

Muslims mark Eid al-Fitr under restrictions



Ramallah, May 24 (RHC)-- Over 5,311,624 cases of coronavirus infection have now been reported worldwide, as well as at least 342,105 deaths, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University. The Muslim world, meanwhile, is celebrating Eid al-Fitr, which marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan, with many countries having introduced new restrictions to prevent infections at large religious gatherings.

Separately, United Nations agencies have warned that the pandemic threatens some 80 million infants with vaccine-preventable diseases, such as measles, diphtheria, and poliomyelitis due to the disruption of routine immunization.

Countries from Saudi Arabia to Egypt, Turkey, and Indonesia have restricted large religious gatherings, as millions of Muslims have begun celebrating one of the happiest times on their calendar, Eid al-Fitr, under the shadow of the coronavirus pandemic.

Indonesia, which has the world's largest Muslim population, has banned congregational prayers at mosques and open fields and restricted family reunions during the three-day holidays. The country, with more than 240 million people, has so far reported nearly 21,745 cases of COVID-19, and 1,350 deaths. Health officials reported 949 new cases on Sunday.

Iraq has reported the largest single-day spike in cases of viral infection since late February, as the nation is celebrating Eid al-Fitr. Health officials reported 308 new cases for Saturday, bringing the total tally to more than 4,200. At least five people also died in Baghdad on Saturday, bringing the country's total fatalities to 152. The government had eased curfew hours during the month of Ramadan as well as the Eid holidays.

In Baghdad, crowds of people were seen at supermarkets and shops and in the streets getting prepared for the Eid celebration, which began on Sunday. The Iraqi Health Ministry said the partial curfew would continue after the holiday.

Turkey also imposed a 24-hour nationwide curfew for four days to keep people at home during the holiday. Under the curfew, which came into effect in 81 Turkish provinces, markets and grocery stores will be closed from May 24th to the 26th.

On Sunday, however, a limited number of worshippers gathered at the Ahmet Hamdi Akseki Mosque in the capital, Ankara, to hold the first congregational prayers in the country since March. The government had already announced that it would allow prayers for Eid, amid continued social distancing measures. The coronavirus outbreak killed 32 people and infected 1,186 others during the past 24 hours in Turkey. The figures pushed the total cases to 55,686 and the total deaths to 4,308.

In Saudi Arabia, the Grand Mosque of Mecca was reported to be largely empty during the Eid on Sunday, as authorities imposed unprecedented restrictions on public gatherings. Only a small number of worshippers were allowed to attend prayers in the holy mosque.

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