

74 Million in Arab Region at Risk of COVID-19, Access to Clean Water: UN Report

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The UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) said Wednesday that 74 million people lack access to a basic handwashing facilities to prevent the spread of the coronavirus outbreak in Arab nations, EDNews.net reports citing Yeni Safak.

The Beirut-based agency acknowledged handwashing with soap and water is effective against the virus and said water demand for handwashing is set to increase between 9 to 12 liters per person per day, meaning an average daily increase of 4 to 5 million cubic meters in household water demand.

The situation is aggravated by inadequate piped water supply in 10 of 22 Arab nations, it added.

Highlighting that nearly 87 million people in the region also lack access to an improved drinking water source in homes, the agency said those obliged to provide water from a public source on a daily basis are subjected to greater risk of infection.

"An estimated 26 million refugees and internally displaced persons in the region are also at a greater risk of contracting COVID-19 due to lack of adequate water, sanitation and hygiene services," the statement said.

ESCWA said just 1 in 10 households has access to clean water in the Gaza Strip as it highlighted the difficult conditions Palestinians living under Israeli occupation face.

Since 2006, Israel has imposed a blockade on the Gaza Strip, where nearly 2 million Palestinians live, and many sectors have been adversely affected including the economy, health, and education.

There are 329 COVID-19 cases in Palestine and the death toll is two.

Globally, the virus has infected more than 2 million patients and has claimed an excess of 132,200 lives, according to figures compiled by the U.S.-based Johns Hopkins University.

More than half a million have recovered.

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