

COVID-19 in Iraqi Kurdistan

The COVID-19 pandemic, also known as the coronavirus pandemic, is an ongoing pandemic of coronavirus disease, caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The outbreak was first identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. The World Health Organization declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January, and a pandemic on 11 March. At 15 May 2020, more than 4.53 million cases of COVID-19 have been reported in more than 188 countries and territories, resulting in more than 307,000 deaths. More than 1.63 million people have recovered.

The KRG (Kurdistan Regional Government) through ministry of health and health directorates in all the cities and provinces started a mass media campaign to give enough information about Coronavirus name, sign, symptoms, ways of prevention and ways of prompt hand washing so as to protect the individual and all the family members.

On the 1st of March 2020 the first case of coronavirus was confirmed in Kurdistan region, four people in Sulaymaniyah province were confirmed to have the virus, a family of three and another woman who all have come back from Iran. From now serious measures have been taken.

House private quarantine started, all schools, universities, shopping malls closed. On the 4th of March the government issued a statement stopping all the religious ceremonies and limiting movement in Kurdistan.

On 7th of March all night clubs, playgrounds and parks were shutdown as cases of the virus started to emerge.

On 11th of March Sulaymaniyah airport announced that from 14th of March for the duration of 15 days it will stop flights to Baghdad and Basra airport, as measures to limit the coronavirus outbreak.

On 12th of March further restrictions were implemented by closing barbers and beauty salons as preventive measures. On 13th of March Sulaymaniyah governor announced the stop of movement between the city and its districts and suburbs starting midnight of the 14th of March up until 24th of March.

On 13th of March the ministry of interior announced curfew all over KRI for 48 hours, to be extended by 78 more hours and later on another extension by 5 days. On the 19th of March the celebration of the Kurdish new year Newroz was cancelled.

On 20th of March, Asa hospital began operation to combat coronavirus. On 22nd of March KRG announced extension of Curfew all over Kurdistan up until 1st of April, then till the 16th of April, and lastly till the 2nd of May.

The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan is the second major party in Kurdistan and Iraq, with a wide prospective to support the health directorate in all parts and cities in Kurdistan. The main activities were:

On 27th February 2020 construction of a hospital to confront coronavirus in Sulaymaniyah began, half of this hospital supported by PUK, then on the 3rd of March the higher committee for issuing fatwas decided to stop Friday prayer and asked people to follow the medical instruction.

On 18th of March PUK main headquarter in Kirkuk announced that it will be providing a hospital for the health sector as the Co-leaders of PUK have provided the necessary funds to purchase the equipment to combat coronavirus in the province.

On 26 of March PUK headquarter provided cleaning material to Tuz Khormato Sub district and Kirkuk to help in combating coronavirus.

Through its main satellite TV; Galikurdistan, Kurdsat, Kurdsat news and Kirkuk TV started to raise awareness by making short stories and moves with famous actors to encourage people to follow instructions and to have the knowledge to prevent the spread of the virus.

On the 27th Lahur Sheikh Jangi visited Shahid Aso Hospital which is specialized to combat coronavirus, and he decided to help by providing the lacking equipment and materials.

Darbandikhan district near Sulaymaniyah city was declared a risky town by the Health ministry, an announcement which had a negative psychological implication on the people who are living there, shortly after PUK co-leader and politburo members visited the town to provide medical, psychological and economical support for the people and district.

Via many non-profitable organizations, PUK provided health, medical and economical support to people all over the region.

On 14th of April signed an agreement with 140 political, social and social democratic parties to cooperate in the fight against coronavirus.

On the 18th of April PUK provided medical support for eastern part of Kurdistan sending necessary medicine to Kermanshah and Sanandaj cities in Iran.

On 20th of April PUK provided medical support to Rojava as a delegation headed by Dr. Soran Jamal Taher visited their representative in Sulaymaniyah, and handed over the medical support which was allocated by PUK.

PUK provided more than 20 000 food baskets to poor families, also there are many refugee camps which need basic supplement.

During the pandemic, PUK supported the University of Sulaymaniyah to produce VTM because of its shortage in the market.

Members of PUK participate in health campaign to distribute medical and food baskets to the refugees.

Quick treatment through online WhatsApp calls, in this campaign more than 39000 patients were treated who were suffering from diseases apart from sign and symptom of corona virus, those who needed further medical care were transferred to hospital under the supervision of medical nurse. This program was supported by PUK.

As of 16 of May 2020, Kurdistan recorded 391 cases of coronavirus, 356 have healed, 30 are still in quarantine, and 5 lost their lives to it.

Dr. Soran Jamal Taher
Head of PUK Relations Bureau