

UK aid supporting the fight against coronavirus in the Middle East

The United Kingdom is working together with countries across the Middle East to tackle coronavirus and protect the most vulnerable, UK Minister for the Middle East James Cleverly said today (22 May) as Muslims around the world celebrate Eid al Fitr.

He called, at this time of celebration and reflection, to consider how we have come together to address the unprecedented global challenge of responding to coronavirus, and continue to work side-by-side.

The UK has to date dedicated £764 million to the global fight against coronavirus. It is also leading international efforts to develop a safe, workable coronavirus vaccine that will be available throughout the world, and is the biggest country donor to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) to find one.

No one country can respond to the devastating impact of this invisible killer, which means the UK's long-standing partnership with the Middle East is now even more important. We are grateful for the work by regional leaders to combat coronavirus, making generous bilateral pledges to the regional and global effort to support healthcare systems and find a vaccine.

Communities across the Middle East are in need of humanitarian assistance, particularly those affected by ongoing conflict in Syria and Yemen, and in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Many people are also forced to celebrate Eid away from their homes whilst taking refuge in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and beyond.

The UK Government has pledged support of more than £30 million over the last few months to life-saving programmes across the region, providing essential medical equipment to treat critical care patients and train frontline medics. This is on top of the UK's funding to the many international agencies and charities providing direct support in this part of the world.

It will also tackle the wider impact of the virus and make sure people have safe access to water and sanitation, children can continue to receive an education and vulnerable families can buy essentials such as food and medicines.

Minister for the Middle East, James Cleverly, said:

"This has been one of the most challenging months of Ramadan the world has ever seen. I wish the Muslim community around the world Eid Mubarak. I am proud UK aid will provide life-saving support to people most in need across the Middle East and beyond.

"I am also grateful for the cooperation to-date with Gulf leaders to combat

the coronavirus, making generous donations, responding to global appeals, and funding vaccine research. Working side by side is the only way to stop this virus. No one is safe until we are all safe.

“Our strong partnership with our allies allows us to share expertise and resources to better tackle this pandemic so together we can stop its spread and help stop future waves of infection.”

To support the most vulnerable communities in the region in this crisis, UK aid in recent months includes £24 million to help people in Syria and £11.1 million the UK allocated earlier this month to help Iraq, Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territories to tackle the virus. If coronavirus is left to spread in developing countries, this could increase and prolong the spread of the virus globally.

At the Yemen pledging conference on 2 June, 2020, the UK is also expected to make a commitment. The ‘High-level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen’ will help to feed millions of Yemenis and reduce the impact of coronavirus.

The UK is also increasing the impact of its support through working with Gulf partners and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in the Islamic Development Bank’s Lives and Livelihoods fund. The £1.3 million support to date will help the poorest Muslim nations in the world, which are particularly vulnerable to the effects of coronavirus.