

# [Updated 21/6/2020] GCC responses to tackle the Covid19 outbreak

As the GCC nations roll out various economic, financial, health and travel-related initiatives, the latest country-by-country measures is compiled below. Scroll down to see a map of the confirmed Covid-19 cases in the Middle East & North Africa region.

**The list is update as of 3:00pm on 21st June, 2020.**

**Table: GCC responses to tackle the Covid19 outbreak**

<b>Bahrain</b>	
<b>Economic &amp; Financial</b>	<b>Health &amp; travel-related</b>
<p><b>Will slash spending by ministries and government agencies by 30%</b></p> <p><b>BHD 4.3bn stimulus package:</b> Doubling the Liquidity Fund to BHD 200mn + Waiver on utilities bills for 3 months + Delay in loans installments for 6 months + Supporting wages of citizens in pvt sector</p> <p>BHD 5m allocated to Bahraini families in need &amp; individuals affected by Covid-19</p> <p><b>BHD 177mn (USD 470mn) will be added to this year's budget</b> to tackle emergency expenses related to the Covid19 outbreak</p> <p><b>Central bank moves:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Banned lenders from freezing customers' accounts</b> in case of lost jobs or retirement</li> <li>- <b>Cut overnight lending rate to 2.45% from 4%</b> to ensure "smooth functioning of the money markets" (before Fed moves)</li> </ul> <p><b>Parliament:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Approved measures like reduction of commercial registration fees</b> as well as <b>labour &amp; utility charges</b> for 6 months</li> </ul> <p><b>Cabinet authorised the finance minister to directly withdraw funds</b> with a 5% ceiling from the public account</p> <p><b>Bahrain will not collect rents and allowance from all tenants of municipal properties</b> for three months starting from Apr</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>All non-essential medical services resume operations</b></li> <li>- <b>Shops and industrial enterprises opened on May 7;</b> restaurants remain closed still for dine-in customers</li> <li>- <b>Plans to resume Friday prayers postponed</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Schools scheduled to reopen in Sep</b></li> <li>- <b>Bans public gatherings</b> of more than 5 individuals</li> </ul> </li> <li>- <b>Bahrain will allow passengers to transit through the international airport;</b> entry into the country will be limited to only citizens; mandatory 14-day self-isolation</li> </ul>
<b>Kuwait</b>	
<b>Economic &amp; Financial</b>	<b>Health &amp; travel-related</b>

<p><b>Central bank:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Reduced the discount rate to 1.5%</b> (from 2.5%) <b>a record-low</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Reduced liquidity and capital adequacy requirements for banks &amp; cut risk weighting for SMEs</b> (estimated to raise bank lending by USD 16bn)</li> </ul> </li> <li>– <b>Domestic banks will defer payment of consumer &amp; SME loans</b> and financing, credit card instalments for six months</li> </ul> <p>Set up a <b>KWD 10mn (USD 33mn) fund</b>, to be financed by Kuwaiti banks</p> <p><b>Government authorized additional funding</b> of KWD 500mn (USD 1.5bn) to ministries and state agencies for fight against Covid19</p> <p><b>Suspended fees</b> on point of sales devices and ATM withdrawals + increased the limit for contactless payments to KWD 25 from KWD 10</p> <p>The <b>Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development</b> pledged almost USD 95mn to support government efforts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Kuwait eases “total curfew” to between 7pm to 5am</b>; lockdown on Hawally area has been lifted</li> <li>– <b>Parliament suspended</b> for 2 weeks (from Jun 18); <b>public sector</b> employees not be allowed to return to offices from this week (starting Jun 21)</li> <li>– <b>Expiring residence permits/ visas expiring in Jun extended for 3 months</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Closed schools, shopping centres, cinemas, wedding halls &amp; children’s entertainment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Halted ALL commercial passenger flights</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>– <b>All educational institutions in Kuwait will reopen on 4<sup>th</sup> Aug</b></li> </ul>
<b>Oman</b>	
<b>Economic &amp; Financial</b>	<b>Health &amp; travel-related</b>
<p>CB announces a <b>\$20bn incentive package</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Repo rate cut by 75bps to 0.5%;</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Reduce Capital Conservation Buffers for banks to 1.25% from 2.5%; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Lending Ratio / Financing Ratio for lenders increased to 92.5% up from 87.5%</li> <li>– banks and financial institutions to <b>freeze repayments</b> of personal and housing loans for three months, effective from May</li> </ul> </li> <li>– Reduce existing fees related to banking services + avoid introducing new fees</li> </ul> <p><b>Finance ministry slashed approved budgets</b> of civil, military and security agencies by 5%</p> <p><b>All government companies have to reduce approved expenditures for 2020 by 10%</b> + no execution of new projects or capital expenditures for the year; all exceptional bonuses for state employees would be halted</p> <p><b>Other measures include</b> tourism &amp; municipality tax breaks, free government storage facilities and postponement of credit instalment payments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Lockdown in Muscat ended; Dhofar Governorate in Oman closed from 12 noon of June 13 until July 3 for tourism</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– At least 50% of employees in government entities will work from the offices starting May 31</li> </ul> </li> <li>– <b>Oman has closed its borders; all domestic and international flights to and from airports suspended from 12 noon of Mar 29</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Covid-19 tests and treatments will be done for free</b> for all communities</li> <li>– <b>Suspend issuance of tourist visas; will not allow cruise ships to dock</b> at its ports during this period <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Schools closed; all public parks closed, public gathering prohibited, Friday prayers at mosques suspended; limited staffing at estate entities</li> <li>– <b>Few shops in Oman</b> (consulting, law, audit firms, flower shops, boutiques etc) to <b>reopen</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>– <b>Restrictions are still in place on gatherings</b> (of more than 5 individuals) on beaches and other public places</li> </ul>
<b>Qatar</b>	
<b>Economic &amp; Financial</b>	<b>Health &amp; travel-related</b>

<p>A \$23.3bn stimulus package</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– QAR 75bn (\$20.6bn) to provide financial + economic incentives for private sector</li> <li>– CB to put in place an <b>appropriate mechanism to encourage banks to postpone loan installments and obligations of the private sector</b> with a grace period of 6 months</li> <li>– Qatar Development Bank to <b>postpone installments for all borrowers</b> for 6 months</li> <li>– Qatar's government entities directed to <b>reduce costs for non-Qatari employees by 30% as of Jun 1</b> (either pay cuts or layoffs)</li> <li>– Directing <b>govt funds to increase investments in the stock exchange</b> by QAR 10bn (\$2.75bn)</li> <li>– Exempting <b>food &amp; medical goods from customs duties</b> for 6 months</li> <li>– <b>Utilities bill exemption</b> for SMEs, affected sectors; <b>rent exemption</b> for 6 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Four-phased recovery programme planned:</b> Mosques to reopen Jun 15th, restaurants to partially reopen (Jul 1)</li> <li>– All <b>international flights suspended</b> from Mar 18; cargo aircraft, transit flights exempt; travel ban on all travelers except Qatari nationals</li> <li>– <b>Qatar Airways grounds its A380 fleet; to temporarily reduce 40% of staff</b> (in food and beverage, retail &amp; ground staff) at Hamad Airport</li> <li>– Educational institutions closed; parks and public beaches closed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Bans social gatherings;</b> introduces enforcement measures: checkpoints and mobile police patrols</li> </ul> </li> <li>– <b>Private sector companies instructed to have 80% of their staff work from home</b>, effective Thurs (Apr 2) for an initial 2 weeks</li> <li>– <b>Public transport modes have been stopped</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 6 tonnes of <b>aid sent to Iran</b> (medical equipment &amp; supplies); donating \$150mn in aid to Gaza</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	
<b>Economic &amp; Financial</b>	<b>Health &amp; travel-related</b>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>SAR 120bn worth measures</b> to support the pvt sector including postponement of VAT/ excise/ income tax/ Zakat payments, exemptions of govt dues etc</li> <li>– <b>SAMA's SAR 50bn stimulus package:</b> financing support for SMEs (including deferred loan payments, concessional loans) and coverage of points of sale &amp; e-commerce fees</li> <li>– <b>SAMA's measures for supporting &amp; financing the private sector:</b> adjusting or restructuring the current funds without any additional costs or fees + reviewing reassessment of interest rates and other fees on credit cards + refunding travel-related forex transfer fees</li> <li>– <b>SAR 7bn allocated to Health Ministry in addition to the SAR 8bn package earlier</b> + SAR 32bn approved for healthcare facilities</li> <li>– <b>Government will cover 60% of private sector salaries (of Saudi citizens)</b> hit by Covid-19; first payment to be send on May 3.</li> <li>– Will <b>allow private businesses</b> (affected by Covid19) <b>to reduce working hours and permit wages to be reduced</b> by not more than 40%</li> <li>– <b>Additional set of measures announced:</b> SAR 50bn to accelerate payment of private sector dues &amp; provide liquidity to several sectors while a further SAR 47bn was set aside for the health sector</li> <li>– <b>Saudi Industrial Development Fund</b> revealed a SAR 3.7bn (USD 3.62bn) stimulus package for industrial sector companies</li> <li>– <b>Initiatives to reduce private sector's burdens related to manpower:</b> e.g. lifting halts on non-payment of fines, fines related to workers recruitment etc.</li> <li>– <b>Saudi Arabia will cut SAR 50bn</b> (USD 13.32bn or less than 5%) of the 2020 budget; <b>cost of living allowance scrapped</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>VAT to be tripled to 15% starting 1st Jul</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>– Land borders with UAE, KW, Bahrain closed except for commercial trucks; shipping services suspended from 50 countries; cargo traffic not affected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Restrictions eased across the nation: Saudi Arabia initiates the 3<sup>rd</sup> phase of its recovery plan</b> by opening most commercial activities from <b>Jun 20</b>. Mosques in Makkah are also set to reopen with social distancing measures in place.</li> <li>– <b>Domestic flights resume; intl passenger flights still suspended + workplace attendance in both public and private sectors</b></li> <li>– <b>Malls reopen with multiple safety measures</b></li> <li>– <b>Mosques reopened with restrictions; Umrah pilgrimages</b> to Mecca &amp; Medina under a temporary ban</li> <li>– Capital Markets Authority <b>urged shareholders &amp; invested in listed companies to vote electronically</b> in upcoming meetings; <b>Tadawul reduces trading hours</b></li> </ul>
<b>United Arab Emirates</b>	
<b>Economic &amp; Financial</b>	<b>Health &amp; travel-related</b>

<p><b>UAE announces a 2-phase recovery plan:</b> short-term gradual re-opening (include the AED 282.5bn stimulus) + focus on sectors “with high potential” in the long-term (AI, 5G, IoT, Blockchain, RE, EVs, 3D printing, robotics...)</p> <p><b>Central bank:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>AED100bn stimulus</b> to facilitate temporary relief on private sector loans &amp; promote <b>SME lending</b>; support also the <b>real estate sector</b></li> <li>– 50% reduction in reserve requirements for demand deposits to 7% (releasing ~ USD 16.6bn in liquidity) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Banks to reschedule loans contracts</b> + grant deferrals on monthly loan payments (till end-2020) + reduce fees and commissions</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>UAE Cabinet: additional AED 16bn stimulus</b> to reduce cost of doing business, support small business, accelerate implementation of govt infrastructure projects</p> <p><b>Ministry of Economy reduced fees of 94 services</b></p> <p><b>Dubai: AED 1.5bn stimulus package</b> to support businesses affected by Covid19 including 10% reduction in utilities bills</p> <p><b>Abu Dhabi: AED 5bn in utilities subsidies</b>; free road tolls till end-2020, 20% rebate on rental values for restaurants + tourism &amp; entertainment sectors (+ faster implementation of Ghadan-21 initiatives)</p> <p><b>Dubai Freezones launch stimulus package:</b> rents postponed for six months; cancellation of fines; free movement of labour with temporary contracts</p> <p><b>Federal Tax Authority extends the Excise Tax return submission deadline</b> for March and April 2020 to May 17, 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Varied restriction across emirates:</b> Abu Dhabi imposes movement ban from/to the emirate till Jun 23rd; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Easing of restrictions:</b> mall capacity increased; restaurants, gyms, beaches, museums reopen.</li> </ul> </li> <li>– <b>Dubai permits shopping malls and private businesses to operate at full capacity</b></li> <li>– <b>Metro services re-open;</b> buses and taxis are operational</li> <li>– 30% of federal employees return to work from May 31; <b>full capacity in Dubai’s govt offices &amp; 30% in Sharjah’s govt offices from Jun 14</b></li> <li>– <b>Curfews reduced</b> to between 10pm-6am; in Dubai from 11pm to 6am</li> <li>– <b>Entry for residents overseas to start from Jun 1;</b> temporary ban to issue new visas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– All inbound, outbound and transit flights suspended from Mar 25; <b>Emirates bookings are open from Jul 1</b> for 12 Arab nations; UAE airports welcome transit passengers.</li> </ul> </li> <li>– <b>Schools to be closed till end-Jun;</b> distance learning extended. Schools will reopen in Sep, though discussions ongoing regarding the method of learning in the 2020-21 academic year. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Mosques, churches and other places of worship remain closed</b></li> <li>– <b>Opened, with social distancing measures:</b> public parks, beaches, cinemas, gyms</li> </ul> </li> <li>– <b>Supporting others:</b> Sends 2 batches critical medical aid to Iran in Mar + flew 215 people from different countries out of Wuhan to Abu Dhabi’s Emirates Humanitarian City</li> </ul>
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**Map: Number of Confirmed Covid19 cases by country (Source: Johns Hopkins University)**

Middle East

North Africa

Iran & Afghanistan

