

The COVID-19 pandemic: a challenge and an opportunity for human rights educators

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Abstract: In this opinion piece, Abraham Magendzo and Audrey Osler discuss a range of challenges facing educators, many of which are thrown into sharper relief by the Covid-19 crisis. Both authors see the need for deep reflection within the community of human rights educators and recognise the crisis as an opportunity for informed dialogue among educators and between teachers and their students. They highlight elements of international and regional (European and Inter-American) human rights instruments within which this dialogue might be set. Osler stresses how the human rights framework was created out of a period of crisis, and is designed to be used in times such as the one in which we are living. Any attempt by state authorities to bypass human rights in the time of coronavirus needs to be resisted. Magendzo proposes a series of concrete questions to provoke discussion and debate among educators and among students.

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Human rights: tools for a crisis

Audrey Osler

How might human rights education help learners around the world traverse the global crisis of the coronavirus pandemic? This is the timely question behind Abraham Magendzo's reflections on human rights and human rights education (HRE). He has written this to develop a conversation about human rights education at a time of crisis. We include it as an opinion piece in this edition of *Human Rights Education Review* because we believe it to be pertinent to many educators who want to discuss the human rights implications of the crisis on children's education.

What can human rights education offer in the circumstances in which we find ourselves? To answer this question, it is important to remind ourselves of the context in which the modern human rights project was conceived. In 1948, when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948) was agreed upon, communities across the globe were reeling from several decades of global upheaval, including two world wars, the 'Spanish flu' pandemic of 1918-1920, which killed tens of millions of people, and the economic depression of the 1930s. History illustrates how societies under pressure frequently turn in on themselves and how many citizens living under such stress may be attracted to 'strong' authoritarian leaders. Uncertainty generates fear and, in such circumstances, people may well turn on each other and look for scapegoats. Such patterns risk repetition today.

The body of human rights law established in the 1940s has not ossified but has expanded over the years. Magendzo does not claim to provide comprehensive coverage of human rights values and legal frameworks, but he nonetheless brings together in one place a collection of ideas and resources designed to support educators, whether or not they self-identify as human rights educators.

There are many reasons why it would be a mistake to suspend the human rights standards, checks and balances that history has shown to be so important. These checks and balances protect us from illiberal actions by governments. Human rights enable and support critical voices who ask difficult questions. Critical voices may seem annoying and irrelevant at times of crisis, but they are a central means by which we hold governments to account. They are essential to democracy.

The questions that Magendzo poses are not new questions, but ones which governments and citizens repeatedly face. The process of building healthy, democratic societies requires educators to engage with these questions and to

support their students in doing the same. This engagement with complex human rights dilemmas is at the core of citizenship education.

Human rights have helped shape our institutions, our governments and courts, in ways that take into consideration our basic rights to life, liberty, freedom of expression, and so on. They are there to serve as an underpinning set of values or principles, ensuring that these institutions continue to function effectively when a crisis occurs. In good times, but particularly in times of crisis, such as the one in which we are living, governments are required to make difficult moral decisions that require a balancing of rights: they are required to allocate resources; they may need to decide when certain rights and privileges should be suspended; and whether to protect the many or the few.

At the centre of the human rights framework are two key concepts: the right to life and that of human dignity. All other rights follow from the right to life, expressed in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 3) and the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) (Article 2) (UN, 1948; Council of Europe, 1950). Without the right to life, other rights do not exist. Nation-states have quite a lot of leeway in protecting the right to life, allowing them to temporarily suspend other rights to guarantee and protect life. This is recognised in the ECHR, where under Article 5, 'the lawful detention of persons for the prevention of the spreading of infectious diseases' is permitted (Council of Europe, 1950). The World Health Organization's (WHO) 2005 International Health Regulations confirm that any health measures should be implemented 'with full respect for the dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons' (WHO, 2016: Article 3). While there is considerable leeway for a State to protect citizens against the impact of a pandemic by suspending certain rights, this scope is not unlimited. Human dignity or worth cannot be earned and cannot be taken away. The government cannot torture people or treat them in an inhuman and degrading way. The government should not detain people unless it can be shown to be necessary and proportionate.

Effectively, the ways in which specific governments act to address the pandemic reveal the values of the country, the state of democracy and the extent of the culture of human rights in that country. As Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau observes, COVID-19 throws a spotlight on democracy, highlighting:

impacts of the pandemic on the state of democracy around the world. From enabling the free flow of information to ensuring transparency and accountability, democracy has an important role to play in helping us confront the global pandemic. (Trudeau, 2020)

The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights reminds us of the principles of equality of dignity and non-discrimination:

the enjoyment of human rights is affected by the pandemic and the measures adopted to encounter it. [...] It is therefore crucial that the authorities take measures that do not lead to discrimination and are proportionate to the aims pursued. Access to health care for all population groups based on sound medical evidence is clearly the priority. Positive measures are required to meet the specific needs of the groups at particularly high risk. (Council of Europe, 2020)

A report by Human Rights Watch (2020) published in the early months of the pandemic highlights a wide range of key human rights issues arising from lockdown measures. Importantly, ensuring that emergency powers are properly scrutinised and that they are time-limited is critical to the protection of citizens' rights. All affected by emergency measures, such as quarantine, need to be aware of their human rights. Governments need to ensure that citizens have access to the full factual picture. This is essential so that citizens can be assured that government decisions are both rational and transparent.

Finally, and importantly, as Magendzo makes clear, looking at potential and actual responses to the coronavirus through a human rights lens does not generate easy answers. Yet is essential that educators and students have opportunities to explore the issue in depth. As Eleanor Roosevelt, one of the architects of the UDHR reminds us: 'Human rights begin in small places close to home' (Roosevelt, 1958). This implies that human rights educators live by these same human rights values, and that we look out for each other and for our students. We need to think how we can each protect vulnerable people. It is by modelling kindness, or what Noddings (2013) refers to as 'an ethics of care' that human rights will be strengthened and will make sense to learners. Some teachers in the city where I live illustrated this when schools were closed by turning their school into a food bank and delivering parcels to the families of students in need. A human rights curriculum needs to build empathy and care, as well as skills of criticality. It can be strengthened by human rights educators modelling care and kindness. By such means, learners understand and experience the reality of interdependence and solidarity. Human rights knowledge and an ability to ask difficult questions will be meaningless unless they are matched with a commitment to justice in action. We have the human rights laws and tools to address a crisis. Our role as educators must be to communicate them more effectively so that we strengthen a culture of human rights, one that will outlive the pandemic.

A challenge and an opportunity for educators

Abraham Magendzo

The pandemic we are experiencing has motivated reflections and deliberations in all countries, from a variety of perspectives. We, as human rights educators, cannot abstract ourselves from reality and must necessarily think, and talk (albeit it virtually) among ourselves and, above all, with our students, about the human rights implications of this crisis. We should, as educators, insist on the principle that human rights are indivisible and interdependent. While the right to life is absolute, there is no hierarchy of rights, so that violations or consequences of specific rights should not be addressed in isolation from other rights. No human right is more important than another. Interdependence means that all human rights are interrelated. However, it should be noted that human rights have limitations or restrictions established by the public authorities and the authorities exercise these limitations in different ways. Public authorities should conform to human rights standards, acknowledging the structural limits within which they operate. According to the Vienna Declaration, any application of restrictions must be understood as exceptional (OHCHR, 1993). I am suggesting, then, that human rights educators in the time of the pandemic need to be aware that although the right to life is fundamental, it is necessary to clarify the extent to which other rights are affected and demand that the State be cautious in acting to restrict rights.

We should make it clear in our educational work that, during the mid-1980s,

the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the UN Human Rights Committee addressed situations of emergency and freedom of movement and provided authoritative guidelines on government responses that restrict human rights for reasons of public health or national emergency. Any measure taken to protect the population that limits people's rights and freedoms must be legal, necessary, and proportional. According to the 1984 Siracusa Principles, that address potential limitations on the provisions of the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (United Nations, 1966), states of emergency must be of limited duration and any reduction in rights must take into account the disproportionate impact on specific populations or marginalized groups (American Association for the International Commission of Jurists [AAICJ], 1985). Furthermore, the Siracusa Principles specifically state that, minimally, restrictions should:

- Be imposed and applied in accordance with the law.
- Respond to a legitimate objective of general interest.
- Be strictly necessary for a democratic society to achieve its objective.
- Be as less invasive and restrictive as possible to achieve your objective.
- Based on scientific evidence and not applied in an arbitrary or discriminatory mode.
- Have a limited duration, be respectful of human dignity, and be subject to revision.
- Address concerns in the field of human rights (AAICJ, 1985).

Referring specifically to the coronavirus pandemic, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, stresses that emergency measures should not be used as a cover for human rights abuses:

Emergency powers should not be a weapon governments can wield to quash dissent, control the population, and even perpetuate their time in power. Exceptional measures should be used to cope effectively with the pandemic – nothing more, nothing less. [...]. Violations [by police and security forces] have often been committed against people belonging to the poorest and most vulnerable segments of the population. [...] In some cases, people are dying because of the inappropriate application of measures that have been supposedly put in place to save them. (OHCHR, 2020)

According to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), it is the gross inequalities and social divides of the region that leave populations vulnerable to adverse health and economic outcomes of COVID-19:

The Americas are the region of highest inequality on the planet, characterized by profound social divides where poverty and extreme poverty are problems that cut across all countries of the region, along with the lack of or poor access to drinking water and sanitation, food insecurity, environmental pollution and the lack of adequate housing. All of this prevents or makes it difficult for millions of people to take basic measures to prevent the disease. (IACHR, 2020: introduction)

The IACHR re-emphasises that governments introducing emergency measures should:

Ensure that any and all restrictions or limitations placed on human rights to protect health in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic comply with the requirements of international human rights law. In particular, such restrictions must comply with the principle of legality, be necessary for a democratic society and therefore be strictly proportionate to achieving the legitimate purpose of protecting health. (IACHR, 2020: Article 20)

Additionally, in the event of establishing a state of emergency, the IACHR reminds governments that:

- i) it must be stated that an exceptional emergency situation does exist, the seriousness, imminence and intensity of which represent a real threat to the independence and security of the State;
- ii) the suspension of some rights and guarantees is only for a period of time strictly limited to the requirements of the situation;
- iii) the measures taken are proportionate, that suspension of rights or guarantees is the only means of addressing the situation, and that it cannot be dealt with by the use of the regular powers of government, and that the measures taken do not cause greater harm to the right that is suspended in comparison with the benefit obtained; and
- iv) the measures taken are not incompatible with other obligations under international law and do not entail any type of discrimination on the basis of, in particular, race, colour, sex, language, religion or social origin. (IACHR, 2020: Article 21)

Amnesty International (2020) has drawn up a 10-point action plan that human rights educators may discuss with learners to consider the impact of the pandemic and consequent government actions on our everyday lives. This is a summary of the key points:

1. Quarantines, particularly those that affect the right to liberty and security of persons, are only permissible if carried out in a non-discriminatory manner: 'They must be of limited duration and reviewed periodically, and if there are several types of possible limitations, the least restrictive should be adopted'.
2. The same is true of travel restrictions and prohibitions, which can also affect the right to freedom of movement. When they are imposed, they must be legitimate, necessary, and proportional, i.e., the least restrictive of all possible alternatives, and non-discriminatory.
3. States must ensure that all affected individuals and communities have access to clear, accessible, timely, and meaningful information on the nature and degree of the threat to health, information on possible measures taken to mitigate risks, as well as early warning information about possible future consequences and ongoing response initiatives.
4. States must ensure that everyone has access to social security, including sick leave, health care, and parental leave, if they are sick or in quarantine, or if they need to take care of dependents, including children affected by school closures.
5. Health workers are at the forefront of this epidemic. States should minimise

occupational risks and ensure provision of adequate and quality personal protective equipment, information, training, and psychological support.

6. International standards on the right to health indicate that health care goods, facilities, and services, including access to care and future vaccines and cures developed for COVID-19, must be available in sufficient quantity for all, especially for the most vulnerable and marginalised sectors of the population, who should have access to them without discrimination.

7. The right to health includes both physical and mental health.

8. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, n.d.), the elderly and those with pre-existing medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease) seem to be more exposed to becoming seriously ill with the virus. Thus, States must do everything possible to protect them. However, we cannot forget that there are other vulnerable groups, including people living in poverty, who have less access to preventive measures.

9. Women and girls may also experience particular and disproportionate impacts: 'All response efforts should include a gender analysis to ensure that the rights of women, girls, and gender non-conforming people are protected and that receive appropriate support'.

10. Solidarity and cooperation are more necessary than ever.

As I have already pointed out, the pandemic challenges us to examine a series of issues relate to human rights more deeply with our learners, in both formal and informal settings. Of course, we should address the right to life and health, the right to liberties and non-discrimination, the right to education, and the right to work. We should also analyse the rights of persons deprived of liberty who have been affected by the pandemic.

The right to life

Undoubtedly, and it could not be otherwise, all countries have focused on protecting UDHR Article 3, the right to life: 'Every individual has the right to life, to freedom and the security of his person' (UN, 1948, Article 3). It is important to note that the right to life is placed on the same level as freedoms and security, meaning that they are interrelated. In guaranteeing the rights of all people without distinction, States have implemented (some more than others) a series of measures that safeguard the right to life: isolation, quarantine, use of masks, the medical care of people infected by the virus, closure of schools and businesses, cancellation of sporting and artistic events, additional forms of surveillance, and so on.

Addressing the right to life provides human rights educators with an opportunity to deepen the dialogue on a series of controversial issues:

- Is it possible, on the one hand, to defend the right to life by taking extreme measures and, on the other, to validate and approve the death penalty (capital punishment)?
- Should intensive treatments be guaranteed to patients with greater chances of therapeutic success? Should treatments privilege those patients with the longest life expectancy?
- Does it make sense to worry about what will happen to the economy and the right to development before focusing now, above all, on the right to life?

Freedom of movement

Some measures adopted in order to control the pandemic, such as quarantine and isolation, although justified, call into question the right to freedom of movement and migration that is guaranteed in the UDHR: ‘Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state’, and ‘Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country’ (UN, 1948: Article 13). It is important to note that restrictions on these rights can only be imposed when they are legal, have a legitimate purpose, and when the restrictions are proportional, even after evaluating their impact. It should be noted that quarantine limits freedom of movement, even for people who may not be infected, to prevent the virus from spreading.

Human rights educators should invite a dialogue and reflection with learners about whether some rights can be limited to protect others, addressing such questions as:

- Should there be restrictions on the exercise of rights?
- Can quarantine be mandatorily imposed?
- Can people be detained against their will? What is more, those who are in quarantine may not be infected and would be deprived of their freedom without any other basis than the possibility (remote or not) that they pose a risk to others.
- Can intimidation and even fear be used as a preventative measure?

Restrictions on the right of movement and on transnational travel have affected the human rights of migrants and their capacity to apply for asylum. There is considerable anti-immigrant rhetoric surrounding the epidemic and some countries have closed their borders. Furthermore, the existence of expressions of xenophobia, prejudice, discrimination, and violence against migrants, linking them to the origin and spread of the pandemic, is evidence of targeted human rights abuse. Clearly discriminatory and offensive language has been used when referring to the coronavirus as the ‘Chinese virus’. In some countries, borders have been closed specifically to prevent immigration.

The United Nations Network on Migration (2020) suggests that nation-states protect migrants by implementing a number of measures: prevention; adequate testing and treatment; continued and increased access to emergency shelters for the homeless, without there being any barriers related to immigration status; and suspension of evictions. I reiterate that I am not disallowing the use of quarantine and isolation to control the spread of the virus, but instead motivating human rights educators to open up dialogues as to whether these measures or others are affecting human rights. For example, by asking the following questions:

- Is receiving information about infected people through cell phones or disclosing personal data, as in South Korea, an interference with private life? The UDHR is categorical in this regard: ‘No one shall be the object of arbitrary interference in his privacy, family, home or correspondence’ (UN, 1948, Article 12).
- What measures need be taken to reduce violence against women, since the data shows that, far from decreasing, such crimes are increasing in many countries during the pandemic? (UN Women, 2020)
- Are state security and police forces proceeding appropriately (legally) or committing abuses against people who violate the curfew or quarantine orders?

The right to education

Human rights educators need to ask to what extent the suspension of schooling, in order to prevent contagion, is a violation of the right to education under the UDHR (Article 26) and 1966 International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (Article 13) (UN, 1948, 1966). These articles emphasise that the right to education must be exercised without discrimination. It should be noted that studying at home through remote learning platforms to complement regular school attendance is an alternative adopted in many countries. However, it carries a degree of discrimination, given that a considerable percentage of students do not have the necessary and adequate technological means to engage in distance learning. Indeed, according to data from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the percentage of people connected to the Internet has increased considerably. At the same time, the ITU highlights how: the Internet is almost saturated in developed countries; the network is only within the reach of 47% of people in developing countries; and the situation is particularly critical in the 48 least developed countries where only 19% of their inhabitants are on line (ITU, 2019). The United Nations Economic, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reported in March 2020 that half of the total students in the world (about 826 million) were unable to attend school due to the pandemic (UNESCO, 2020). With digital remote learning the only option for ensuring the continuity of education for these children, the ITC figures suggest that around 53 per cent of children in developing countries, and around 13 per cent in the wealthiest countries are without access to education.

In addition, a large number of families in large cities live in micro-apartments of 18-40 square meters. These homes do not allow students to study properly. There is little space and there are people of all ages, including children and elders, who must adapt to this reality. Furthermore, these homes do not respond to the standards of the UDHR: 'Everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living adequate for the health of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services' (UN, 1948: Article 25, 1). The ICESCR protects the right to adequate housing and recognises 'the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions' (UN, 1966: Article 11). The concept of adequate housing means a space that provides adequate security, lighting, ventilation, basic infrastructure, and an adequate environment in relation to work and basic services. It also means having a place where one can be isolated, if desired.

Additionally, it is important to note that research in many countries, especially developing ones, has shown that teachers do not necessarily have the appropriate professional expertise to provide virtual education in times of the coronavirus (infoDev, n.d.). It should not be forgotten that the majority of teachers are trained to teach face-to-face classes.

Human rights educators must, therefore, establish dialogues in relation to questions such as:

- Is the separation of students from schools - on reasonable grounds - not increasing inequalities and obstructing learning opportunities for the most vulnerable?
- If teachers are not prepared to teach at a distance, is there any point in insisting on this modality?

- Who decides when the students return to classes: The Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Health?
- What messages does the pandemic deliver regarding the changes that need to be made to national educational systems?

The right to work

One right that has been seriously affected and should be a concern of human rights educators is the right to work, which includes the protection of workers and enterprises. The UDHR states:

Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

Every person who works has the right to a just and favourable remuneration, ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection. (UN, 1948: Article 23.1 and 23.3)

The International Labour Organization (ILO) 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work establishes that these rights are universal and that they apply to all people in all countries, regardless of the level of economic development (ILO, 1998). It addresses particular groups with special needs, such as the unemployed and migrant workers. It recognises that economic growth alone is insufficient to ensure equity and social progress and to eradicate poverty.

The right to work has been seriously affected by the pandemic across the globe. A report by the ILO (2020) calculated that the COVID-19 pandemic would bring about the disappearance of 6.7% of the world's hourly jobs between April and June 2020. This is equivalent to the loss of 195 million full-time jobs. The most affected sectors, especially in low and middle-income countries, have a high proportion of workers in informal employment, with limited access to health services and social protection. In terms of employment at risk, 44% of workers in Latin America are in sectors that are considered high risk, according to the ILO. This is a figure substantially higher than the global average, which is calculated as 38% of the workforce. Faced with this dramatic situation for workers and companies, governments have developed diverse and varied policies aimed at preserving labour relations. These are financial policies aimed at protecting workers, protecting valuable employment relationships, and preventing company bankruptcies.

It is important to note that the right to work in developing countries has been affected not only by the pandemic. Its precariousness has been historical. It is not surprising then that wage and other work-related demands have been strongly expressed in the protests that took place in several countries prior to the pandemic. Furthermore, there is uncertainty regarding the right to work, given that there is the possibility of a deep recession and a subsequent wave of layoffs.

That the pandemic is seriously affecting workers is an issue that human rights educators should address. Basic questions regarding the relationship between work and human rights need to be considered:

- Who is responsible for guaranteeing the right to work? The State, employers or workers?
- Why are many countries not implementing the right to equitable and satisfactory remuneration, in accordance with human dignity?

- The ILO has pointed out that the pandemic is not only a health crisis - it is also a social and economic crisis. Is the ILO right?

Deprivation of liberty

One issue that has come to the fore during the pandemic is the situation of persons deprived of their liberty. Human rights educators should pay close attention to this issue in relation to prison populations. There are those who think that prisoners have violated rights and are therefore not entitled to claim their rights. This position is not compatible with the UDHR since:

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. (UN, 1948, Article 2)

This includes, of course, the condition of being deprived of liberty. Furthermore, the UDHR asserts that: 'Everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living that ensures health and well-being, including [...] medical care [...]' (UN, 1948 Article 25.1) and this, without a doubt, includes prisoners. For its part, the ICESCR recognises 'the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health' (UN, 1966, Article 12.1). This point should be underlined since, during the pandemic, there have been serious problems concerning prisons and prison populations in some countries, and this should be analysed and discussed by human rights educators.

Since its establishment, the IACHR has devoted special attention to the situation of persons deprived of liberty in the Americas. The Commission (IACHR, 2020) has found that respect for the rights of persons deprived of liberty is one of the main challenges faced by the member states of the Organization of American States. The nature of the problems identified in this report reveals the existence of serious structural shortcomings that gravely impair non-derogable human rights, such as the right to life and to the humane treatment of inmates.

The main concern in recent weeks is not overcrowding, poverty and violence, but preventing the spread of COVID-19 and death behind bars. Drinking water and soap are in scarce supply while prisoners' demands for greater protection against contagion are increasing. The growing fear of the virus has led to strikes, escapes, and prison riots in Chile, Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Argentina and other locations.

In these countries, in order to correct the problem of overcrowding and contagion, it has been decided to free prisoners, excluding, for example in Chile, individuals who have committed violent crimes, femicide, rape, child abuse, and crimes against humanity. Regarding the last-mentioned group, who violated human rights during the civic-military dictatorship (1973-1990), a debate has arisen in the country. Some Chileans maintain that they should be treated like other prisoners who, due to age or illness, are allowed to complete their sentences at home with their relatives. Others present convincing arguments that they should not enjoy this prerogative. It is important for human rights educators to engage in dialogue with students on this debate, always with the understanding that human rights violations are inexcusable.

In summary, human rights educators can raise questions such as:

- Should prisoners who have violated other people's rights have their rights respected?
- Should persons deprived of liberty who have committed crimes against humanity during dictatorships be granted amnesty and sent home when they are seriously ill, advanced in age, and have served a significant part of their sentences?
- Can people who have committed crimes against humanity be released on humanitarian grounds, as long as they acknowledge their crimes, tell the truth, and ask for forgiveness; or in all cases should they be forgiven and released?

Concluding remarks

I wish to stress that, in my opinion, human rights education needs to carefully analyse the implications of the various measures and restrictions that have been adopted to control the coronavirus epidemic. In the words of Amnesty International (2020): 'Censorship, discrimination, arbitrary detention and human rights violations have no place in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic. Human rights violations impede, rather than facilitate, responses to public health emergencies, and reduce their effectiveness'.

In other words, the health emergency should not be used as an excuse to engage in practices that violate human rights, nor to introduce unnecessarily repressive acts with the aim of protecting health. Nor should actions be taken to silence the work of human rights defenders.

The right to health, as guaranteed by the UDHR, presupposes a number of related rights: the right to accessible health care; the right to access information; the prohibition of discrimination in the provision of medical services; the freedom not to receive medical treatment without consent; and other important guarantees. Quarantines, which restrict the right to freedom of movement, can only be justified under international law if they are proportionate, time-limited, imposed for legitimate purposes, strictly necessary, and applied in a non-discriminatory manner.

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