Baghdad, Iraq (05 January, 2015) - The Ministry of Health in Iraq, in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), confirms that there is **no suspected case of Ebola Virus Disease** (EVD) in **Iraq** as of January 5th 2015.

On 31 December, 2014, Al-Sabah newspaper, Shafaq news agency and Rudaw online newspaper reported a rumor of EVD cases in Mosul, Ninewa governorate. The news was also relayed through other media agencies in and outside of Iraq.

Following this rumor, the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization investigated the allegations through existing surveillance networks, as well as through contacts with health authorities and medical sources in Ibn Sina Hospital in Mosul. All sources contacted have negated the existence of any suspected cases of Ebola. The Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization further confirmed that the laboratory facilities in Mosul do not have the necessary capabilities to diagnose and confirm the Ebola Virus.

The Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization remain vigilant and have scaled up surveillance efforts to ensure early detection and safe management of any eventual suspected EVD cases in the country. All necessary precautionary measures are being taken to ensure that effective preventive programmes are in place and that the people of Iraq are provided with all affordable support in case any EVD case is detected. The World Health Organization and the Ministry of Health have taken the following actions:

- Assessments of international entry points have been conducted jointly between the Ministry of Health, WHO experts and Health Cluster partners. It included international crossings and entry points like the International airports and ports.
- The Ministry of Health together with WHO are finalizing the implementation of the assessment mission's recommendations with a focus on strengthening the EBV preparedness and readiness measures.
- The surveillance efforts have been scaled up at all health facilities to ensure that any imported or suspected cases are promptly detected.
- A contingency and response plan is currently under development.
- Instructions have been issued to all governorate Directorates of Health (DOH) to be vigilant at points of entry.
- Regular information exchange between WHO and MOH on the status of the outbreak of Ebola in West Africa and in other affected countries is on-going.
- Recommendations were made to DOHs and other health authorities to reactivate taskforces at the Governorate levels for **any eventualities.**
- Communication materials and awareness raising messages were developed, and will be disseminated to all local media outlets and channels.

Facts about EBOLA

- Ebola virus disease; also known as Ebola hemorrhagic fever, or Ebola, is a disease of humans and other primates caused by Ebola virus. It is a highly infectious disease which presents with extremely high fever and bleeding tendencies. It is very infectious; and can be fatal within a short time but can easily be prevented.

- Signs and symptoms typically start between two days and three weeks after someone contracts the virus. It presents with extremely high fever, sore throat, muscle pain, and headache. Usually followed by vomiting, diarrhea and rash, along with decreased function of the liver and kidneys. Some people may bleed both internally and externally.

- Ebola can kill between 25 percent and 90 percent of those infected with the virus, averaging out at 50 percent. This is often due to low blood pressure from fluid loss, and typically follows six to sixteen days after symptoms appear.

- Ebola virus disease spreads by direct contact with body fluids, such as blood, saliva and sweat of an infected human or animals, and with a recently contaminated item or surface. Ebola does not spread through air between primates and humans. Semen or breast milk of a person infected with Ebola virus disease may still carry the virus for several weeks to months even after recovery.

- Other diseases such as malaria, cholera, typhoid fever, meningitis and other viral hemorrhagic fevers may have symptoms that resemble those of Ebola virus disease. Blood samples to confirm the diagnosis of the disease.

- There is no specific treatment or vaccine for Ebola, although a number of potential treatments are being studied. Efforts to help those who are infected are supportive; mainly through oral rehydration therapy (drinking slightly sweetened and salty water) or giving intravenous fluids and treating symptoms.

- The largest outbreak to date is the ongoing epidemic in West Africa, which is centered in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. As of 31 December 2014, this outbreak has 20,416 reported cases resulting in 8,004 deaths.