



**Center for Global & Strategic Studies
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COVID-19 and Human Rights Crisis

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Abstract

The unexpected circumstances brought about by COVID-19 pandemic has caused many human rights crises. On one side, extensive lockdowns and strict regulations are being implemented to protect the spread of coronavirus. On the other side, it is also causing human rights crises globally such as the freedom of movement, freedom of association, education, employment, security etc. As COVID-19 has spread all over the world, therefore the governments have formed variety of strategies to overcome the spread of coronavirus, including the closing of businesses, compulsory self-quarantining, prohibiting public gatherings, closure of educational institutions and strict implementations of SOPs. The following article is an attempt to recognize and analyze some of the crucial human rights crises due to Covid-19 pandemic. It will elucidate, how extensive lockdowns are creating challenges people around the globe.

Introduction

COVID-19 is a deadly disease, which shows minor to major symptoms like respiratory failure and also causes death in severe cases as currently, there is no treatment for Covid-19. According to the WHO, people who are over 60 years old, and those who suffering from cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular, and chronic respiratory diseases are at greater risk. As per WHO, 18,142,718 cases are confirmed and 691,013 deaths globally till 4th Aug 2020.¹ According to the United Nations, human rights are inherent rights to all human beings regardless of religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, language, and gender.² Covid-19 caused many human rights crises which are affecting our mental peace, harmony, and unity.

¹ <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

² <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/human-rights/>

1. Increase of domestic Violence

Social isolation during the Covid has led to the increase in domestic violence. The rate of domestic violence increased to 30 percent since the commencement of the crises. Confinement in small apartments leads to the risk



of aggressiveness, which caused domestic violence. Women and children are more affected by it, as the WHO characterized it as a crucial public health problem.³

It is quite difficult for the victims of domestic violence to approach the concerned authorities during the lockdown. Particularly in the COVID-19 situation, some convenient ways to approach concerned authorities for the victims in addition to awareness and counseling sessions are much needed to overcome the crises.

2. Infringement of detainee's human rights

Due to overcrowding in prisons, the risk of spreading COVID-19 is more. They are more exposed due to shared food services, toilets, rooms etc. and therefore lack of hygiene is likely to increase the spread of the



coronavirus among the detainees.⁴ Social distancing has also caused difficulty for the relatives of the detainees to visit them. It is worth pointing that for the protection of all detainees they get tested and authorities take necessary measures for those who are infected.

³ Lebret, Audrey. "COVID-19 pandemic and derogation to human rights." *Journal of Law and the Biosciences* 7, no. 1 (2020): lsaa015.

⁴ Amon, Joseph J. "COVID-19 and detention: respecting human rights." *Health and Human Rights Journal* 23 (2020)

3. Most vulnerable people during Covid-19

The risk of dying from COVID-19 is more common in older people. The low-income countries contain 69 percent of the old-aged people.⁵ COVID-19 caused a scarcity of resources at hospitals which creates problems for the



elderly people. Older people who are at refugee camps and prisons are particularly at risk, due to the lack of hygiene, over crowdedness, fragile health services, and scarcity of water and sanitation. It is worth mentioning that a prolonged period of isolation for older persons will bring mental health issues.

4. Freedom of movement

The most important measure taken against the COVID-19 is prohibiting the freedom of movement by imposing extensive lockdowns. It is the most needed step against the spreading of virus but has caused a huge



impact on jobs, education, healthcare, social services and safety at home.⁶ It caused many challenges including anger and frustration especially among the youth. So in this context strategies and awareness programs are needed to overcome these challenges.

⁵ Lloyd-Sherlock, Peter, Shah Ebrahim, Leon Geffen, and Martin McKee. "Bearing the brunt of covid-19: older people in low and middle income countries." (2020).

⁶ Lebret, Audrey. "COVID-19 pandemic and derogation to human rights." *Journal of Law and the Biosciences* 7, no. 1 (2020): Isaa015.

5.Right to education

The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization evaluated that due to the COVID-19, 138 countries have closed schools worldwide and various countries had adopted local and regional



closures. It is worth pointing that about 80% of the children are affected due to the closure of the schools.⁷

It is a daunting situation for the poor students to attain online classes as some are deprived from the standard schools which are providing online education while others are deprived from the lack of electronic resources to attain the online classes. In Pakistan, due to the internet issues, students are facing difficulties to take online classes and there are no alternative ways to fulfill their needs.

6.Work and employment

Covid-19 restrictions caused the loss of jobs worldwide. In Pakistan, COVID lockdowns and restrictions may cause loss of jobs from 1.4 to 18.3 million.⁸ The United States lost more than 20 million jobs by April 6th,⁹ Italy expected half a



million jobs to be lost due to the Covid-19 crises¹⁰ and China lost 27 million jobs by March

⁷ Van Lancker, Wim, and Zachary Parolin. "COVID-19, school closures, and child poverty: a social crisis in the making." *The Lancet Public Health* 5, no. 5 (2020): e243-e244.

⁸ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1562985>

⁹ Coibion, Olivier, Yuriy Gorodnichenko, and Michael Weber. *Labor markets during the covid-19 crisis: A preliminary view*. No. w27017. National Bureau of Economic Research, 2020.

¹⁰ <https://www.thelocal.it/20200526/half-a-million-jobs-to-be-lost-in-italy-this-year-due-to-coronavirus-crisis>

2020¹¹. It is a quite challenging period for those employee's families, who lost their jobs. Moreover, it will be more challenging to those labors, whose families are depending on their daily income for their food.

8. Migrant and Refugees

The strict border security apparatus to control the spread of coronavirus is hostile for the migrants and refugees. Most of the migrants stay in unsafe urban areas where robbery, rape,



kidnapping is expected to happen. Due to these restrictions, the economy has been affected badly like every year more than 50,000 migrant workers visit Canada as per the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP).¹² According to the UN refugee Agency, there are 71 million people as refugees. Due to the scarcity of food and other basic need during lockdowns, there are possibilities of them turning to the criminal activities such as robbery.

Conclusion

It is a daunting situation for humanity that the whole world is facing and we still don't know when it will completely end or will the world be able to figure out a treatment for it. Human rights crises are increasing with the increase in the rate of Coronavirus cases. There are certain measures which we need to adopt such as cooperate with WHO guidelines, strictly apply SOPs, cooperate with the government departments and health authorities.

¹¹ <https://thediplomat.com/2020/06/how-china-can-avert-an-employment-crisis/>

¹² Haley, Ella, Susana Caxaj, Glynis George, Jenna Hennebry, Eliseo Martell, and Janet McLaughlin. "Migrant farmworkers face heightened vulnerabilities during COVID-19." *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development* 9, no. 3 (2020): 1-5.



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