,296	1,135	1,839	1,952 (16.54%)	1,472/ 18,321
9/1	280	6,626	101,576	1,150	1,778	1,050 (26.6%)	1,476/ 18,459
10/1	467	6,542	102,043	1,163	1,751	1,911 (24.43%)	1,476/ 18,459
11/1	454	6,496	102,497	1,167	1,647	3,026 (15%)	1,319/ 18,616

Purchasing vaccines

- Mai al-Kayla, PA minister of health, reported that **vaccines were expected to arrive in the PA during the first quarter of 2021**, but said no final date had been set for their arrival. She said the ministry of health was in contact with the four companies developing the vaccine but the quantity provided would be **sufficient for only 70% of the Palestinian public**. She **added the W.H.O. was expected to supply vaccine for an additional 20% of the population** (Wafa, January 9, 2021).
- On January 6, 2021, the ministry of health in Ramallah published **a formal response to news items in the Israeli media stating that the ministry had received 20 doses of vaccines from Israeli NGOs for trial purposes**. The ministry of health denied the reports, stating that for the purchase the vaccines it not dealing only with four international companies and the W.H.O. The ministry also stated that the vaccines that would arrive during February 2021 would be provided to local residents at no cost (Facebook page of the ministry of health in Ramallah, January 7, 2021).
- The PA foreign ministry claimed that the fact the PA was looking for vaccines from different sources did **not absolve Israel of its responsibility to provide them to the PA according to international law**. According to the foreign ministry, Israel practices "medical apartheid" because as an "occupying power" it has the same commitment to provide the Palestinians with vaccines as to its own citizens. The foreign ministry also claimed that not giving the Palestinians the vaccines **discriminates against the Palestinian people and deprives them of their right to health**. According to the ministry, in accordance with Article 556 of

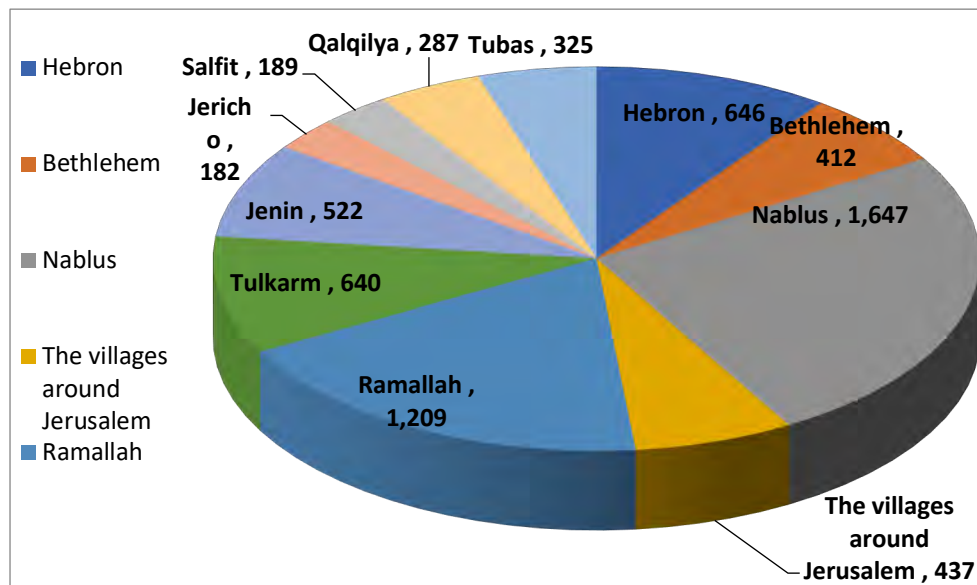
the Fourth Geneva Convention, an occupying power must take the necessary preventive measures to fight the spread of disease. Therefore, Israel has to give vaccines to the PA and to vaccinate the Palestinian prisoners. The ministry called on the international community to exert pressure on Israel to take responsibility (Wafa, January 9, 2021).

Geographic distribution of COVID-19 epicenters

Overview

The Nablus district still has the highest number of Covid-19 cases, with 1,647 new cases detected during the past week, down from 2,344 a week ago. The distribution of active cases by district, as of January 11, 2021, was Nablus, 1,647; Ramallah, 1,209; Hebron, 646; Tulkarm, 640; Jenin, 522; Bethlehem, 412; the villages around Jerusalem, 437; Qalqilya, 287; Tubas, 325; Salfit, 189; and Jericho, 182 (Facebook page ministry of health in Ramallah, January 11, 2021).

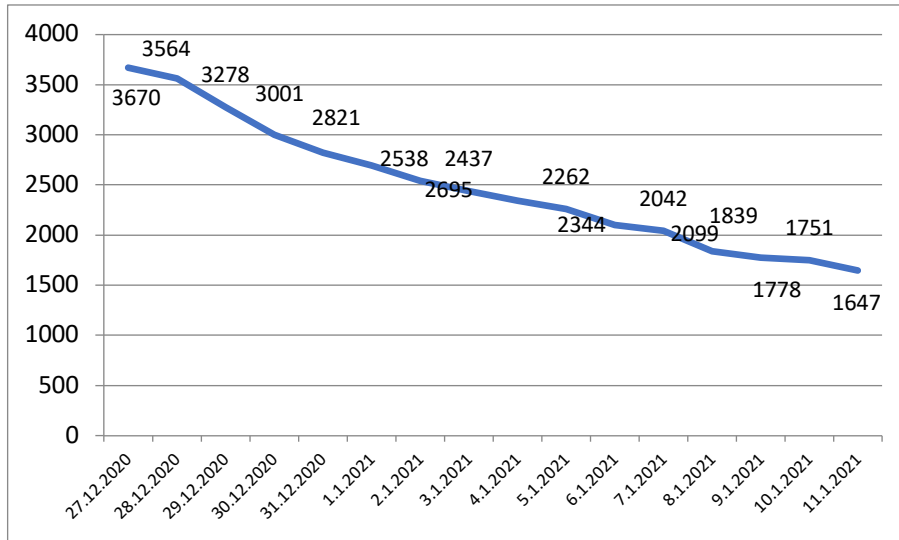
The distribution of active cases in the various districts



Nablus district

The Nablus district still has the highest number of Covid-19 cases in Judea and Samaria although the number has declined significantly. As of January 11, 2021 there were 1,647 active cases, down from 2,344 a week ago.

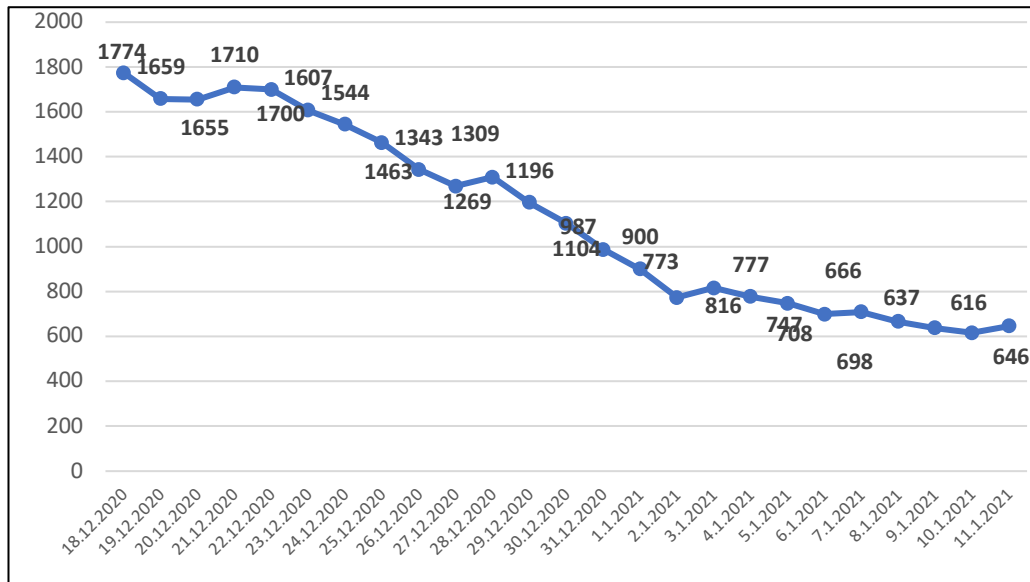
Number of active cases in the Nablus district



Hebron district

In the Hebron district coronavirus infections continued decreasing. As of January 11, 2021, **the number of active cases stood at 646**, down from 777 a week ago. The Hebron district currently has the third highest number of cases in the PA territories.

Number of active cases in the Hebron district



► **Dr. Afif Atawna**, responsible for the Covid-19 portfolio in the Hebron district, said the district's curve was flattening. He said the trend was accompanied by stability in the number of Palestinians tested daily. However, he said, they were monitoring the numbers very carefully because winter is not yet over and there is the danger of an outbreak of other

viruses besides the coronavirus (Facebook page of the ministry of health in Ramallah, January 7, 2021).

► **As part of the general lockdown in Israel it was decided to close the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron to visitors for ten days.** Hamas spokesman Abd al-Latif al-Qanua, called its closing an Israeli "hate crime," part of its "ongoing aggression" against the Islamic and Christian shrines and an Israeli attempt to establish its sovereignty over every site. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) called the closing the Cave "a deliberate act of terrorism" and surrender to Israel's extreme right wing.

Bethlehem district

There was a decrease in the number of active cases in the Bethlehem district. There are currently **412 active cases**, down from **553 a week ago**.

Jenin district

The number of active cases in the Jenin district continued decreasing this past week. As of January 4, 2021, there were **522 active cases**, down from **646 a week ago**.

► In the coming weeks **a new hospital will open in Jenin, the Ibn Sina Specialist Hospital.** It has five floors and covers an area of about 1.5 acres. It will serve the residents of the Jenin and neighboring districts. It was built at a cost of \$42 million and with the leadership of the Palestinian Investment Fund (Wafa, January 5, 2021; Facebook page of the Ibn Sina Specialist Hospital, January 5, 2021).



Right: Muhammad Mustafa, director of the Palestinian Investment Fund, and the governor of the Jenin district tour the hospital (Facebook page of the Jenin district governor, January 5, 2021). Left: Mai al-Kayla, PA minister of health, on a tour of the hospital (Facebook page of the ministry of health in Ramallah, January 5, 2021).

► As part of enforcing the preventive measures and guidelines the Palestinian police in the Jenin district hand out several hundred citations a day to local residents, store owners and drivers who do not employ preventive measures (PA police website, January 2021).



Right: Engagement party in Jenin. Left: Wedding in Jenin (Facebook page of Tasjilat al-Badawiya, January 8, 2021).

The Qalqilya district

As of January 4, 2021 the number of active cases in **the Qalqilya district continued declining**, standing at **287, down from 327** a week ago.

► The PA police in the Qalqilya district continued enforcing preventive measures and guidelines. During the week they closed stores that opened in violation of the law, detained residents, handed out citations and impounded vehicles (PA police website, January 5, 2021).

The Ramallah district

In the Ramallah district the number of active cases continued to decline. The district still has the second highest number of cases in Judea and Samaria, after the Nablus district. **The number of active cases currently stands at 1,209, down from 1,449 a week ago.**

► Despite the restrictions of the lockdown and the PA's guidelines not to hold crowded events, engagement and wedding parties continue being held in the villages throughout the Ramallah district.



Right: An engagement party in Bila'in (Facebook page of Studio Lamar from Deir Abu Masha'al, January 9, 2021). Left: A wedding in Deir Amer (Facebook page of the Top Art Studio in Ramallah, January 3, 2021).

The villages around Jerusalem

The **number of active Covid-19 cases in the villages around Jerusalem rose this past week to 437 from 415 a week ago. Weddings and other mass events** continue being held, some of them, in ITIC assessment, by residents of east Jerusalem.

- The Palestinian police in the villages around Jerusalem, in collaboration with the security forces, closed several dozen stores that were in violation of PA government decisions and detained the owner of an open café. They gave citations to drivers and residents who did not employ preventive measures (PA police website, January 9, 2021).

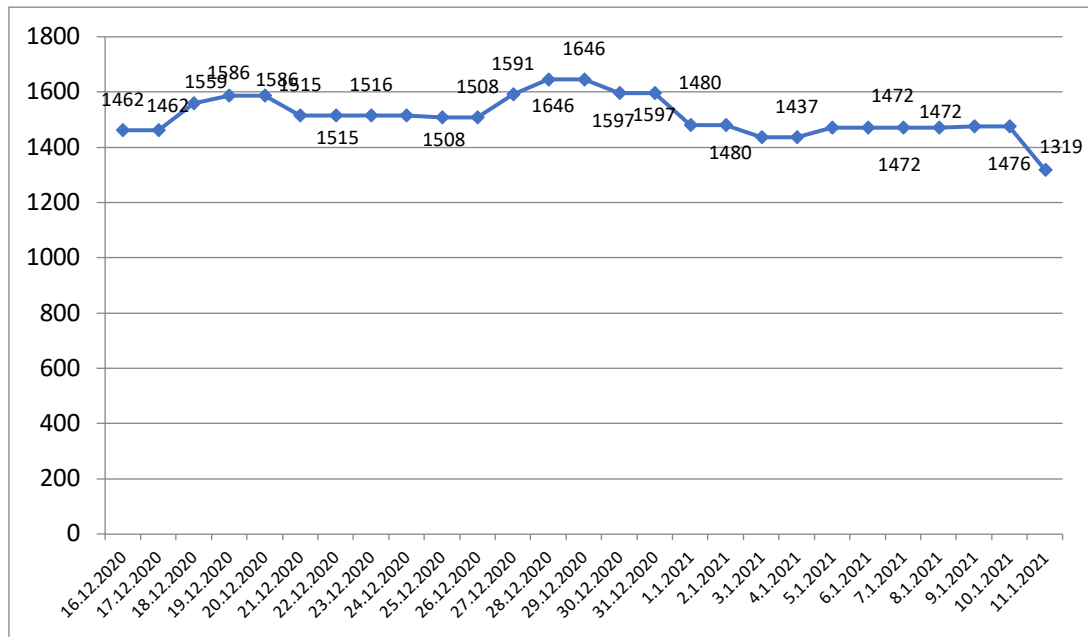


Right: An engagement party in Anata (Facebook page of the Jawad Studio, January 5, 2021). Left: A wedding in Anata (Facebook page of Ifrah Anata, January 3, 2021).

The East Jerusalem Neighborhoods

According to the PA, this past week **800 new active cases were detected, up from 716** a week ago. **The number of active cases is 1,319, down from 1,437** a week ago. According to the Jerusalem municipality the number of active cases is currently 1,094, down from 1,253 a week ago. The rate of positive test results in most of the neighborhoods is around 10.6%, as of January 11, 2021.

The number of active Covid-19 cases in east Jerusalem, according to the PA



The extent of Covid-19 infection in east Jerusalem, according to the Jerusalem municipality, December 13, 2020

Neighborhood	Number of tests in the past 24 hours	Positive results	Number of active cases	Number of recoveries	Deaths
Beit Hanina	552	13.6%	179	2,214	14
A-Tor	274	9.1%	80	1,677	19
The Old City	369	7.3%	130	1,603	24
Kafr 'Aqab	143	9.8%	58	1,632	8
Shuafat	282	12.1%	81	1,181	14
Issawiya	183	9.8%	48	1,064	9
Ras al-Amoud	222	9.9%	88	1,010	10
Silwan/City of David	223	10.8%	53	852	8
Shuafat refugee camp	114	2.6%	21	776	7
Bayt Safafa	131	7.6%	80	870	4
Wadi Joz, Sheikh Jarrah	198	16.2%	59	708	11
Jabel Mukaber	193	12.4%	77	676	12
Sur Bahr	199	9%	56	633	8
Abu Tor	45	11.1%	34	558	4
Anata	11	0%	24	437	1
Bab al-Zahara	80	13.8%	26	333	10
Total	3,219	10.6%	1,094	16,224	163