



UN Monitor: COVID-19 Round-Up on Human Rights - 20-04-2020

The global impact of the COVID-19 crisis and the responses have raised a wide range of human rights concerns.

UN human rights experts and the UN High Commissioner have spoken out, collectively and individually, issuing statements covering the full range of civic, political, economic and cultural rights.

These can be found on the UN OHCHR website: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/COVID-19-and-Special-Procedures.aspx>

- Ms. Michele Bachelet, the **UN High Commissioner for Human Rights** has issued a statement saying: “Instead of taking action to increase the health response, some leaders are seeking to capitalize on people’s fear of COVID-19 by deflecting anger toward vulnerable communities like migrants—people already unfairly blamed for society’s ills.” [Read more ...](#)
- A group of over **60 UN Special Procedures experts** urged States to assist without exception to all during these times of COVID crisis and reminded that everyone has right to life-saving interventions. [Read more...](#)
- A group of **26 UN human rights experts** have urged States to avoid overreach of security measures in their response to the coronavirus outbreak and reminded them that emergency powers should not be used to quash dissent. [Read more...](#)
- A group of **57 UN human rights experts** have expressed grave concern at the multiplication of accounts of police killings and other acts of violence within the context of COVID-19 emergency measures. [Read more...](#)
- Mr. Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky, the **UN Independent Expert on foreign debt and human rights**, urged States to increase spending that targets inequalities and poverty caused by the COVID-19 crisis, and not just bail out corporations, banks and investors without human rights or social conditions attached. [Read more...](#)
- Mr. Saad Alfarargi, the **UN Special Rapporteur on the right to development**, reminded governments and international financial institutions to stay true to their commitment under the 2030 agenda and to their promise ‘to leave no one behind’ in their response to COVID-19 crisis. The statement is endorsed by 32 other human rights experts. [Read more...](#)
- Ms. Hilal Elver, the **UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food**, called for the immediate lifting of international sanctions to prevent hunger crises in countries hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. [Read more...](#)
- Ms. Leilani Farha, the **UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing**, said that as Governments worldwide are relying on people to stay home to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus, they must take urgent measures to prevent anyone falling into homelessness and ensure access to adequate housing for those without. [Read more...](#)

- Mr. Dainius Pūras, the **UN Special Rapporteur on the right to health**, cautioned governments not to fail to protect persons who use drugs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Seven other experts have also endorsed this statement. [Read more...](#)
- A group of **11 UN human rights experts** reminded States that COVID-19 will not be stopped without providing safe water to people living in vulnerability. [Read more...](#)
- Mr. David R. Boyd, the **UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment**, reminded States not to use COVID-19 as an excuse to weaken environmental protection. [Read more...](#)
- Mr. David Kaye, the **UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression**, joined international experts from the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights, and the Representative on Freedom of the Media of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe to urge Governments to promote and protect access to and the free flow of information—disrupted owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. [Read more...](#)
- Mr. Ahmed Shaheed, the **UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief**, expressed concern at the alarming rise in anti-Semitic hate speech since the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis and urged countries to monitor and condemn these. [Read more...](#)
- Mr. Clément Nyaletsossi Voule, the **UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association**, reminded States that responses to the COVID-19 threat should not halt these essential freedoms but instead should be in compliance with their human rights obligations. In particular, the Special Rapporteur has detailed ten key principles. [Read more...](#)
- Ms. Alena Douhan, the **UN Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of the unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights** called for the lifting of all unilateral sanctions that obstruct the humanitarian responses of sanctioned States, in order to enable their health care systems to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and save lives. [Read more...](#)
- Mr. Baskut Tuncak, the **UN Special Rapporteur on hazardous substances**, urged States and businesses to urgently step up their efforts to ensure that health care workers fighting the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide receive adequate protective equipment. [Read more...](#)
- The **Working Group on discrimination against women and girls** emphasized that governments must ensure women from diverse groups and backgrounds are included in decisions at the local, national and international level in handling the COVID-19 pandemic. The statement has been endorsed by six other special procedures experts. [Read more...](#)
- Ms. Dubravka Simonovic, the **UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women**, has warned the States of likely rise in domestic violence including its effects on women and children following restrictive measures advocated to fight COVID-19. [Read more...](#)
- Ms. Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, the **UN Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children**, and Ms. Najat Maalla M'jid, the **UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children**, have appealed to States to boost child protection measures to help safeguard the welfare of millions of children worldwide who may be more exposed to violence, sale, trafficking, sexual abuse and exploitation during the COVID-19 pandemic. [Read more...](#)

- Mr. Fernand de Varennes, the **UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues**, urged governments to redouble efforts for the protection of human rights and the promotion of equality and non-discrimination for all, including Roma minorities, in their fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. [Read more...](#)
- The **Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent** made an urgent appeal for Governments to commit to racial equity and racial equality in providing health services for all during the COVID-19 crisis or risk a higher death rate because of discrimination. [Read more...](#)
- Mr. Felipe González Morales, the UN Special Rapporteur on migrants, and Ms. Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, the UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, called on Governments to adopt urgent measures to protect migrants and trafficked persons in their response to COVID-19. [Read more...](#)
- Ms. Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, the **Special Rapporteur on internally displaced persons**, has urged States not to forget internally displaced persons. She said that States must immediately step-up their measures to protect the 40 million internally displaced people worldwide from the COVID-19 threat. [Read more...](#)
- Mr. Fernand de Varennes, the **UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues**, reminded States that exploitation of COVID-19-related fears by groups and politicians to scapegoat minorities is leading to an alarming rise in verbal and physical abuses against Chinese and other minorities, with some even being denied access to health care and information about the pandemic. [Read more...](#)
- Ms. Rosa Kornfeld-Matte, the **UN expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons**, called “unacceptable” the highest risks faced by older persons during this pandemic crisis and called for societies to exercise solidarity and better protect older persons who are bearing the lion’s share. [Read more...](#)
- Ms. Tendayi Achiume, the **UN Special Rapporteur on racism, xenophobia and related intolerance and the Working Group on peoples of African Descent**, stated that racism and xenophobia remain a global challenge. Forms of racial violence, exclusion, and hateful supremacist rhetoric continue to afflict communities, and structural and institutionalized forms of discrimination also remain pervasive. In this context, the human rights system provides a vital resource—principled and practical guidance on how to combat discrimination and intolerance. [Read more...](#)
- Ms. Catalina Devandas, the **UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities**, has warned that little has been done to provide people with disabilities with the guidance and support needed to protect them during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, even though many of them are part of the high-risk group. [Read more...](#)
- Ms. Daniela Kravetz, the **Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea**, urged the State to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading in its overcrowded jails by immediately releasing all political prisoners, low-risk offenders and others such as the sick and elderly who are particularly vulnerable to illness or death. [Read more...](#)
- A group of 13 UN human rights experts called on **Iran** to expand its temporary release of thousands of detainees to include prisoners of conscience and dual and foreign nationals still being held despite serious risk of COVID-19 infection. [Read more...](#)

- Ms. Rhona Smith, the UN **Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia**, warned that the Government's new state of emergency law in response to the COVID-19 pandemic risks violating the right to privacy, silencing free speech and criminalizing peaceful assembly warned. [Read more...](#)
- Mr. Philip Alston, the **UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights**, warned that poor people in **the United States** are being hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Government must urgently take additional steps to prevent tens of millions of middle-class Americans from being plunged into poverty. [Read more...](#)
- Mr. Michael Lynk, the UN **Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967**, has urged Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Hamas to live up to their international legal responsibilities by ensuring that the right to health is fully provided to Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, during the COVID-19 pandemic. [Read more...](#)
- Mr. Yao Agetse, the **UN Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Central African Republic (CAR)**, warned that the Central African Republic is struck by the COVID-19 pandemic and is heading towards a certain health disaster if hostilities do not stop immediately. [Read more...](#)
- Ms. Yanghee Lee, the **UN independent human rights expert on Myanmar**, has urged the country to allow free flow of information and aid to protect right to health in COVID-19 crisis. [Read more...](#)

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