### Case Report:

# The Origin and Consequences of Sebiran Community COVID-19 Case

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### **Abstract:**

On March 2, 2020, the Ministry of Health announced four confirmed cases of COVID-19 with travel history. The health departments in Iraqi Kurdistan started to identify and monitor all individuals considered with close contact with confirmed COVID-19 patients. An individual who returned to the Sebiran community (in Erbil) from Iran on February 16, 2020, without announcing the authorities and later was tested positive for the coronavirus. The asymptomatic person behaved normally with other persons as a healthy person since his return. The health authorities reported that by March 24, 2020, 15 persons of this community had been affected among the first 200 tests. The confirmed cases were his wife and son (5 years old), neighbors who had close contact with the confirmed case, persons with household exposure, and community members with indirect contact with the case. The strict lockdown and curfew were applied to the Sebiran community for 14 days. Following March 24, 2020, no positive case was identified among the performed cases in the community. Accordingly, on 5/4/2020, the quarantine of the community was lifted. The success of the KRG is summarized in: timely quarantine, active surveillance/active symptom monitoring, and social distancing.

**<u>Keywords</u>**: COVID-19, Infection control, community confinement, public health.

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## **Introduction:**

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has spread quickly across China and several other countries and territories since its last occurrence in December 2019. It was declared to be a public health emergency of international concern<sup>1</sup>. On Friday, February 25, the Kurdistan Region's Ministry of Health announced that we take all necessary measures to prevent this new fatal virus within this region<sup>2</sup>. On March 2, 2020, the Ministry of Health announced four confirmed COVID-19 cases in the region. The cases had a travel history to Iran with close household contacts in the Sulaymaniyah governorate. They were a family of three members and a woman who just returned from Iran. Later, few confirmed cases of COVID-19 were announced in the capital

of the region (Erbil). Accordingly, the government closed all governmental organizations and the interconnected routes except for medical and security settings<sup>2</sup>.

In January, local Iraqi Kurdistan health departments, in collaboration with medical teams, started to determine and monitor all individuals with close contacts with confirmed COVID-19 cases. On March 16, 2020, an individual returned to the Sebiran community from Iran. This person did not inform the authorities and later was tested positive for the coronavirus<sup>3</sup>. He visited Iran for a preexisting medical condition of his son. He visited the Urology Unit of the East Emergency Hospital in Erbil for a renal medical condition on March 21, 2020. One of the doctors advised him to take the coronavirus test because he has returned

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from Iran before 36 days. He had no symptoms of the disease in the body, but he was tested positive for the COVID-19. The affected person had normal behavior with other persons as a healthy person. Accordingly, the health authorities performed the test for his family members. The tests revealed that his wife and son were affected by the virus so<sup>3</sup>.

### **Discussion**

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) had announced the curfew on 11 March 2020. The curfew was extended inside the cities of Erbil and Sulaymaniyah for 72 hours at 12:00 Sunday midnight, March 13, 2020. The government announced that "The final deadline for people's return to the Kurdistan Region is 12:00 midnight of Monday, March 15, 2020, beyond which all crossing points will be closed to travelers". In addition, the government announced that persons who have returned illegally to the Kurdistan Region from Iran must immediately report to medical centers. Failing to do so will lead to mandatory quarantine and prosecution under the law for the intentional spread of the virus and illegal border crossing<sup>4</sup>.

The KRG had imposed a lockdown and suspended all traffic within Erbil and Sulaimani cities on March 11, and it was extended by April 1 across Iraqi Kurdistan on Sunday by the Ministry of the Interior. Travel between towns and provinces had already been suspended, except for security vehicles and medical teams. The person who returned from Iran had not been quarantined. The ministry of health had announced that the person who returned from abroad between the first and fourteenth February 2020 must take a test of COVID-19<sup>4</sup>.

Being positive his test and family members for COVID-19, the health authorities decided to quarantine his entire town of Sebiran. The community is located in 9 km northwest of Erbil. The population of Sebiran community is 5,300 (1500 households). This community has 431 IDPs (108 households). The KRG decided to quarantine the community for 14 days in 21 March 2020<sup>5</sup>.

The government provided the required basic needs of the community. The government did not allow anyone to enter this community except for security forces and medical teams. On March 23, 2020, the Ministry of Health announced Sebiran community to stay at home. It announced that the persons who had close contact with the first case of Sebiran must report the medical teams. The official

affirmed that the security forces surrounding the compound would depart, but noted that the security forces would remain to continue to implement the ongoing curfew<sup>4</sup>.

Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) health officials placed Sebiran under quarantine to prevent further spread of coronavirus. Sebiran residents were not permitted out of their homes until the quarantine is lifted. Food and daily provisions were provided by the government and the Barzani Charity Foundation<sup>3</sup>.

The government decided to take the test of coronavirus for 200 persons weekly for 14 days. The health authorities reported that by March 24, 2020, 15 persons of this community had been affected among the first 200 tests. The confirmed cases were his wife and son (5 years old), neighbors who had close contacts with the confirmed case, persons with household exposure, and community members with indirect contact with the case. The affected cases were referred to the special health center in Erbil. The close contact with a confirmed case is the main way of infection by this virus<sup>6</sup>.

Following March 24, 2020, no positive case was identified among the performed cases in the community. Although he did not show any symptoms of the virus, he was able to infect others. Infected individuals can carry the virus for 14 days or more without experiencing any symptoms. The strict lockdown and curfew were applied to the Sebiran community for 14 days. Accordingly, on 5 April 2020, the quarantine of the community was lifted. The medical team performed 200 tests randomly following finishing the quarantine period and found no confirmed cases of COVID-19.

#### **Conclusions**

The success of the KRG can be summarized in the following measures; timely quarantine<sup>7</sup>, active surveillance/active symptom monitoring<sup>8</sup>, and social distancing<sup>9</sup>.

**Conflict of interest statement**: The authors do not declare any conflict of interest.

**Ethical Approval issue**: Not applicable. The information used in this study was collected from reports about Sebiran community documented in media websites.

**Individual authors' contribution**: The authors of this study had sufficient contribution to the data collection, review, and analysis.

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