Committee: Human Rights Council

Topic: Are Human Rights compatible with pandemic management?

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Position: Chairs

"Human rights are our bloodline; they connect us to one another, as equals.

Human rights are our lifeline; they are the pathway to resolving tensions and forging lasting peace.

Human rights are on the frontline; they are the building blocks of a world of dignity and opportunity for all – and they are under fire every day."

Antonio Guterres, February 2021

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of the viral disease "COVID-19" – first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. This disease had reached the level of a pandemic. The WHO called for governments to take urgent and aggressive action to stop the spread of the virus. The way this advice was translated in the eyes of the Chinese authorities was to imprison its citizens who revealed any aspect of the coronavirus spread in the country, as for the journalist Zhang Zhan who, reported Amnesty International, was arrested, tortured, and imprisoned without any specific charges. During the first weeks of the pandemic, hundreds of web users have been persecuted in China because of the information they had revealed.

Access to reliable information and freedom of expression are crucial in times of crisis, however the COVID-19 pandemic has put stronger pressure on civic space, journalists worldwide and overall, on Human Rights. Emergency measures taken by governments for the protection of public health have, in numerous countries, been used to extend governmental powers at the cost of basic human liberties including freedom of expression, freedom of association and freedom of peaceful assembly.

The growing intimidation of journalists and crackdown on dissenting voices in the Balkans, Eastern Europe, Central and (South)East Asia and southern America shows a continuation and acceleration of long-term trends of erosion of human rights and freedoms with an increasing control and restriction of access to information.

While the label of 'fake news' is often assigned to inconvenient information, purposeful misinformation has become a powerful tool in global as well as local politics. In several countries such as Hungary and Poland, laws are being amended or tightened, giving governments even more power to prosecute human rights defenders and journalists. The effects of enhanced surveillance measures introduced namely in China or Albania to monitor the spread of the virus are also of deep concern, endangering privacy and data rights and journalists' ability to protect sources. States must ensure that freedom of expression and media freedom are protected during any crisis.

Structure of the report:

I-Global consequences of COVID-19

II-Intensification of challenges to human rights

III-Control, tracking and identification tools

I. Global consequences of COVID-19

All over the world, the Covid-19 crisis is exacerbating pre-existing social, political, and economic problems rooted in structural inequality, exclusion, and injustice. In fragile and conflict affected countries the pandemic will be yet another crisis adding to those already afflicting these countries and their populations with potentially devastating impacts on vulnerable communities. Several may see this crisis as an opening to commit crimes with more impunity; fragile justice and peace processes could potentially break down and conflicts reignite.

As Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights recently affirmed, 'COVID-19 is a test for our societies, and we are all learning and adapting as we respond to the virus. Human dignity and rights need to be front and centre in that effort, not an afterthought'.

A. democracy

Democracy and the Rule of Law must not be victims of the coronavirus emergency. As governments are adopting measures against the coronavirus, a number are equally seizing the opportunity to ramp-up anti-democratic measures aimed solely at shoring-up their political agendas, stifling opposition and silencing critical overview. No emergency measures warrant a government to repress and deny fundamental rights and freedoms. Emergency measures, whatever their nature, must be necessary, proportionate and with clear sunset clauses.

Promoting democracy and defending democratic freedoms are fundamental to many States. Indeed, strong democratic institutions and accountable governments, uphold universal rights and the rule of law, are key building blocks for secure and prosperous States.

In 2020, several challenges faced democracy exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. There was further evidence of the retreat of democracy and a rise in authoritarianism. In 2020, the NGO Freedom House recorded a decline in global freedom for the 15th consecutive year. COVID-19 brought the interdependence of democracy and human rights into even sharper focus, with governments using the crisis to restrict civil liberties further and to entrench repressive measures.

Examples:

> ➤ In the USA there have been several cases of employers who stopped health workers from speaking out about workplace conditions with a range of reprisals, including harassment, disciplinary procedures, and unfair dismissal. For example, certified nursing assistant Tainika Somerville was fired in April from her role in a Bridgeview Healthcare Centre in Cook County, Illinois, after having filmed a Facebook live video stream two days earlier that shows her reading out a petition at her workplace from her and other workers about the lack of personal protective equipment in the facility.

Of great concern are the democracies that have responded to the pandemic with repressive measures.

Examples:

> ➤ A proposed law in Brazil, intended to counter "fake news" about the coronavirus, threatens to stifle free expression and invade privacy.

'In Poland, two activists were arrested in June and face possible sentences of up to 10 years in jail on trumped up charges of "theft and burglary" for putting up posters accusing the government of manipulating COVID-19 statistics.'

POLAND: Protest outside Police Headquarters in Warsaw against arrest of two polish activists who organised a poster action   © Agata Kubiś / OKO.press

- India's government started using a new tracking app in April aimed at curbing the spread of COVID-19, but some fear it could be used as a tool of mass surveillance under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has a track record of stifling dissent, judicial independence and press freedom since his election in 2014.

- In Chile, authorities are trying to censor the use of art to criticize police violence and express support for health professionals by suing an art troupe on the grounds of inciting hate against the national police force

B. dictatorship

According to the Freedom House report, the condition of democracy and human rights has grown worse in more than 80 countries. As the vaccination campaign is advancing worldwide, although in a patchy way, civil society organizations and activists in countries led by authoritarian regimes face new challenges of coping with the consequences of the accelerated illiberal agenda of their countries' leaders. During the last one and a half years, one could observe how authoritarian leaders introduced excessive control and surveillance, discriminatory restrictions on freedom of assembly, movement, and speech, often enforced by police or the military.

Several countries are taking advantage of the current COVID-19 global pandemic to implement repressive measures under cover of "public health protection." These actions are taking place in the context of 14 years of democratic decline, according to Freedom House, and a resurgence of authoritarianism. According to the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index, more countries have declined in their fundamental rights score than any other rule of law factor both over the last year and the last five years. Further, in the 18-24 months leading up to the pandemic, there has been an explosive rise in the use of digital media globally (and not always for a positive purpose), a rise in transnational corruption and kleptocracy, and continued lack of confidence in democracy with expectations for economic growth and security not being met. The COVID-19 pandemic has added fear to these other uncertainties, making it easier for some leaders to use the crisis as an excuse to expand their authority and repress their people. While popular protests against authoritarian rulers (from Russia and Hong Kong to Algeria and Iraq) were quieted during the early months of the pandemic, in Belarus and other places, the popular demand for accountability has since returned.

Examples:

- In Egypt, at least nine doctors have been arrested and sanctioned for criticizing their government's response to the pandemic.

- A constitutional law professor at Tsinghua University in Beijing was detained for six days and then fired from his job after criticizing the Chinese government's handling of the pandemic.

Further, more than 70 elections in all regions of the world have been postponed. Some of these postponements are legitimate in the context of the pandemic and have since taken place, but others seem to have been postponed for political expediency. Technologies such as digital surveillance and contact tracing pose the risk of being used for non-pandemic purposes as well, leading to loss of privacy if not properly controlled. In the most extreme cases, emergency decrees restricting freedoms without any end dates have been passed.

Example:

- Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte pushed a bill through parliament last March granting him emergency powers which allowed him to reallocate the country's budget, as well as direct its hospitals.

"The public health crisis provides authoritarian governments with an opportunity to implement the notorious "shock doctrine" – to take advantage of the fact that politics are on hold, the public is stunned, and protests are out of the question, to impose measures that would be impossible in normal times," Deloire added. "For this decisive decade to not be a disastrous one, people of goodwill, whoever they are, must campaign for journalists to be able to fulfil their role as society's trusted third parties, which means they must have the capacity to do so."

Example:

> The situation with Covid-19 in Belarus has been even more complicated. Since the beginning of the pandemic, Alexandre Lukashenko, the country's long-standing autocratic leader, denied the seriousness of the threat. The medical professionals who spoke up about the danger of the pandemic faced repercussions to various extents. When an unprecedentedly large wave of peaceful protests swept the country after the contested August 9 re-election of Lukashenka, the medical workers took to the streets. This time not only did they have to take care of people suffering from Covid-19, but also of numerous victims of brutal police violence. Since then, there has been an ongoing crackdown on healthcare workers, including multiple arrests, imposed fines, and administrative charges. Numerous doctors and nurses have been fired due to their political views.

Denying growing numbers and having claimed several times that Belarus has overcome Covid-19, Lukashenko at the same time blames the protesters for creating obstacles for the authorities to prevent the spread of the pandemic whenever it serves his purposes. It is worth noting that the protesters usually wear masks and try to keep social distance, while in detention they are being held in overcrowded cells against all sanitary norms. Similarly, the Covid-19 restrictions were also used not to allow independent international observers to be present at the presidential election polling places or to prevent human rights lawyers from visiting civil society activists in detention.

Opposition supporters parade through the streets during a rally to protest the country's presidential inauguration in Minsk on September 27, 2020. © TUT.BY, AFP

The Covid-19 pandemic provided authoritarian governments with a dangerous combination of increased surveillance and civil liberties restrictions partially justified, for the frightened public, by the stressed needs for public safety and "greater societal good". Civil society organizations and activists, political opposition to the ruling regime, and human rights defenders have often suffered greatly from this situation and continue to face consequences of limited rights and freedoms. Yet, the closure of the borders dictated by the pandemic increases the sense of isolation of the citizens of authoritarian states.

II.   Intensification of challenges to human rights

The digital transformation has brought the media to their knees in many countries. Falling sales, the collapse in advertising revenue and the increase in production and distribution costs linked above all to increases in the price of raw materials have forced news organisations to restructure and lay off journalists. These economic problems have social consequences and an impact on the editorial freedom of media around the world. Newspapers that are in a much weaker economic situation are naturally less able to resist pressure.

The economic crisis has also accentuated the phenomena of ownership concentration and, even more, conflicts of interest, which threaten journalistic pluralism and independence. The acquisition of Central European Media Enterprises (CME) by the Czech Republic's wealthiest billionaire has alarmed several Eastern European countries where CME controls influential TV channels. The consequences of concentration are being felt in Argentina and in Asia. In Japan, newsrooms are still heavily influenced by their bosses in the "keiretsu," the media-owning conglomerates that put business interests first.

A. How to protest during a global pandemic?

Hundreds of thousands of people have protested issues ranging from racism and corruption, to disputed exam and election results. But 2020 has also been different from previous years for one obvious reason - the protests have been held at a time of a global pandemic.

In many places, large gatherings, including protests, have been banned and people have been arrested, accused of breaking lockdown rules at demonstrations. Meanwhile, others have opted not to take part in protests because of fears they could catch or spread coronavirus. Protesters and activists have also faced criticism for gathering during a pandemic, with opponents calling them irresponsible or foolish.

Governments around the world have taken different approaches to protests:

> ➢ Following Floyd's death, some UK government and police officials warned people against protesting. Prime Minister Boris Johnson said people had a right to protest but should do so "in accordance with the rules on social distancing".

> ➢ In the US, protesters in cities including Washington DC, New York and Boston were urged to seek coronavirus tests.

> ➢ Israel has been banning mass demonstrations, citing the risk of transmission.

The pandemic has led some activists to get creative in finding ways of protesting without the need for social contact. Indian climate activist Disha said she and fellow campaigners have moved more of their focus online, where they have found that it is easier to mobilise support. At the protest earlier this year, they encouraged people to make banners and hang them from their houses or along the street so that their messages could be seen without having to attend a gathering. While online activism has long been an important complement to real-life action, with public gatherings off the table many activists are making it a much more central aspect of their activities.

Example:

> ➢ In Hong Kong pro-democracy protesters have been gathering signatures for an online petition, and organized Hong Kong's largest-ever medical workers strike, with more than 9,000 health professionals refusing to work until the government improved its coronavirus response.

> ➢ In Brazil, millions of people are participating in a massive nonviolent action against President Jair Bolsonaro by coming to their windows at a specified time and banging

>   pots and pans together.

On a more strategic level, movements have also used the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to provide services for the general population, to be proactive on health and safety even when governments refuse to and to reveal inequities in the existing health and economic systems.

Examples:

➢ In the Democratic Republic of Congo, where the health system has finally gotten under control a series of deadly Ebola outbreaks, the citizen's movement LUCHA has urged the government to strengthen its response to COVID-19. These measures include the creation of provincial-level committees of public health experts equipped with adequate resources to address the crisis and ensuring everyone's access to water and hygienic products.

➢ In Nicaragua, a coalition of movements working to bring democratic change, has created a coronavirus emergency committee after criticizing the government for their insufficient response to the crisis.

➢ In Senegal, social movements have also pressured the government to increase the robustness of its response, and launched a campaign to improve social solidarity to fight the virus. Y'en a Marre, a group of Senegalese rappers, students, and other youth, released a music video spreading awareness about the virus and necessary safety precautions.

Screenshot of the Senegalese music group Y'en a Marre about Covid prevention
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=06YbY1MLp4A&t=128s

B. Freedom of speech: a Stranded Human Right?

At least 83 governments worldwide have used the Covid-19 pandemic to justify violating the exercise of free speech and peaceful assembly, according to Human Rights Watch. Authorities have attacked, detained, prosecuted, and in some cases killed critics, broken up peaceful protests, closed media outlets, and enacted vague laws criminalizing speech that they claim threatens public health. The victims include journalists, activists, healthcare workers, political opposition groups, and others who have criticized government responses to the coronavirus.

"Governments should counter Covid-19 by encouraging people to mask up, not shut up," said Gerry Simpson, associate crisis, and conflict director at Human Rights Watch. "Beating, detaining, prosecuting, and censoring peaceful critics violates many fundamental rights, including free speech, while doing nothing to stop the pandemic."

Human Rights Watch reviewed national government responses around the world to the Covid-19 pandemic and found that unlawful interference with free speech has been one of the most common forms of overreach. In some countries, violations were limited. In others, such as China, Cuba, Egypt, India, Russia, Turkey, Venezuela, and Vietnam, government violations affected hundreds or thousands of people.

In some countries, including Bangladesh, China, and Egypt, people remain in detention at the time of writing simply for criticizing government responses to Covid-19 months earlier.

Human Rights Watch identified the following trends:

- Authorities in at least 51 countries have used laws and regulations adopted to prevent the spread of Covid-19, as well as counterterrorism and other measures pre-dating the pandemic, to arbitrarily arrest, detain, and prosecute critics of government responses to the coronavirus, or of policies unrelated to the pandemic, resulting in fines and imprisonment. Those targeted include journalists, bloggers and others posting online, opposition figures and activists, protesters, academics, healthcare workers, students, lawyers, cartoonists, and artists.

- Using the new laws, laws pre-dating the pandemic, or without citing any laws, at least 33 governments have threatened critics, in some cases with prosecution, if they criticize the authorities' response to the pandemic.

At least 52 governments have prevented Covid-19-related reporting by enacting laws and regulations criminalizing forms of media coverage that they deem undesirable. They have also warned government critics to refrain from contradicting the authorities' response, blocked specific reports, and shut down media outlets.

C. Access to information and beyond

Around the world, people of Asian descent have been subjected to xenophobia, stigmatization and racist attacks. Moreover, many States have now imposed extensive travel restrictions or even blanket travel bans; some have gone as far as using the COVID-19 pandemic as a pretext to promote their xenophobic and anti-asylum agenda and have now shut down their borders to refugee claimants, thereby flouting the right of anyone to seek asylum from persecution in other countries.

In a frontal attack against women's human rights, in Texas and Ohio, the authorities have moved to ban healthcare providers from performing abortions in most circumstances – purporting to do so to respond to the global COVID-19 crisis. There is also a world of false information on COVID-19. For instance, Indonesia's health minister suggested that Islamic prayers shielded people from the virus.

Mistrust of media outlets suspected of broadcasting or publishing news contaminated by unreliable information continues to grow. According to the Edelman Trust Barometer, which studies the public's trust in institutions, 57% of the people polled in its latest international survey thought the media they used were contaminated with untrustworthy information. Undermined by this crisis of trust, journalists become the targets of the public's anger during big street protests taking place in many parts of the world, including Iraq, Lebanon, Chile, Bolivia, and Ecuador, as well as in France, where journalists are also the victims of police violence. In another increasingly visible phenomenon, nationalist or far-right activist groups have openly targeted journalists in Spain, Austria, Italy, and Greece, while the Taliban in Afghanistan and some Buddhist fundamentalists in Myanmar have no qualms about using violence to impose their world vision on the media.

An indigenous woman shows a portrait of Cristina Bautista Taquinas, an indigenous leader killed by illegal armed groups, during a march in Cali, Colombia, June 2020. Photograph: Pablo Rodriguez/EPA

III.   Control, tracking and identification tools

As the COVID-19 pandemic struck, Artificial Intelligence (AI) quickly became central to the fight against the virus. From diagnosis to drug development, from forecasting the disease's spread to monitoring and surveillance of the population, the tools of AI were called upon to address the scale and scope of the pandemic.

A. Human Rights challenged

Tech companies, governments, and international agencies have all announced measures to help contain the spread of the COVID-19. Some of these measures impose severe restrictions on people's freedoms, including to their privacy and other human rights. Unprecedented levels of surveillance, data exploitation, and misinformation are being tested across the world.

Many of those measures are based on extraordinary powers, only to be used temporarily in emergencies. Others use exemptions in data protection laws to share data.

Some may be effective and based on advice from epidemiologists, others will not be. But all of them must be temporary, necessary, and proportionate. It is essential to keep track of them. When the pandemic is over, such extraordinary measures must be put to an end and held to account.

- Immunity passport

Since the late 1980s governments across the world have been trying to build identity registries and by the mid-90s ID cards became a 'modern' policy, implementing smart cards and by the time of 9/11 biometric IDs became the preferred solution to undefinable problems. Then came vast databases of biometrics to identify people — with biometric passports leading to biometric border systems, with digital patient records creating e-health systems, with centralisation and automation of access public services leading to digital welfare programmes, to name a few - leading to some of the world's largest biometric databases, as well as other technologies that can be used to track and profile individuals and communities.

Identity systems create risks for those who have access to an ID, as well as those who don't. These systems can exclude: for all the claims of universality, there will be some people who do not have access to an ID, or those who cannot use their ID, and are denied access to goods and services. ID systems can exploit: they link together diverse sets of information about an individual, and allow tracking and profiling. ID systems can give the state and private sector a 360-degree view of the person.

The risks to individuals and communities emerging from this are huge. Immunity passports are essentially restricting the liberties of individuals on the basis of their "immunity" status, or lack of it. The concerns observed are when it comes to identity including exclusion and discrimination, the exploitation of people's data, surveillance of people, and mission creep all apply to the concept of immunity passports.

Example:

➢ The decision of Chile to not deploy immunity passports out of concerns it would lead to discrimination and disadvantage those applying for jobs clearly illustrates what could potentially go wrong, and the need to weigh the benefits and harms. And yet others are pushing through with their plans including in the US and the UK, amongst others, and the concept is being driven by industry-academic fora, the digital ID industry. visionaries of a world driven by identification and the travel industry.

- <u>Quarantine enforcement and Covid-19</u>

Quarantining is a significant interference with rights, which is why it is only recommended to be done under the advisement of health professionals.

In the context of Covid-19, quarantining is now being done based on profiles.

Examples:

➢ In Hong Kong, authorities are requiring the use of a bracelet and an app for all travellers.

➢ South Korea's app uses GPS to track locations to ensure against quarantine breach, sending alerts if people leave designated areas.

➢ Thailand is using an app and SIM cards for all travellers to enforce their quarantine.

Lower-tech solutions are also being used.

➢ India is stamping the hands of people arriving at airports to specify the duration of their quarantines.

➢ In Serbia, the police and military will reportedly monitor people in quarantine.

➢ Vietnam is using a network of informants.

➢ And public shaming is another form: in Montenegro social media users have been publicly naming patients.

- <u>Using Personal Location Data</u>

Many countries are using cell phone data to track people's movements in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Austria, Belgium, Italy, the UK and Germany are all reportedly gathering anonymized or aggregated location data from telecom companies.

Other countries are using cell phone data but without the added protections of anonymization or aggregation. For instance, media reports suggest that Ecuador's government has authorized GPS tracking to enforce compliance to quarantine. The Israeli authorities' move to permit the security service to use cell phone data of infected persons has already raised privacy concerns. This system is apparently already operational, with 400 people recently receiving SMS messages warning them of potential contact with infected persons.

In South Korea, authorities have been sending health advisory texts which have been accompanied with personal details of infected patients, including hyperlinks which open to detailed data about their movements. This measure has raised alarm bells because it breaches medical confidentiality and fuels stigma against people with the virus. It does not appear to meet the conditions required for surveillance to be lawful and is a violation of the right to privacy.

These measures raise important questions about how personal information is collected, used, and shared. Once personal data is collected, there is a real danger of it being shared and used for purposes other than health tracking.

- <u>Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Big Data</u>

Several states are turning to AI and big data technologies to combat COVID-19. China is reportedly using a mix of 'smart' thermal scanners and facial recognition technologies in public places to track the spread of the virus. Chinese tech giant Alibaba has rolled out a health tracking feature that uses data about personal health and assigns a colour-coded health status to an individual. This system is used to determine people's access to public spaces. Worryingly, the app shares this data with law enforcement authorities.

In Poland, the government has rolled out an app intended to ensure compliance with home quarantining. It reportedly sends prompts for selfies to be uploaded, which are then verified using facial recognition and location data to ensure that the person hasn't violated quarantine orders. Similar apps are reportedly being rolled out in other countries, including one in India which seeks geo-tagged selfies.

AI technologies could also increase the possibility of unlawful discrimination and may disproportionately harm already marginalized communities. Many of the technologies being deployed use opaque algorithms with biased data and using these in decision-making entrenches discrimination against certain groups.

- Private Surveillance Companies

While public-private collaborations can provide necessary creative solutions to deal with health crises, many governments are turning to surveillance companies with deeply worrying human rights records.

For instance, controversial surveillance vendors Clearview AI and Palantir are reportedly in talks with US authorities. The Israeli surveillance company NSO Group, which has a history of selling to abusive governments, is now selling a big data analysis tool which claims to track the spread of the disease by mapping people's movements.

Like NSO Group, many surveillance companies have a history of operating in the shadows and have remained unaccountable for their human rights abuses.

It is critical that companies involved in the fight against COVID-19 identify, prevent, mitigate, and account for any human rights risks that may arise from the pandemic context with regard to their operations, products and services. Companies must not use the COVID-19 crisis to evade their human rights responsibilities.

B. Protecting Human Rights

Countries should pay particular attention to the following aspects when using technological tools which process personal data to combat the pandemic:

- The need for a time limit (applied to the retention period of all collected personal data) and legal sunset clauses.

- Proportionality of the measures taken and ongoing assessment of the proportionality considering the effective results of the measures (with the possibility to withdraw the measure where there is no concrete evidence of its benefits);

- Cooperation with the national data protection authority, at early stages of the design of the processing, as well as at later stages (for example to process the feedback on a data protection impact assessment or an enforcement action).

- Transparency of the data processing operations, especially for automated tracing tools (this notably includes the publication of the source code of the software, of impact assessments and security audits).

- Accountability of data controllers, integration of privacy by design, realisation of data protection impact assessments of the processing and relevant security measures.

Greater awareness and compliance with those requirements contribute to increase the trust that individuals place in their governments and acceptance of the measures adopted in the general interest.

The role of international organisations such as the Council of Europe is essential in recalling the path to take, issuing recommendations and guidance, enabling exchange of information and best practices.

The way the health crisis has been addressed prompts a reaffirmation of the resilience of the data protection principles as a key component of the effective functioning of our democracies.

The future lies in our capacity to react promptly to new challenges without undermining our core values and putting our societies at greater risk on the longer term than do the present threats we have to address.

An accurate AI-based algorithm can only be developed using large amounts of data. Data sharing, however, relies upon careful consideration of multiple data governance concerns: data collection (informed consent on data gathering), data access (once collected, what is done with it and who has access to it), and data benefits (what is the benefit to participate for the populations involved).

As the global pandemic crisis continues to evolve, movements' plans and tactics will evolve as well. The dominance of the street protest as a central tactic of nonviolent action may make this evolution difficult. But the need to shift within the broader range of nonviolent action tactics is also an opportunity for creativity and growth, as activists, just like the rest of us, are forced to innovate in response to a changing world.

Conclusion

It is critical that the world be prepared to respond to future health crises while maintaining respect for democratic norms and civil liberties. Recommendations to protect democracy, human rights, and rule of law during a global health crisis include:

- Continuing to support democracy and human rights organizations that are active around the world, providing much needed and desired assistance to those striving to bring or restore freedom and rights to their countries particularly for vulnerable groups disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

- Reviewing the norms and criteria for limiting civil liberties during a health crisis and updating them to reflect the current reality of new and advanced technology so that a comprehensive set of best practices exists for the global community to follow.

- Preparing for the inevitable next pandemic by communicating the updated norms and developing benchmarks for countries to follow if it becomes necessary, once again, to limit civil liberties in the name of public health protection.

- Tracking the actions taken by countries to restrict civil liberties during the pandemic and monitoring them to determine whether they accord with international human rights norms and are lifted once the health crisis has ended.

- Once a safe vaccine is available, civil society should be encouraged to monitor and report on whether access to the vaccine is provided in a manner that is fair and non-discriminatory, where priority is given to subgroups of the population based on medically recognized criteria rather than political or other bases.

- Encouraging civil society organizations to monitor their governments' actions, especially regarding surveillance, tracking, and contract tracing initiatives, to ensure that they are used in a limited and appropriate manner and with respect for personal privacy.

- Identifying targeted issues regarding infringement of civil liberties and working to form coalitions of like-minded organizations to raise concerns and demand change.

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