



**Rooted in Trust** is a global and local humanitarian response by Internews that aims to combat the spread of rumours and misinformation around COVID-19 in Lebanon.

Internews and its partner Maharat Foundation are collecting rumours reported across Lebanese social media in an effort to combat misinformation and to provide vulnerable communities with accurate information.

This rumour bulletin presents **four major rumours** that have been circulating within the community about COVID-19 during the past two weeks.

It is natural for conflicting information to spread during a new pandemic. Providing accurate information to the community is vital to combatting misinformation or misleading information, so people can better protect themselves and their community.

## COVID-19 SITUATION IN LEBANON

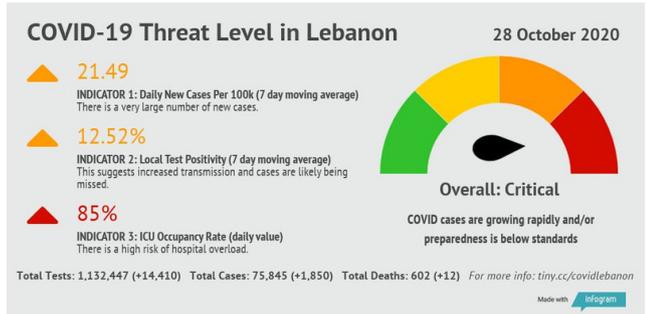
On February 21, 2020, Lebanon confirmed its first case of COVID-19. As of October 28, 2020, there have been 75,845 cases in total with 602 deaths.

The Lebanese health sector's response to the outbreak is increasingly hampered by the country's ongoing financial crisis, while trust in international and governmental institutions is at an all-time low.

Such an environment poses a heightened risk for the spread of misinformation and rumours around COVID-19.

*Rates of COVID-19 cases among Syrian refugees compared to overall rates per region, according to UNHCR on October 20, 2020*

Region	Case Rates	Percentage
Bekaa	221	18%
North	190	15%
BML	733	59%
South	103	8%



Source: Sara Chang, Lebanon-based public health and COVID-19 researcher

**Ministry of Public Health (MOPH)**

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**Hotline 1214**  
**Call Centre 01-594459**

**World Health Organization**

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**01-612970 | 01-612971**  
**01-612972**  
**(For COVID-19 inquiries related to symptoms and testing facilities)**

**Airport Quarantine Section**

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**01-629352**

For more details as to where you can access health care and consult on any COVID-19 concerns, contact the above numbers.



## WHAT'S IN A RUMOUR?

Rumours are unverified information collected from a first-hand source within the community that could take the shape of a question, criticism, or general comment about a situation or topic.

In this bulletin, rumours were collected as data points from across various platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp, by Internews and Maharat from September 30 to October 14.

## RUMOUR #1

**Home remedies and self-medications:** People are relying on home remedies that might deteriorate their health such as non-prescribed antibiotics.

**ANSWER** Antibiotics do not work against viruses, only on bacterial infections. COVID-19 is caused by a virus, so antibiotics will not be helpful.

On the contrary, the use of an antibiotic when there is no sign of a bacterial infection could weaken the immune system or interact with other medication.

According to WHO, there are no foods or drinks known today to be effective COVID-19 treatments. If a traditional medicine product is found to be safe, effective, and quality assured, WHO will recommend the medicine for fast-tracked and large-scale local manufacturing.

## RUMOUR #3

**Mistrust in PCR tests:** People are reluctant to take the PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test and believe many of the confirmed cases are false. One person reported to Internews that people in his area believed the PCR test causes COVID-19.

**ANSWER** A false negative or positive test result might occur due to cross-contamination or non-specific interactions with the testing swab.

Likewise, false negatives might occur if the test is performed in the early stages of infection when the person has a low viral load.

No tests have been invented yet that prove 100% infection of COVID-19, which indicates the importance of prevention, as screening and treatment is changing everyday due to the development of the virus.

PCR is still the most efficient test to detect COVID-19.

UNHCR fully covers testing and treatment for registered Syrian refugees who are showing symptoms across 7 hospitals in Lebanon: Rafik Hariri, Baabda, Halba, Baalbak, Zahle, Tripoli, and Saida Governmental Hospital.

## RUMOUR #2

**Border requirements:** Conflicting and hard to find information about entry requirements between Lebanon and Syria has caused confusion for Syrians and Lebanese looking to travel between the two countries.

**ANSWER** **Per the Lebanese General Security:** Aboudieh and Masnaa crossings are open for repatriation of Lebanese and Syrians with Lebanese residency) on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Lebanese nationals and Palestinian refugees can cross on Mondays and Fridays, and Syrians with a valid Lebanese residency or Syrian students in Lebanon can cross on Wednesdays. All other border control posts (BCP) are open during the week for people arriving for short periods of time who have had a negative PCR within the past 96 hours.

Testing will only be done for repatriates at the Aboudieh and Masnaa BCPs. However, anyone coming for a maximum of 48 hours does not require a PCR test.

People who exited Lebanon for Syria with a negative PCR result may return to Lebanon using the original test result if travel did not exceed 72 hours from the date the negative test was issued. They will undergo another PCR test at the Lebanese border by the Ministry of Public Health. People who test positive must quarantine for ten days, and then redo the test.

Syrians leaving Lebanon to Syria--both registered and unregistered refugees--may cross as long as they are carrying personal ID cards and a negative PCR test conducted 24 hours prior by a lab approved by the Syrian government.

-<http://www.mofaex.gov.sy/moh/pcr/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/syrianembassyLB/photos/a.108223377395529/193018028916063/?type=1&theater>

## RUMOUR #4

**COVID-19 is a hoax:** Disbelief in COVID-19 has been an issue since the virus was first confirmed in Lebanon.

**ANSWER** Sometimes, facts and figures about death and case rates are unsuccessful in convincing people of the severity of a sickness that many have not yet witnessed firsthand. Personal testimonials and first-hand experiences sometimes give a human face to an often faceless crisis.

In October, Campji, a grassroots media initiative run out of Syrian camps in Lebanon, published a series of testimonials from Syrians directly impacted by COVID-19: <https://fb.watch/1ocF-dEnOf/>