

Despite direct economic consequences, study finds majority of Arabs do not care about Ukraine-Russia war

Mon, 2022-05-30 19:47

LONDON: According to an exclusive Arab News-YouGov poll, the majority of people across the Middle East and North Africa do not seem to care very much about the war in Ukraine.

Experts, however, say there are plenty of reasons why they should.

“It does seem like it is taking place so far away,” said Abeer Etefa, the Cairo-based senior spokeswoman for the UN World Food Programme in the Middle East and North Africa.

Kyiv, Ukraine’s capital, is more than 3,000 kilometers from Riyadh.

“But also, the politics and dynamics of the conflict in Ukraine are far too complicated for a lot of the audiences in this region.”

The survey was carried out among 7,835 people across 14 countries in the MENA region between April 26 and May 4.

Asked where they stand in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, 18 percent sided with Ukraine, and 16 percent with Russia.

But an overwhelming 66 percent of respondents answered with a collective shrug, opting to take “no stance” on the crisis – indifference that peaked in Jordan and Algeria (74 percent) and Saudi Arabia (71 percent).

The complexities of European history and politics aside, Richard Gowan, UN director of the Brussels-based International Crisis Group, sees another reason for the apparent indifference of many Arabs to events in Ukraine.

“We are seeing a very big gap between how Americans and Europeans see this conflict, and how it’s viewed in other parts of the world,” he said.

“One key issue is that many people in the Arab world see this as NATO pitched against Russia, and the reality is that you’re not going to be able to turn around suspicions of NATO and the US in the Middle East and North Africa any time soon.”

Although the fighting in Ukraine and the reasons behind the conflict do indeed have nothing to do with the Arab world, shockwaves from the conflict are already affecting millions of Arabs, who are faced with rising costs of basic foodstuffs, said Etefa.

She added that even if the fighting stopped tomorrow, “the world will need between six months to two years to recover, from a food security

perspective.”

Even before the conflict, she said, “by February food prices in many countries across the region had already reached an all-time high.

“Last year the cost of a basic food basket, the minimum food needs per family per month, increased by 351 percent in Lebanon, the highest increase in the region, followed by 97 percent in Syria and 81 percent in Yemen.

“And now the Ukraine crisis is driving up prices even higher.”

Experts had expected wheat from India to make up some of the shortfall from Ukraine, but last week the Indian government banned exports after crops in the country was hit by a heatwave, driving up the prices of some foods to a record high.

Even before the conflict, the WFP was providing assistance to millions across the region, in Yemen, Lebanon and Syria. Now, even as demands on its resources grow rapidly as a result of events in Ukraine, the rise in food and oil prices means the WFP’s own costs have escalated alarmingly.

“This is happening at a very difficult time for the World Food Programme,” said Etefa.

“Because of the war in Ukraine our global operating costs have been pushed up by \$71 million a month, reducing our ability to help those in need in the region at a time when the world is facing a year of unprecedented hunger.

“That means that each day, globally, there are four million people fewer we can assist with a daily ration of food.”

Opinion

This section contains relevant reference points, placed in (Opinion field)

Many countries in the region are heavily dependent on food exports from Russia and Ukraine which, thanks to a combination of disruption to farming, port blockages and sanctions, have slowed to a trickle.

Both Russia and Ukraine are among the most important producers of agricultural commodities in the world – in 2021, either Russia or Ukraine, or both, ranked among the top three global exporters of wheat, maize, rapeseed, sunflower seeds and sunflower oil.

Russia is also the world’s top exporter of nitrogen and other fertilizers, indispensable make-or-break ingredients for countries with significant agricultural sectors of their own.

In a recent report, the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization warned that disruption of harvests and exports in Ukraine, combined with the impact of

sanctions on Russian exports, threatened to create a “global supply gap that could raise international food and feed prices by 8 to 22 percent above their already elevated baseline levels.”

Economically vulnerable countries would be the first to feel the effects of a prolonged reduction in exports from Russia and Ukraine – and countries across MENA are directly in the line of fire.

The FAO predicts that “the global number of undernourished people could increase by 8 to 13 million people in 2022/23,” with the worst effects felt in the Asia-Pacific, followed by sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa.

“The region collectively imports 42 percent of its wheat, and 23 percent of the vegetable oil from Russia and Ukraine,” explained Etefa.

“In the month following the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine, the price of wheat flour, a staple in the diet of most families across the region, had already gone up by 47 percent in Lebanon, 11 percent in Yemen, 15 percent in Libya and 14 percent in the Palestinian territories.”

One of the countries most exposed to food shortages and price hikes triggered by the Ukraine crisis is Egypt, which has been struck a double blow. Egypt sources 85 percent of its wheat from Russia and Ukraine, and a large part of the country’s tourism sector is dependent on visitors from the two countries.

Back at the beginning of February, just before the Russian invasion, Egypt was already suffering from high global wheat prices and the government was considering controversial reforms to the expensive national bread subsidy scheme.

Under the scheme, which at 2022 prices cost the government \$5.5 billion, more than 60 million Egyptians receive five loaves of bread a day for just \$0.5 a month.

Regional governments are also keenly aware that in various countries spiralling food prices were linked to the uprisings of the Arab Spring – and in March this year protests erupted in Iraq against a big hike in the cost of flour, triggered by the war in Ukraine.

Indeed, warned Dr Bamo Nouri, a lecturer in international relations and honorary research fellow in the Department of International Politics at City University of London, “Iraqis may be the first in a global movement of protests over price rises as the Russia-Ukraine conflict continues.”

There had, he highlighted, “indeed been a trend in various Middle East countries where there has been little interest, with no particular stance on the Russia-Ukraine conflict.”

One reason was that in many Middle Eastern states, “the responsibility to resolve any given crisis is placed on the government, and unless and until it reaches ordinary the reaction or debate around it will be minimal.”

He added: "In the stable oil rich Gulf states, such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait, this may be justified, because the government has the means and the infrastructure in place to keep the domestic impact of any external crisis to a minimum ."

On the other hand, in less stable regional states, such as Iraq and Lebanon, "a large proportion of society watches outside events closely, because they are aware of the repercussions and try to proactively plan and manage the situation, because the government does not have the capacity to do so."

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Spotlight

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After peace efforts to end the war in Ukraine stalled, international agencies warned that the effects of the conflict, including supply chain issues and inflation, will worsen worldwide. AFP

MIDDLE EAST

Most Arabs don't care about Ukraine-Russia war: Survey

Despite direct economic consequences, 66 percent of Arabs have no stance on conflict

Jonathan Gornall, London

According to an exclusive Arab News-YouGov poll, the majority of people across the Middle East and North Africa do not seem to care very much about the war in Ukraine.

Experts, however, say there are plenty of reasons why they should. "It does seem like it is taking place so far away," said Abeer Etefa, the Cairo-based senior spokeswoman for the UN World Food Programme in the Middle East and North Africa.

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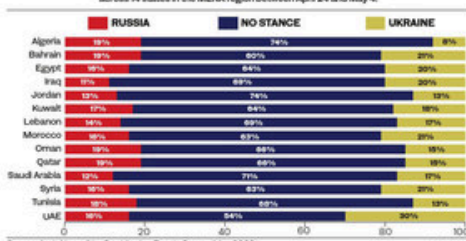
The complexities of European history and politics aside, "one key issue is that many people in the Arab world see this as NATO pitched against Russia," said Richard Gowan, UN director of the Brussels-based International Crisis Group, "and the reality is that you're not going to be able to turn around suspicions of NATO and the US in the Middle East and North Africa any time soon."

But shockwaves from the conflict are already affecting millions of Arabs, who are faced with rising costs of basic foodstuffs, said Etefa.

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WHERE DO YOU STAND IN THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT?

The Arab News-YouGov survey sampled the views of 7,835 people across 14 states in the MENA region between April 24 and May 4.



Source: Arab News-YouGov Ukraine Russia Survey, May 2022

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February food prices in many countries across the region had already reached an all-time high.

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In 2021, either Russia or Ukraine, or both, ranked among the top

three global exporters of wheat, maize, rapeseed, sunflower seeds and sunflower oil. Many countries in the region are heavily dependent on these exports which, thanks to a combination of disruption to farming, port blockages and sanctions, have slowed to a trickle.

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Economically vulnerable countries would be the first to feel the effects of a prolonged reduction in exports from Russia and Ukraine — and countries across

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"The region collectively imports 42 percent of its wheat, and 23 percent of the vegetable oil from Russia and Ukraine," said Etefa.

"In the month following the outbreak of the conflict, the price of wheat flour, a staple in the diet of most families across the region, had already gone up by 47 percent in Lebanon, 11 percent in Yemen, 15 percent in Libya and 14 percent in the Palestinian territories."

One of the countries most exposed to food shortages and price hikes triggered by the crisis is Egypt, which has been struck a double blow. Egypt sources 85 percent of its wheat from Russia and Ukraine, and much of the country's tourism sector is dependent on visitors from the two countries.

Regional governments are also keenly aware that spiralling food prices were linked to the uprisings of the Arab Spring — and in March this year protests erupted in Iraq against a big hike in the cost of flour, triggered by the war in Ukraine.

Indeed, warned Dr. Ramo Nozari, a lecturer in international relations and honorary research fellow in the Department of International Politics at City, University of London, "Iraqis may be the first in a global movement of protests over price rises as the Russia-Ukraine conflict continues."

Our YouGov Ukraine poll exposes deep Arab mistrust of the West

FAISAL J. ABBAS | EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

In 2017, Arab News, the Middle East's leading international English-language daily, formed a partnership with the online polling company YouGov to conduct a series of surveys designed to shed light on regional attitudes to international events, in a region where credible statistics can be hard to come by.

As "the voice of a changing region," we felt it incumbent upon us to take the pulse of public opinion in that region, the better to fulfil our journalistic mission to be a credible source of information about the Arab world for regional and international readers, and to provide insights about the Middle East and North Africa to English speakers worldwide.

Today, we report the results of our latest collaboration with YouGov: An examination of attitudes on the "Arab Street" to the conflict in Ukraine. The findings offer illuminating insights on the catastrophe unfolding on Europe's eastern flank that will reverberate far beyond the MENA region.

They suggest apathy and disinterest in the Arab world toward this atrocious conflict; 66 percent of respondents said they had no stance on the war, while those who did choose a side were almost evenly divided — 18 percent backed Ukraine and 16 percent Russia.

Most strikingly, perhaps, the findings lay bare the extent of the distrust of the West across all 14 of the countries covered in the survey. Almost one-quarter of the 7,835 people surveyed (24 percent) pointed the finger of blame for the conflict squarely at NATO, while more than one in 10 (13 percent) said US President Joe Biden was responsible. Only 16 percent blamed Russia.

This can be attributed in part to Russia's massive investment in its own news channels in Arabic, and to a massive online outreach effort. Even before the beginning of the so-called

"special military operation" on Feb. 24, a flood of material across numerous social media platforms, in several languages including Arabic, made the case that Russia was responding to NATO expansionism and acting only in self-defense.

But underpinning the widespread Arab skepticism on this issue is not so much the success of Russian propaganda, but rather the steady ebbing away of trust in the West over the past two decades.

The region and its people have witnessed the chaos and suffering caused by the "liberation" of Iraq and the subsequent rise of Daesh, the betrayal of the people of Syria and the abandonment of Afghanistan to the Taliban. As the Arab Forum Foundation co-founder Rashed Janahi pointed out at the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos last week, Iraqis are still paying the price for the failures of US reconstruction efforts that have left their country "effectively a failed state."

It is telling, also, that from a regional perspective, NATO and the US, currently in the form of President Biden, are seen as virtually one and the same.

This skepticism toward the West and its motives perhaps also informs the apparent indifference of Arabs to the conflict. Nevertheless, that an overwhelming 66 percent take no stance on such a major international event, with its enormous consequences for the wider world, betrays a worrying tendency toward isolationism that is simply not sustainable in today's global economy.

One issue highlighted in the survey that is close to our hearts here at Arab News is the level of trust in the media covering the conflict. Gratifyingly, with the support of 27 percent of respondents, Arabic media emerges as the most trusted, edging ahead of Western media with 21 percent. But in an era of information overload and rampant fake news, that a third of respondents expressed trust in none of the media reporting on the war should serve as a red flag to news outlets of all stripes.

Today, more than ever, trust in media is not a given, but must be earned.

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Study shows Arabs more likely to blame NATO than Russia for Ukraine war
Most Arabs distrust media coverage on Russia's invasion of Ukraine: Poll

[Study shows Arabs more likely to blame NATO than Russia for Ukraine war](#)

Mon, 2022-05-30 19:08

LONDON: In all but one of 14 countries surveyed in a special Arab News-YouGov poll on where Arabs stand on the Ukraine conflict, a majority of respondents who expressed a view believe the blame for the war lies not with Russia but

with NATO.

The only exception to this is in Syria, where blame is apportioned equally.

These findings highlight the gulf in perceptions of the conflict between the Arab world and Europe. A similar poll conducted by YouGov in Europe during April found that “an overwhelming majority of the citizens of EU countries attribute responsibility for the situation in Ukraine to Russia.”

This feeling was strongest in Finland and Sweden, where both countries are fearful of Russian expansion over their borders and are now anxiously contemplating joining NATO.

There, and in the UK, Poland and the Netherlands, more than 70 percent of people laid the blame firmly at the door of the Kremlin.

Among countries in the GCC, Levant and North Africa, although NATO is perceived more often as the party responsible for the conflict, the apportioning of blame is more balanced. People in the Gulf states, for example, blame NATO (23 percent) only marginally more than they do Russia (19 percent).

The perception in the Arab world that NATO is to blame for the conflict echoes the official line from the Kremlin, and Eto Buziashvili, research associate at the Atlantic Council’s Digital Forensic Research Lab, believes it can be attributed to a large extent to Russia’s digital campaign of disinformation.

“There is constant disinformation messaging coming out of official Kremlin sources on a range of social networks,” she said. “They have been blocked on platforms including YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, but they have also been actively using Telegram.”

“I observed that a few weeks ago they started to invest in video content, featuring the war in Ukraine, and have launched channels on Telegram that are running in more than 17 languages, including Persian and Arabic.

“This is part of the broader picture of Russian disinformation efforts around the war. Blaming NATO was the first narrative that came out of the Kremlin, which says it was NATO that was standing behind Ukraine that provoked the conflict.”

Tobias Borck, research fellow for Middle East security studies at London-based defense and security think-tank the Royal United Services Institute, says the finding also reflects a regional ambivalence toward NATO as a tool of the West.

“What has been experienced in the Middle East is that NATO – and by NATO, most people mean the US and the West – does what it wants. In this case, people see that Russia is doing what it wants, and think, well, what’s the big difference?

“The West has behaved in this way for years. It has gone and occupied Iraq,

for example, and now Russia is doing a similar thing in Ukraine. OK, it's not great that Russia is doing this, but what's the big difference, basically?

"So if the Russians are saying well, it's because NATO keeps expanding, then that's a narrative that resonates and mixes with anti-Western and anti-imperial sentiment in the region."

Across MENA, 13 percent of respondents to the YouGov survey say that US President Joe Biden is responsible for the war – possibly reflecting the inevitable conflation of NATO with the US, and the widespread negative view in the region of American military adventures across the Middle East.

Overall, however, 42 percent of respondents aren't sure who to blame.

In the view of the 7,835 people canvassed across the Middle East and North Africa, there is widespread agreement that Ukraine itself cannot be blamed for the conflict. No more than 8 percent of respondents in any country, and only 5 percent across the GCC states as a whole, felt Ukraine could be held responsible.

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Where do Arabs stand?



IMPARTIAL ARABIA

Poll finds that Arab street has no stance on Russia-Ukraine conflict

'Public opinion is about everyday life, the conflict is further away than issues that are more important and immediate'

Leen Fouad London

The majority of people in the Arab world have no stance on the Russia-Ukraine conflict, a striking finding from a region that has been directly economically impacted by the war, a new Arab News-YouGov survey has found.

Out of 7,835 respondents from the Arab world, 66 percent did not have a view on the Russia-Ukraine conflict, compared with 18 percent who sided with Ukraine, and 16 percent who sided with Russia.

"When you talk about public opinion, it's much more about everyday life, in that sense the conflict is further away, it's further away than issues that are

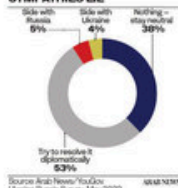
much more important and much more immediate," Tobias Brock, associate fellow and Middle East expert at the Royal United Services Institute, told Arab News.

"The conflict is, first of all, geographically further away than the war in Syria, or the conflict in Yemen, or the conflict in Libya or what is going on in Israel and Palestine right now," he said.

Brock, with Jack Senogides, recently wrote a paper on the implications of the Russia-Ukraine war for countries in the MENA region. In their paper, the authors explain that "most Middle Eastern states have been so slow off the mark in formulating their positions vis-a-vis Russia and its war."

Experts highlight that general Arab opinion might be echoing the perspectives of their respective

WHERE MENA SYMPATHIES LIE



governments, which also see the war as a European conflict.

The survey also reveals that the majority of respondents who sided with Russia came mainly from 4 out of 14 countries surveyed: Algeria (19 percent), Oman (19

percent), Qatar (19 percent) and Tunisia (18 percent).

Meanwhile in Jordan, respondents who did take a stand were divided equally (13 percent) between Russia and Ukraine.

Both Ukraine and Russia are among the top wheat exporters in the world (about 29 percent of global supply), and on which many countries in the Arab region depend. One would assume, for example, that Egyptians — who source 85 percent of their wheat from Russia and Ukraine combined — would be more opinionated about the conflict.

Among the Gulf states, 22 percent of respondents sided with Ukraine, compared with 15 percent with Russia. While the difference is somewhat insignificant, two Gulf states stand out for



favoring Russia over Ukraine, namely Oman and Qatar, both with 19 percent of respondents favoring Russia.

Oman and Russia have enjoyed good bilateral relations, particularly in the past few years as Muscat seeks to diversify its relations with non-Western powers. Trade between both countries have also increased

significantly, growing by 62 percent in 2018.

In early May, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visited Oman to discuss trade. The two countries have announced a wide package of bilateral agreements, including a mutual visa exemption program.

Oman did not take a concrete stance on the Russia-Ukraine conflict but affirmed its position that the two countries should reach political and diplomatic solutions through dialogue.

While state attitudes do not necessarily determine how the general public will side in a conflict, experts believe that sometimes public opinion mirrors state behavior, which might explain Omani stances on the war.

PERCEPTIONS

Study shows Arabs more likely to blame NATO than Russia for ongoing Ukraine war

Jonathan Gornall London

In all but one of 14 countries surveyed in a special Arab News-YouGov poll on where Arabs stand on the Ukraine conflict, a majority of respondents who expressed a view believe the blame for the war lies not with Russia but with NATO. The only exception to this is in Syria, where blame is apportioned equally.

These findings highlight the gulf in perceptions of the conflict between the Arab world and Europe. A similar poll conducted by YouGov in Europe during April found that "an overwhelming majority of the citizens of EU countries attribute responsibility for the situation in Ukraine to Russia."

This feeling was strongest in Finland and Sweden, where both countries are fearful of Russian expansion over their borders and are now anxiously contemplating joining NATO.

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"There is constant disinformation messaging coming out of official Kremlin sources on a



The view that NATO (left) is to blame for the war in Ukraine can be largely credited to a Russian digital disinformation campaign, according to research specialists.

Shutterstock

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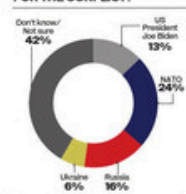
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IN YOUR OPINION, WHO DO YOU THINK IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONFLICT?



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Poll finds that Arab street has no stance on Russia-Ukraine conflict
Most Arabs distrust media coverage on Russia's invasion of Ukraine: Poll

[Trial opens of 4 accused of killing Sudan policeman](#)

Author:

Sun, 2022-05-29 23:20

KHARTOUM: The trial of four men accused of fatally stabbing a senior police

officer during anti-coup protests in Sudan opened in Khartoum on Sunday, an AFP correspondent said.

The judge ordered an investigation into allegations the four had been tortured in custody and adjourned the court until June 12, according to the correspondent.

Gen. Bareema was killed in January, according to authorities, one of two police fatalities during months of ongoing protests that erupted in the wake of an October 25 coup led by army chief Gen. Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan. According to medics, nearly 100 demonstrators have been killed in crackdowns against anti-coup protests.

Four protesters – Mohammed “Tupac” Adam, Mohammed Al-Fattah, Mossaab Al-Sherif and Ahmed Al-Nanna – were arrested and charged in January over Bareema’s death, and have remained in custody since.

In March, they held a week-long hunger strike in Khartoum’s Kober Prison to protest against “inhumane treatment,” “police brutality” and a lack of due process, their lawyers said.

Hundreds rallied in front of the courthouse to demand the release of the defendants, who made peace signs as they were escorted inside by security forces.

Dozens, including the policeman’s family, formed a rival protest to demand justice.

The October coup derailed a fragile transition to civilian rule set in motion by a power-sharing deal between the army and protest leaders after the ouster of former President Omar Bashir in 2019.

Since Gen. Burhan’s power-grab, hundreds of activists have been detained and at least 98 people killed in a crackdown, according to pro-democracy medics. Many of those have been shot dead by security forces, the medics say. Gen. Burhan has said some security force members “misused” their weapons during demonstrations, but no trials of personnel have been publicly announced.

Ahead of the trial of the four accused protesters, a local pro-democracy “resistance” committee said that the case amounted to “targeting revolutionaries with malicious reports to get rid of them” and “an assault on the revolution and its values.”

On Saturday, thousands once more took to the streets of Khartoum, where two protesters were killed.

In a statement, the police blamed the deaths on demonstrators’ “violent and unjustified hostility.”

UN special representative Volker Perthes said he was “appalled” by the latest deaths, tweeting Sunday that “it is time for the violence to stop” and urging Sudan’s authorities to lift an ongoing state of emergency.



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Sudan's military leader lifts state of emergency Sudan women's activist wins human rights prize

[Deadly nose-bleed fever shocks Iraq as cases surge](#)

Author:

Sun, 2022-05-29 23:13

NASIRIYAH, Iraq: Spraying a cow with pesticides, health workers target blood-sucking ticks at the heart of Iraq's worst detected outbreak of a fever that causes people to bleed to death.

The sight of the health workers, dressed in full protective kit, is one that has become common in the Iraqi countryside, as the Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever spreads, jumping from animals to humans.

This year, Iraq has recorded 19 deaths among 111 CCHF cases in humans, according to the World Health Organization.

The virus has no vaccine and onset can be swift, causing severe bleeding both internally and externally and especially from the nose. It causes death in as many as two-fifths of cases, according to medics.

“The number of cases recorded is unprecedented,” said Haidar Hantouche, a health official in Dhi Qar province.

A poor farming region in southern Iraq, the province accounts for nearly half of Iraq’s cases.

In previous years, cases could be counted “on the fingers of one hand,” he added.

Transmitted by ticks, hosts of the virus include both wild and farmed animals such as buffalo, cattle, goats and sheep, all of which are common in Dhi Qar.

In the village of Al-Bujari, a team disinfects animals in a stable next to a house where a woman was infected. Wearing masks, goggles and overalls, the workers spray a cow and her two calves with pesticides.

A worker displays ticks that have fallen from the cow and been gathered into a container.

“Animals become infected by the bite of infected ticks,” according to the World Health Organization.

“The CCHF virus is transmitted to people either by tick bites or through contact with infected animal blood or tissues during and immediately after slaughter,” it adds.

The surge of cases this year has shocked officials, since numbers far exceed recorded cases in the 43 years since the virus was first documented in Iraq in 1979.

In his province, only 16 cases resulting in seven deaths had been recorded in 2021, Hantouche said. But this year Dhi Qar has recorded 43 cases, including eight deaths.

The numbers are still tiny compared with the COVID-19 pandemic – where Iraq has registered over 25,200 deaths and 2.3 million recorded cases, according to WHO figures – but health workers are worried.

Endemic in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the Balkans, CCHF’s fatality rate is between 10 and 40 percent, the WHO says.

The WHO’s representative in Iraq, Ahmed Zouiten, said there were several “hypotheses” for the country’s outbreak.

They included the spread of ticks in the absence of livestock spraying campaigns during Covid in 2020 and 2021.

And “very cautiously, we attribute part of this outbreak to global warming, which has lengthened the period of multiplication of ticks,” he said.

But “mortality seems to be declining,” he added, as Iraq had mounted a spraying campaign while new hospital treatments had shown “good results.”

Since the virus is “primarily transmitted” to people via ticks on livestock, most cases are among farmers, slaughterhouse workers and veterinarians, the WHO says.

“Human-to-human transmission can occur resulting from close contact with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected persons,” it adds.

Alongside uncontrolled bleeding, the virus causes intense fever and vomiting.

Authorities have put in place disinfection campaigns and are cracking down on abattoirs that do not follow hygiene protocols. Several provinces have also banned livestock movement across their borders.

Near Najaf, a city in the south, slaughterhouses are monitored by the authorities.



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GCC chief condemns extremists, Israeli Knesset member for storming Al-Aqsa Mosque

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RIYADH: The Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council condemned on Sunday the storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque by extremists and a member of the Israeli Knesset under the protection of Israeli police.

Dr. Nayef Falah Al-Hajraf's condemnation comes as tens of thousands of flag-waving Israeli nationalists marched through the Muslim quarter of Jerusalem's Old City on Sunday.

Many marchers sang and danced as they wound their way through the streets. Others sought confrontation, chanting "Death to Arabs."

Al-Hajraf said the new developments were a flagrant violation and a dangerous escalation.

He stressed the need for Israel to respect the historical, legal and religious situation in Jerusalem, and called on the international community to assume its responsibilities to preserve the safety of Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest site in Islam.

The Secretary-General urged Israel to abide by its obligations as an occupying power in accordance with international humanitarian law.



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Clashes hit Al-Aqsa amid outrage over provocative Israeli flag march
Visit by far-right Israeli lawmaker sparks Jerusalem unrest