

COVID-19, lockdown, curfew and Ramadan

A word from the OIE Sub-regional Representation in Tunis, Tunisia

COVID-19 officially reached Tunisia on 2 March 2020.

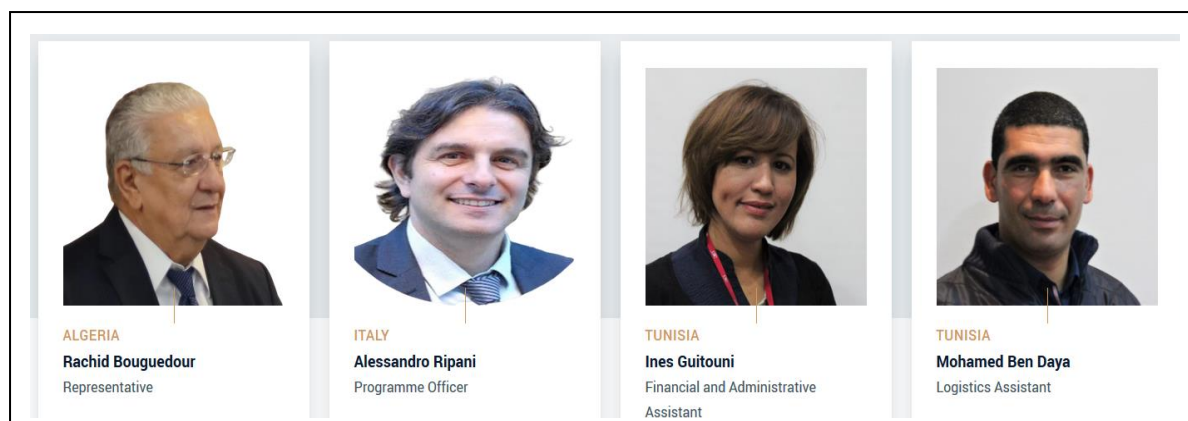
The major control measures implemented by the Tunisian Government were:

- a lockdown (except for essential activities, including Veterinary Services which have continued to operate)
- a curfew from 6:00 pm to 6:00 am starting from 18 March and from 8:00 pm to 6:00 am from 24 April (first day of Ramadan)
- isolation of suspected and positive cases
- compulsory quarantine for people arriving from abroad.

In this framework of rules, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Tunisia dispatched to the diplomatic missions (embassies and international organisations) operating in Tunisia instructions on how deal with the emergency situation in the country by inviting them to reduce the number of persons physically present in their offices.

In this context, OIE staff at the Sub-regional Representation in Tunis reorganised their working norms by allowing Ms Ines Guitouni (Financial and Administrative Assistant) and Mr Mohamed Ben Daya (Logistics Assistant) to work from home, coming into the office when necessary, while Dr Rachid Bouguedour (Representative) and Dr Alessandro Ripani (Chargé de mission) continued to work regularly from the office.

OIE staff in Tunis

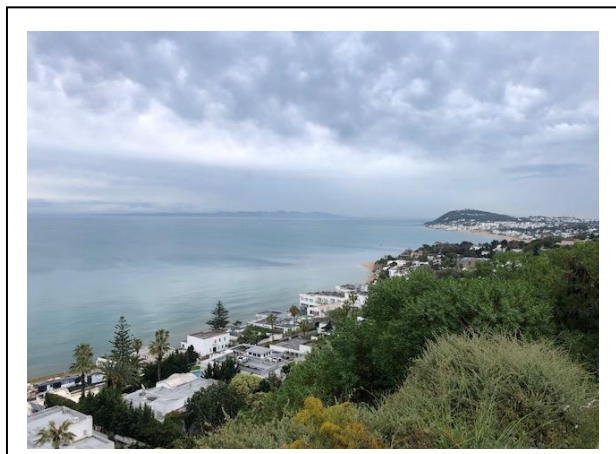


In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, the OIE Sub-regional Representation in Tunis has also been impacted by the month of Ramadan, which began on 24 April 2020. During this period, the working day for public administration is from 8:00am to 2:30pm on Monday to Thursday and from 7:30am to 1:00pm on Friday. The OIE Representation does not follow this schedule but it is impacted by dealing with local administrations that do.

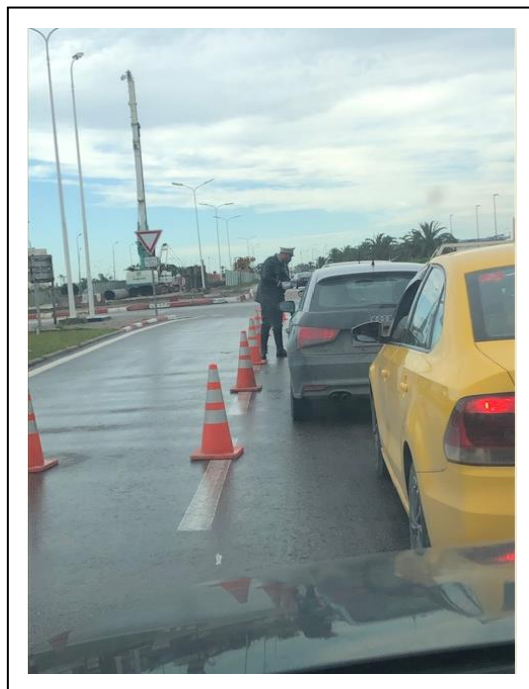


Lockdown also affected the shortage of coffee capsules in the country and, therefore, the coffee machine in the office is taking a well-deserved rest and is also fasting for Ramadan!

It was the end of April 2020, and another day (though unexpectedly cloudy) started in Tunis for OIE staff based in the Sub-regional Representation for North Africa under the lockdown and curfew rules



Gammarth view on the way to work. The city is located about 20 km north of Tunis



One of the police checks along the way at which citizens authorisation papers are checked



The entry gate to the OIE office in Tunis. Two dogs welcome us everyday and so far no COVID-19 clinical signs are evident



Office of Dr Rachid Bouguedour



The almost carless street in front of the office



In the office, control measures, such as social distancing and basic hygiene rules, are taken, but masks are not yet necessary indoors!!!

Office of Dr Alessandro Ripani

Daily working programme

Although physical meetings have been cancelled, online meeting tools are being used to continue priority activities, such as Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp, etc. In addition to that, the use of mail remains a useful way to continue communicating and working.



Several virtual meetings have been held using Zoom. For example, in the framework of the EuFMD work-plan 2019-2021 in support of REMESA, EuFMD organised a virtual meeting for the North African countries of REMESA (Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Mauritania and Libya) held on 23 April.

However, this experience has also shown the potential use of online meeting systems during driving. Because of the curfew, we obliged to leave the office by 5.00 pm to be sure to be at home by 6.00 pm. Recently, the Directors of Establishments for Veterinary Education around the Mediterranean organised a Zoom meeting at 5.00 pm. Therefore, I had to join the meeting on the way home. It was extremely easy to connect in the car by using a hands-free device. So, instead of listening music, I participated in a Zoom meeting!!



We thank our colleagues from the office in Tunis for writing this article.