

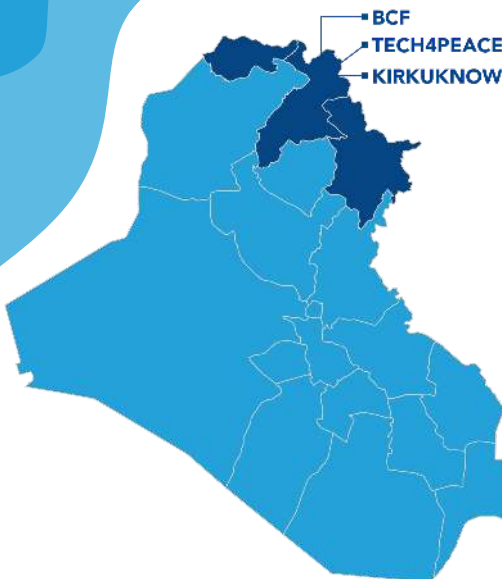
Community Bulletin

#3

Iraq
April 2022

Introduction to Rooted in Trust

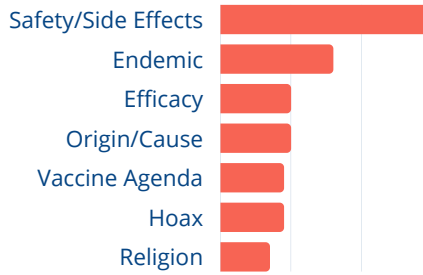
Rooted in Trust (RiT) is a USAID Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs (BHA)-funded project by Internews that aims at countering the unprecedented scale and speed of the spread of rumors and misinformation on COVID-19 health response and COVID-19 vaccines among vulnerable populations affected by humanitarian crisis. In Iraq, Rooted in Trust works with media, community-based organizations, and health and humanitarian actors to build a healthier information ecosystem that is responsive to the needs of internally displaced populations in northern Iraq, with the goal of disrupting and mitigating the flow of misleading and inaccurate information.



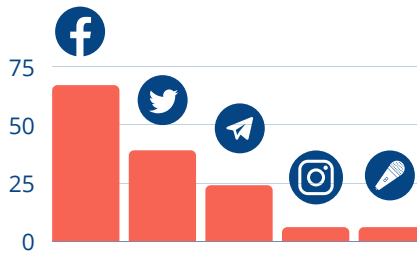
About This Bulletin

This bulletin provides humanitarian and health partners with the latest rumor data identified among internally displaced populations in northern Iraq. The aim is to guide and inform risk communication and community engagement efforts within the COVID-19 response. It profiles common rumors across social media in Iraq during April 2022. In total, 142 rumors have been collected. They have been categorized as #48 medium-risk, and #98 low-risk levels. Data were collected through in-person listing groups, various pages, groups, and accounts that have significant user engagement from Facebook, Telegram, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media platforms.

Top Rumor Themes



Rumor Sources



Methodology

In Iraq RiT 2.0 collects, manages, and addresses any instance of an online and offline COVID-19 Rumor in targeted communities and population groups of concern (Women, Disabilities IDPs,...etc.) in two local languages Arabic and Kurdish. Following the fact-checking process, rumors go through categorization, qualitative and quantitative data analysis, and then producing products to be shared with the target population.

COVID-19 situation overview in the country

According to the WHO, the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Iraq reached 2,324,982 at the end of April. In addition, 48 deaths have been reported during April, totaling 25,211. As of May 3, 2022, a total of 18,118,688 vaccine doses have been administered in Iraq. However, only 7,403,714 people out of 41 million are fully vaccinated. There is a low vaccination rate in Iraq, at 17.7%. Furthermore, the Iraqi Ministry of Health warns of the 'fifth wave' of COVID-19. Health authorities state a new wave of COVID-19 infections is expected to sweep across the country due to a large part of the population remaining unvaccinated. Moreover, Iraq faced another health issue in April, in which the Ministry of Health registered around 20 cases of hemorrhagic fever, also known as Congo fever, and there were six deaths.

18,118,688
Doses Administered



48
Death



5,625
COVID-19 Cases



Rumor #1

Theme: Efficacy

Fact Checking

- ✓ The rumor captured high engagement on social media indicating the decision was published on the International Court of Justice's official website[1], however, the link attached to the news is unofficial and does not belong to the International Court of Justice. Instead, the link leads to a site opposing several cases of Coronavirus vaccination. Also, based on the official website of the International Court of Justice, there has been no declared decision to cancel the corona vaccines and to prevent their manufacturing or sale.
- ✓ In the second part, the post claims that the United Kingdom has implemented the decision, which is not true. On the contrary, the UK government[2] continues encouraging people to comply with preventive measures and take the vaccine to avoid infection of the virus, similarly WHO[3] did not state abolition of the health protocol.
- ✓ There is no official source proving or validating the arrest of the executive president of Pfizer **Albert Bourla** or putting him under international legal prosecution.

Sources

1. Link to the official website of the International Court of Justice: <https://www.icj-cij.org/en>
2. United Kingdom government recommendations on Coronavirus: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
3. WHO Coronavirus guidance: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance>
4. Iraq: WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard With Vaccination Data | WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard With Vaccination Data

"*URGENT* The International Court of Justice rules the abolition of all forms of vaccination, manufacture, sale, and abolish the health protocol of the WHO OMS, and puts several personalities under international legal prosecution, including the Director-General of Pfizer on charges of genocide, and Britain is the first country to initiate immediate implementation."

Posted in Arabic on a Facebook public account. It had a total of 466 engagements on Facebook (274 likes, 152 comments, and 40 shares)

Recommendations

for outreach workers and communities

- The partner should conduct sessions with health actors (such as the Ministry of Health, Family Health Clinic inside Camp; Heevie Organization, and Zhian Organization, etc.) which are trusted entities among communities, and later conduct awareness sessions on this rumor and invite one of the trusted health actors to attend the sessions.
- Health workers must share the tailored reasons and accurate qualitative information and data which is available on the WHO webpage[4]; and be clear by highlighting positive experiences with the vaccine (personal or their practice), as appropriate, to reinforce the benefits and strengthen confidence in vaccination. Most of IDP community members have been vaccinated by Government or International Health organizations with either Pfizer, AstraZeneca, or Sinopharm. The partner confirmed that most of them are fully vaccinated while some of them feared taking the second dose of the vaccine or not taking the vaccine at all due to future side effects.
- Partners should conduct community events in IDP camps, especially with (community and religious leaders) to discuss and build trust between affected people and the health outreach workers.

Rumor #2

Theme: Safety/Pregnancy/Fertility



"There is nothing left of what I have said except that it has been verified literally. Covid vaccines target the genitals of women and cause abortion at frightening rates, and this is a very dangerous indication of targeting future generations with genetic modification. We count up to God from every unfair medical criminal that people have been implicated because of...
Shocking testimonies of specialist doctors"

Posted in Arabic on a Telegram public channel. It had a total of 10793 engagements on Telegram (51 likes, 42 comments, and 10700 views)

Fact Checking

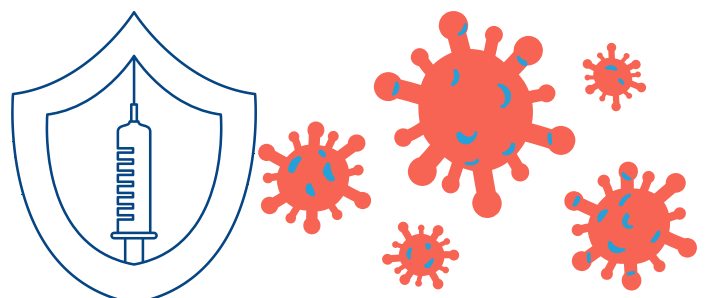
- ✓ According to scientific studies published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) the COVID-19 vaccine reduces the risk of infection and builds antibodies that protect the baby during pregnancy. The Covid-19 vaccines are safe and effective for pregnant women and their babies. According to the results so far there is no scientific evidence that vaccines interfere with fertility, either in men or women; and no risk was found[5] to the pregnant woman or the baby if vaccinated.
- ✓ Pregnant women are more at risk of severe COVID-19. Women are encouraged to get vaccinated while pregnant[6] where it is available in all health facilities in Iraq and IKR.
- ✓ **Dr. Enas Mustafa Hassan**, a specialized gynaecologist in Erbil, stated "Vaccines are safe for pregnant women and their babies, new scientific researches indicate that vaccination during pregnancy can help protect babies younger than 6 months old from hospitalization due to COVID-19 infection"

Recommendations for outreach workers and communities

- Partners should conduct sessions with health care workers and community leaders to find out what their hesitations are and turn the finding into a subject to arrange an engagement activity and invite an expert on the subject matter to advise and guide the community members and respond to their concerns with confidentiality to mitigate the misinformation. Also, to speak about how rumors impact vaccine uptake among women and vulnerable groups, that's where it would make a difference.
- Partners could arrange sessions to be led by gynecologists' for women in the IDP camps to inform participants that there is no evidence of adverse maternal or fetal conditions from vaccinating pregnant patients.

Sources

5. T4P: <https://t4p.co/article/2022-05-08-effect-of-covid-19-vaccine>
6. WHO link: Episode #41 - Vaccines, pregnancy, menstruation, lactation and fertility (who.int)



Rumor #3

Theme: Safety/Treatment/cure

Fact Checking

- ✓ During the COVID-19 pandemic, it was observed that people on social media promoted the use of alternative herbal medicine as an effective way to prevent getting COVID-19 by recommending different herbal supplements to the community.
- ✓ Cinnamon does not prevent COVID-19. Despite the general benefits of cinnamon on the body, there are side effects[7] of people under medications that can be adversely affected by taking too much cinnamon. Additionally, some conditions can be harder to manage or even get worse with too much Cinnamon.
- ✓ Cinnamon[8] can lower blood sugar and negatively amplifies the effects of medication for diabetes, lowering blood sugar too much. Also, the coumarin level in some cinnamon can interact negatively with medication that also affects the liver and increase the risk of liver damage.
- ✓ It's always best to talk to your doctor before taking any supplements, especially if you're taking other medications. To get the health benefits of cinnamon without having to worry about the hazards of coumarin, you can sprinkle a small amount of cinnamon on your food or occasionally drink cinnamon tea.



Sources

7. Episode #41 - Vaccines, pregnancy, menstruation, lactation and fertility (who.int)
8. https://www.cinnamonvogue.com/cinnamon_side_effects.html
9. <https://flo.health/menstrual-cycle/lifestyle/diet-and-nutrition/cinnamon-side-effects>



"Cinnamon prevents you from coronavirus"

Posted in Kurdish language on a Facebook public account. It had a total of 97 engagements on Facebook (90 likes, 6 comments, and 1 share)

Recommendations for outreach workers and communities

- Patients should approach doctors for consultation before taking any supplement as Cinnamon is a spice one, sprinkled on toast and lattes, specifically since there are four major types of cinnamon and the results of the study are difficult to interpret because it's often unclear what type of cinnamon and what part of the plant was used in the supplements.
- Partner should conduct awareness sessions with IDP and host community members to be led by expert doctors and having research, addressing cinnamon's side effects on health, indeed cinnamon has been spread out as an herbal treatment instead of being vaccinated.

Important Links and Helplines:

- MOH KRI website: www.gov.krd/moh/
- Self-Registration for Covid-19 vaccination: vac.health.digital.gov.krd
- Corona hotline: **122**



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