

Committee: Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee
Agenda Item: Protection of Human Rights During Pandemics
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A. Introduction

In December 2019 an outbreak of a disease caused by a novel coronavirus is registered in the Chinese municipality of Wuhan, quickly spreading to other regions of China and the world. Later, the World Health Organisation officially recognizes the novel coronavirus as SARS-CoV-2 and the disease is named COVID-19 (We encourage you to mainly focus on COVID-19 in the committee.). Until this day, this disease has escalated quickly, spreading to almost every country on Earth taking many lives along the way. Brave and hard-working officers of every field have formed a united front against this deadly disease. Therefore, various governments have taken measures of safety such as implementing lockdown, quarantine, and many other policies.

In modern society, the rights of people are being protected and supported by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the laws of states, created based on the needs of people and the Declaration of Human Rights itself. In difficult times like this, the protection of those rights is extremely vital due to its direct concern of valuable human lives. Pandemics have been a part of human history for many years and there is not a shred of doubt on our sides, that they will be a part of the future as well. Currently, we -humans altogether- are battling not one but two pandemics. One of them is COVID-19 which has been a part of our lives since December 2019 and the second is - although it is recognized as a global epidemic not a pandemic by WHO- HIV/AIDS. Both of these diseases have truly affected all parts of the world as COVID-19 alone has taken approximately 344.000 human lives.

Many communities in Europe, Asia, America, and beyond have had to adopt a vastly different arrangement of lifestyles despite their dynamic living standards. Therefore, many questions have arisen regarding the rights of those working in hospitals and places with high possibilities of infection such as public transportation vehicles.

B. Some of The Significant Human Rights

I. Right to Information and Freedom of Expression

Social media brings about many positive opportunities within itself and these opportunities can be used in the field of fostering the protection and the support of human rights yet it can be poorly misused. As a significant part of globalization, social media is a very suitable platform for the rapid spread of misinterpreted, mislead, and incorrect information. The statistical analyses have shown that usage of various platforms of social media has rapidly increased since the outbreak of COVID-19 and with this portion of increasing usage, a dilemma of sorts has arisen between the right to information and freedom of expression on social media.

Media Consumption In

How has your usage of the following changed?
% of "Increased Significantly" or "Increased Some"



II. Right to Health

The right to health is an inclusive and most certainly a vital right that applies to all human beings. Association of this right as access to hospitals and health care is correct although not exactly accurate. Safe drinking water, adequate sanitation and nutrition, a healthy environment, and working conditions are some of the substantial contents of the right to health.

The conflict between employees and employers has been visible in a wide margin of aspects of workplaces from worldwide companies to local businesses in terms of healthy working conditions which needs an immediate solution.

The capital city of Argentina, Buenos Aires, hundreds of protestors are in the streets demanding food and money to feed their children "It's not just any old cold. It's an illness we still don't

properly understand and I can see it's getting worse in Brazil” Oliveira, a 45-year-old metal worker, said of Covid-19, which has now claimed nearly 16,500 Brazilian lives.

During pandemics, the protection of the rights of healthcare workers is also essential. Working for a long number of hours with limited focus and receiving a small paycheck, the possible exposure of the deadly coronavirus, and working away from their families are some of the concerns that the healthcare workers all around the globe have.

Healthcare services, goods, and facilities must be provided without any discrimination. Non-discrimination is a key factor when it comes to human rights and its enjoyment to its highest attainable standards of health.

C. History

Before discovering medicines for the horrible diseases spreading through the countries and continents, quarantines were fairly common in ancient history until recent times. The very word quarantine is rooted in the Italian words *quarantena* and *quaranta giorni*, or 40 days, the period of time that the city of Venice forced passengers and cargo ships to wait before landing in the 14th and 15th centuries to try to stave off the plague.

D. Important Questions

1. Is there a difference between stay at home and quarantine?

Quarantine is designed to isolate someone sick or at least known to have been exposed to a contagious disease, whereas a stay-at-home order is meant to promote social distancing and thus lower the number of infections.

Quarantines have often generated tensions between protecting public health versus respecting individual rights. While protecting the general health and maintaining the number of infected persons controlled by encouraging people to stay at home.

Sadly, there have been protests and anti-lockdown activities in several countries (the USA coming first). The protests have featured picnics with no facemasks, blocked traffic near hospitals, protesters not obeying the social distancing rules.

Thus, the number of people attending these protests being more than hundreds are going to cause the lockdown to be extended.

2. Do Emergency Orders and Quarantines Violate Human Rights?

A state of emergency is a situation in which a government is empowered to perform actions or impose policies that it would normally not be permitted to undertake. A government can declare such a state during a pandemic, epidemic, or natural disasters. Such declarations alert citizens to change their normal behavior and order government agencies to implement emergency plans. States of emergency can also be used as a rationale or pretext for suspending rights and freedoms guaranteed under a country's constitution or basic law. The Corona Virus outbreak was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020.

3. Is Freedom of Expression Under Attack?

In some countries like China, Turkey, Egypt, Brazil, governments have targeted doctors, nurses, and journalists who've tried to get the word out about what's happening in their countries, Morocco, Jordan, Yemen, and Oman have suspended publication of all print newspapers. Turkmenistan is reportedly arresting people just for saying the word "coronavirus." Armenia, South Africa, and Botswana, among others, have put in place rules restricting misinformation about the virus, but the rules are so uncertain that they could be used to squelch any criticism of governments. In the Philippines, officials have arrested people demanding government relief.

4. Pandemic vs Globe

COVID-19 is disproportionately affecting the already vulnerable – particularly poor people and people of color – and exacerbating other longstanding issues such as gender-based domestic violence and

unsafe, overcrowded prisons and jails. Since social distancing and proper hygiene aren't quite possible in jails and prisons, they are now essentially deathtraps for the ones staying there.

5. What can you do?

This is a moment for organizing. People can sign online petitions for things like universal healthcare. They can help support robust, independent journalism. They can challenge government officials on social media. They can take part in in-person protests as long as they practice social distancing. They can vote.

E. Useful Links and Sources

<https://www.forbes.com>

<https://www.theguardian.com>

<https://www.numerator.com/resources/blog/update-impact-coronavirus-covid-19-consumer-behavior-us-6>

<https://www.who.int/publications-detail/addressing-human-rights-as-key-to-the-covid-19-response>

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/COVID-19.aspx>

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/human-rights-rule-of-law/covid19>

<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/Factsheet31.pdf>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pandemic#HIV/AIDS>

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/covid-19-coronavirus-outbreak-and-the-eu-s-response/timeline/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_the_COVID-19_pandemic_in_February_2020