

INSIGHT



COVID-19 PANDEMIC



Egypt's Dar al-Ifta's Response

Editorial Board

Managing Editor:

Nada Hussein

Contributors:

Dr. Ibrahim Negm

Senior Advisor to the Grand Mufti and Secretary-General of the General Secretariat for Fatwa Authorities Worldwide.

Noha Talaat


Researcher and Interpreter.

Mostafa Khalifa

Graphic Designer.

Contact us

WWW.dar-alifta.gov.eg

 /Egypt.DarAlIfta.Eng

 /user/DarAlIftaaEnglish

 /DarAlIftaEng

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Introduction

Insight is a monthly magazine that was first published by Egypt's Dar Al-Ifta in October 2016. When the project started, it was exclusively dedicated to refuting extremist ideologies and to correcting the erroneous religious misconceptions spread by terrorist groups. The magazine made a huge success on a national and international level. After a hiatus of one year, the magazine aims to make an aggressive comeback with its new monthly issues that will explore a variety of relevant religious and social topics. Our goal is to explain Islam and make our work more accessible to the world through this easy-to-read magazine. We will still cover and discuss extremists' ideologies, but we also plan to cover a variety of relevant religious and social topics in every month's issue. Our goal is to help you understand the ideology of Islam better and make our work more accessible to the world through this magazine.

For this special comeback edition, we found no topic more relevant than COVID-19 in the current context. This edition includes a range of information directly related to the current global pandemic in one place. We also wanted to take the chance and dedicate this special edition to the millions around

the world who lost their lives to COVID-19 and to their loved ones who suffered their loss.

It has been a little over a year since the situation began unfolding. Our lives and realities were suddenly and drastically changed and we are not sure when everything will return to normal. In the beginning, we had so many questions and so few answers. However, as the days unfolded, we began to learn something new every day and we are still learning.

We learned about science, religion, economies, and politics. Yet, most importantly of all, we learned about ourselves as human beings. We learned that we took so much of our lives for granted. Seemingly overnight, things as simple as day-to-day aspects of our lives were lost to us. We were forced to distance ourselves from our loved ones. Many of us lost our jobs, livelihood, and housing to mention a few. Our lives were turned upside down. Though a crisis in every sense of the world, the pandemic taught us some positive lessons that we ought to never forget. One of the most important of these is that we learned that we cannot live without each other and that through that, we started seeing a sense of solidarity taking over the world. We

learned that humanity is fragile without cooperation, unification, and unity of interests just as God Almighty intended for us. We learned that all people of all races and creed share the same struggles and feelings.

We understand the fear, frustration, confusion, and uncertainty the world is experiencing and that is why we developed this magazine to offer you the understanding and information required to help you navigate through troubled times with strength and hope.

In this special edition, you will find a full COVID-19 timeline, COVID-19 fatwas, a look back on Egypt's Dar Al-Ifta's response and its role during the pandemic, and an op-ed piece covering how extremists took advantage of the pandemic by Dr. Ibrahim Negm, Senior Advisor to the Grand Mufti and Secretary-General of the General Secretariat for Fatwa Authorities Worldwide.

We hope this edition answers your questions and concerns about the ongoing situation of COVID-19 through the fatwas and coverage we made on the topic. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact us. We are here to provide any information you need to make the situation easier and help eliminate the spread of misinformation about the pandemic.

Note: As you keep reading, please keep in mind that this is an ongoing situation meaning that data and news are changing on daily basis.

Stay safe and remember these rules to save yourself and others.



Wear a mask.



Stay six feet away from others (2 arms long).



Wash your hands regularly.



Avoid crowds.

Fun Facts

that are not so much fun

The novel Coronavirus is named SARS-CoV-2, but the disease is COVID-19. (Secor, 2020).

The most recent common ancestor (MRCA) of all Coronaviruses is estimated to have existed since 8000 BCE. Other evidence placed the common ancestor 55 million years ago. (Virology, 2013)

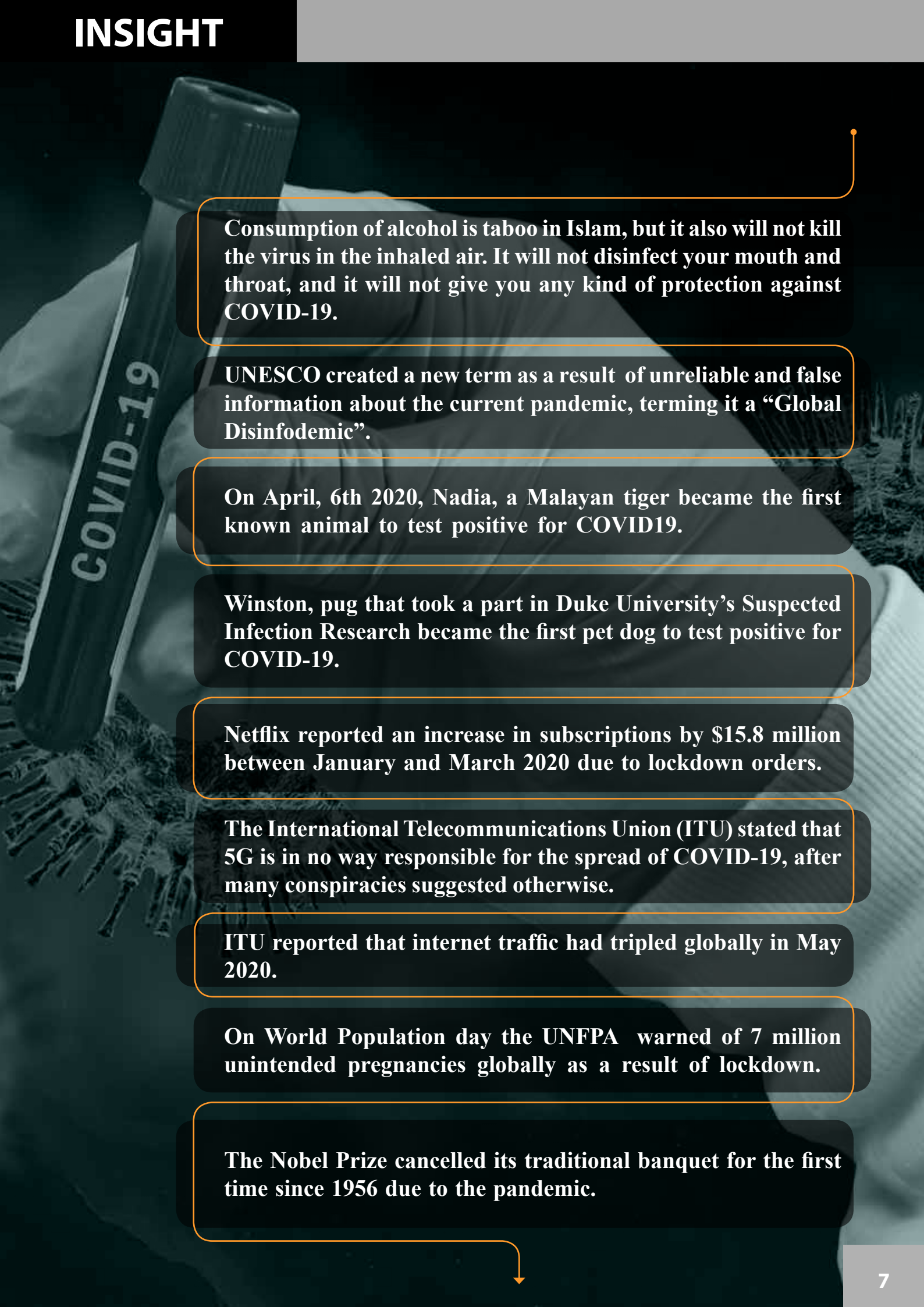
The study of the origin of SARS-CoV-2 is complicated by the limited sampling of infection in the early stages of the pandemic and its low evolutionary rate.

Many studies estimate that SARS-CoV-2 arose in October or November 2019.

Harvard Medical School Researchers found that COVID-19 could have been spreading in China as early as August 2019. This was based on satellite images of hospital movements and search engine data.

According to South China Morning Post, the November 2019 case was not from Wuhan.

Scientific evidence suggests that it descends from a Coronavirus that infects wild bats and spreads to humans through an intermediary wildlife host. It is not clear if the virus evolved in wildlife or if its distinctive proteins were selected for after transferring to humans.



Consumption of alcohol is taboo in Islam, but it also will not kill the virus in the inhaled air. It will not disinfect your mouth and throat, and it will not give you any kind of protection against COVID-19.

UNESCO created a new term as a result of unreliable and false information about the current pandemic, terming it a “Global Disinfodemic”.

On April, 6th 2020, Nadia, a Malayan tiger became the first known animal to test positive for COVID19.

Winston, pug that took a part in Duke University’s Suspected Infection Research became the first pet dog to test positive for COVID-19.

Netflix reported an increase in subscriptions by \$15.8 million between January and March 2020 due to lockdown orders.

The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) stated that 5G is in no way responsible for the spread of COVID-19, after many conspiracies suggested otherwise.

ITU reported that internet traffic had tripled globally in May 2020.

On World Population day the UNFPA warned of 7 million unintended pregnancies globally as a result of lockdown.

The Nobel Prize cancelled its traditional banquet for the first time since 1956 due to the pandemic.



An Overview of the First 51 Days of the Outbreak

December 1st, 2019

- ⊙ A patient from Hubei, Wuhan, became the first person to present symptoms. The patient did not have a direct link with Wuhan Seafood Market, that has been associated with the virus.

December 8th, 2019

- ⊙ One to five cases with similar symptoms were reported each day.
- ⊙ No clear evidence of how many people were infected. Later Chinese authorities and World Health Organization (WHO) stated that this day marked the first forty-one cases.

December 16th, 2019

- ⊙ The first documented COVID-19 hospital admission worldwide, in Wuhan.

December 24th, 2019

- ⊙ An unresolved case started the first scientific move.
- ⊙ A sample was sent from Wuhan Central Hospital to Vision Medicals.

December 26th, 2019

- ⊙ An elderly couple with fever and coughs were admitted at the Hubei Provincial Hospital

December 27th, 2019

- ⊙ The elderly couple's CT scans were abnormal and the same pattern was found in the couple's son.
- ⊙ Dr Zhang Jixian who worked as an expert during the SARS outbreak in 2003, suspected signs of an outbreak and prepared for a quarantine area.
- ⊙ Vision Medicals reported back that the sample taken on December, 24th contained a new kind of Coronavirus.
- ⊙ Vision Medicals reported to the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences "A sample containing a new Coronavirus similar to bat SARS Coronavirus".
- ⊙ Another unresolved case at Wuhan Central Hospital takes place and another sample sent to CapitalBio Medlab.

December 29th, 2019

- ⊙ Doctors believed there might be a new virus of unknown etiology.
- ⊙ The first four cases officially confirmed were all linked to Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market.
- ⊙ Reports suggested that over 180 people in Wuhan were already infected on that day but were identified later.

December 30th, 2019

- ⊙ CapitalBio Medlab reported back that the sample taken on December 27th contained SARS Coronavirus.
- ⊙ The sample was sent to Vision Medicals who also confirmed that it was identical to the first one they have received.
- ⊙ Doctors realized now that they are dealing with a new serious virus.
- ⊙ Doctors at Wuhan Central Hospital started sharing the report online in discussions mainly aimed at colleagues.
- ⊙ Wuhan Municipal Health Commission contacted its affiliate institutions and gave them guidelines to confront a possible outbreak of infectious pneumonia.
- ⊙ The scientific research had begun along with investigations too.
- ⊙ The news became international through a report made by FluTrackers.

December 31st, 2019

- ⊙ Wuhan Municipal Health Commission released a statement on their website emphasising an ongoing scientific and clinical investigation. additionally, they have advised the public with guidelines to follow.
- ⊙ No evidence of human-to-human transmission yet.
- ⊙ WHO's Office picked up the statement by Wuhan Municipal Health Commission and notified International Health Regulations (IHR).
- ⊙ Chinese officials disinfected Wuhan Seafood Market and advised stallholders to wear masks.
- ⊙ Several international health authorities contacted WHO for information.

January 1st, 2020

- ⊙ WHO requested information from the Chinese authorities and activated its Incident Management Support Team (IMST), as part of its emergency response.
- ⊙ Wuhan officials reported the outbreak was under control.
- ⊙ Huanan Seafood Market was shut down for remediation.

January 2nd, 2020

- ⊙ WHO wrote to China's National Health Commission, offering support and asking for further information.
- ⊙ WHO informed Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN) partners about the situation in China.
- ⊙ Forty-one patients were tested and confirmed to have contracted the virus. 66% of them had direct exposure to Huanan Seafood Market.

January 3rd, 2020

- ⊙ Cases kept rising and eleven patients were seriously ill but no deaths yet.
- ⊙ Chinese officials provided information to WHO on the cases of "viral pneumonia of unknown cause" in Wuhan.

January 4th, 2020

- ⊙ The UN activated its incident-management system in China on a regional and global level.
- ⊙ The US. formally offered sending experts to China to investigate the outbreak.

January 5th, 2020

- ⊙ China confirmed fifty-nine cases.
- ⊙ WHO issued its first Disease Outbreak News Report stating that recommendations on public health measures and surveillance of influenza and severe acute respiratory infections apply.

January 6th, 2020

- ⊙ Wuhan health authorities announced ruling out influenza, avian influenza, adenovirus, Coronaviruses SARS, and MERS as the cause of the outbreak.

January 7th, 2020

- ⊙ Scientists in China announced the discovery of a new Coronavirus.
- ⊙ The world continued to wait for more information.

January 9th, 2020

- ⊙ A patient with an underlying chronic illness was the first death victim of COVID-19.
- ⊙ Chinese authorities determined that the outbreak is caused by a novel Coronavirus.
- ⊙ The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) posted its first risk assessment.
- ⊙ Chinese scientists reported the new Coronavirus in 15 out of 57 patients with the illness in Wuhan.
- ⊙ Scientists announced that the virus appears to be less lethal than SARS. They also reported that the new outbreak was first detected in Wuhan on December 12th, 2019.

January 10th, 2020

- ⊙ Scientific research groups started the rapid activation of research and development activities during epidemics.
- ⊙ Four different reports on the gene sequencing data of the 2019-nCoV (a virus from the same family as the SARS), were posted on different websites by different researchers and groups.
- ⊙ WHO published guidelines for countries, covering topics related to management of an outbreak.

January 11th, 2020

- ⊙ Chinese media officially reported the first death from the novel Coronavirus that happened on January 9th.

January 12th, 2020

- ⊙ Wuhan hospitals began reaching capacity, with some people being denied care.
- ⊙ WHO published more guidance on travelling, testing in the laboratory and medical investigations.

January 13th, 2020

- ⊙ Thailand confirmed the first case outside China.
- ⊙ Researchers flagged Thailand, Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan, Australia, and the UAE as high-risk destinations based on airline history from Wuhan.
- ⊙ WHO held the first teleconference with the Diagnostics and Laboratories Global Expert Network.

January 14th, 2020

- ⊙ Two patients of the confirmed cases in Wuhan were a married couple raising the possibility of human-to-human transmission.
- ⊙ WHO stated: “it is certainly possible that there is limited human-to-human transmission”.
- ⊙ Wuhan Municipal Health Committee stated that there is no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission, however, the possibility cannot be ruled out.
- ⊙ The Chinese government became aware of the threat of a pandemic due to the reporting of Thailand’s viral infection a day earlier.

January 15th, 2020

- ⊙ A second death occurred in China.
- ⊙ US Embassy issued a Health Alert Watch Level 1 for an outbreak in Wuhan caused by a novel Coronavirus.

January 16th, 2020

- ⊙ Researchers at Universitätsmedizin Berlin developed a new laboratory assay to detect the novel Coronavirus.

January 17th, 2020

- ⊙ Thailand was put on a high alert because the Lunar New Year was coming up and millions of Chinese travellers visit Thailand during that time.
- ⊙ EDCD reported forty total laboratory confirmed cases. (41 in Wuhan, 2 in Thailand, and 1 in Japan) - (2 of them died, 12 had been discharged, and 5 were severe cases).

January 18th, 2020

- ⊙ The number of laboratory-confirmed cases in China rose up to sixty-two.

January 19th, 2020

- ⊙ Cases started spreading fast in other cities in China.

January 20th, 2020

Countries and Territories That Reported Their First Confirmed Cases in January 2020

- ⊙ China, Thailand, Japan, South Korea, United States, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, Singapore, Vietnam, France, Nepal, Australia, Canada, Malaysia, Cambodia, Germany, Sri Lanka, Finland, UAE, India, Italy, Philippines, Russia, Spain, Sweden, and the UK.
- ⊙ China's NHC confirmed that the virus was human-to-human transmissible.
- ⊙ China's CDC identified three different strains of 2019-nCoV, and confirmed that the original Wuhan Coronavirus had mutated into two additional strains.
- ⊙ US. CDC developed its own testing kit after confirming their first case.
- ⊙ US. National Institutes of Health started the process of developing a vaccine.
- ⊙ WHO stated that what is happening could be of a much larger outbreak.

February 2020

Countries and Territories That Reported Their First Confirmed Cases in February 2020

- ⊙ Belgium, Egypt, Iran, Israel, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Algeria, Austria, Brazil, Croatia, Switzerland, Georgia, Greece, North Macedonia, Norway, Pakistan, Romania, Denmark, Estonia, Netherlands, Nigeria, San Marino, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Iceland, Lithuania, Mexico, Monaco, New Zealand, and Sub Saharan Africa.

Outstanding Data

- ⊙ China: 79,251 cases and 2,835 deaths. (surpassing the toll from the SARS epidemic from 2002 to 2003).
- ⊙ Philippines: the first death outside mainland China.
- ⊙ Iran: 593 cases and 43 deaths.
- ⊙ Italy: 1,128 cases and 29 deaths.
- ⊙ Singapore: 102 cases.
- ⊙ South Korea: 3,150 cases and 17 deaths. (The first reinfection case was also confirmed).
- ⊙ USA: 68 cases and 1 death. (The death indicated that community transmission was happening in the US since December).
- ⊙ WHO reported that the number of new cases outside China had exceeded the number of new cases in

China on February, 25th. That came after a spike of cases in Italy, Iran and South Korea.

Science

- ⊙ Chinese experts reported that nucleic acid testing was only able to identify 30%-50% positive cases.
- ⊙ NASA released satellite images over China showing that air pollution has decreased due to reduced travel and lockdown measures.
- ⊙ WHO stated that COVID-19 is not a pandemic yet but urged countries and warned that the virus "has pandemic potential".
- ⊙ WHO raised the Coronavirus alert to the highest level.

Global News and Responses

- ⊙ Various countries all over the world shut down their borders and/or banned travelling to and from many other countries to contain the virus.
- ⊙ Chinese authorities confiscated more than 31 million surgical masks.
- ⊙ The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress in China, drafted legislation with a comprehensive ban of the trading and eating wildlife.
- ⊙ Italy introduced strict measures that placed almost fifty thousand people in quarantine. Fines were imposed on

those entering or leaving outbreak areas.

- ⊙ USA banned travel from Iran, and increased travel warnings to Italy and South Korea.
- ⊙ Thailand advised travellers to postpone trips to China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Italy, Macau, Taiwan, Iran, South Korea and Japan. Healthcare workers are not allowed to travel to places affected unless necessary.
- ⊙ Iran banned exporting of soap, bleach, and disinfectants to reduce shortages.
- ⊙ An Iranian Member of Parliament died due to the Coronavirus.
- ⊙ Iran cancelled Friday prayers in some cities and banned travellers from China.
- ⊙ New Zealand's government banned travellers from Iran, in response to their first case.
- ⊙ Taiwan raised its alert level to the highest after a spread of cases.
- ⊙ Japanese authorities asked online auction sites to stop selling face masks, to prevent mask shortages.
- ⊙ Cherry Blossom Festivals in Japan were cancelled due to fears of the virus spreading.
- ⊙ The UAE suspended all school activities and closed nurseries.
- ⊙ Russia deported eighty-eight foreigners in Moscow for breaking quarantine.
- ⊙ Switzerland banned public gatherings of more than one thousand people.
- ⊙ France banned gatherings of more than five thousand people.
- ⊙ Australia created a plan to prepare for a bigger spread and extended a travel ban on China.
- ⊙ Saudi Arabia banned pilgrims and foreigners from entering the country to contain the virus.
- ⊙ Spain advised travellers to avoid infected regions like Italy, Japan, Iran, South Korea, Singapore and China unless required.
- ⊙ WHO warned against criminal scams exploiting the Coronavirus emergency.

Economy, Funds, and Donations

- ⊙ Various US. stock market indices posted their sharpest falls since the 2008 financial crisis.
- ⊙ Several small surgical mask factories began mass production in Hong Kong.

March 2020

Countries and Territories That Reported Their First Confirmed Cases in March 2020

- ⊙ Armenia, Czechia, Dominican Republic, Saint Barthélemy, Saint Martin, Andorra, Indonesia, Jordan, Latvia, Morocco, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Tunisia, Argentina, Chile, Gibraltar, Liechtenstein, Ukraine, Faroe Islands, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Martinique, Palestine, South Africa, Bhutan, Cameroon, Colombia, Costa Rica, Peru, Serbia, Slovakia, Togo, Vatican City, Maldives, Malta, Moldova, Paraguay, Albania, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Brunei, Cyprus, Guernsey, Panama, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Congo, Jamaica, Jersey, Mongolia, Northern Cyprus, Turkey, Cuba, French Polynesia, Honduras, Ivory Coast, Réunion, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Cayman Islands, Curaçao, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guadeloupe, Guatemala, Guinea, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kosovo, Puerto Rico, Saint Lucia, Sudan, Suriname, U.S. Virgin Islands, Uruguay, Venezuela, Central African Republic, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, Mauritania, Mayotte, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, Akrotiri and Dhekelia, Bahamas, Guam, Uzbekistan, Benin, Greenland, Liberia, Somalia, Tanzania, Barbados, Gambia, Montenegro, Sint Maarten, Bermuda, Djibouti, El Salvador, Kyrgyzstan, Mauritius, Montserrat, New Caledonia,

Nicaragua, Zambia, Angola, Chad, Fiji, Haiti, Isle of Man, Niger, Cape Verde, East Timor, Madagascar, Papua New Guinea, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Åland Islands, Eritrea, Transnistria, Dominica, Grenada, Mozambique, Syria, Belize, Myanmar, Turks and Caicos Islands, Laos, Libya, British Virgin Islands, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Anguilla, Northern Mariana Islands, Botswana, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Sint Eustatius, and Somaliland.

Outstanding Data

- ⊙ China: 80,786 cases and 3,169 deaths.
- ⊙ Argentina: 1 death (the first in South America).
- ⊙ Ireland: 3,235 cases and 71 deaths.
- ⊙ Malaysia: 2,766 cases and 43 deaths.
- ⊙ Palestine: 117 cases (10 of them in Gaza).
- ⊙ Panama: 1,181 cases and 30 deaths.
- ⊙ South Korea: 9,786 cases and 162 deaths.
- ⊙ USA: 101,242 cases and 1,500 deaths (overtaking China and Italy).
- ⊙ Spain: 812 deaths between Sunday the 29th and Monday the 30th.
- ⊙ France: 44,550 cases, and 3,024 deaths.
- ⊙ Iran: over 40,000 cases and 2,757 deaths.
- ⊙ Kazakhstan: first 2 cases (the first in Central Asia).
- ⊙ Egypt: 166 cases (and the first death in Africa).

- ⊙ Italy: over 10,000 deaths.
- ⊙ Germany: 7,272 cases and 17 deaths.
- ⊙ UK: 17,089 cases and 1,019 deaths.

Science

- ⊙ On February 11th, WHO officially declared COVID-19 a pandemic.
- ⊙ The FDA authorized the use of hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine to treat seriously ill patients.
- ⊙ The UN announced the beginning of the first vaccine trial.

Global News and Responses

- ⊙ Chinese government announced closing its borders to foreigners in response to the rise of imported cases.
- ⊙ British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Health Secretary Matt Hancock tested positive for COVID-19.
- ⊙ Puerto Rico issued the first stay at home order in the United States.
- ⊙ US Department of State raised the global travel alert to Level 4, the highest possible alert.
- ⊙ Former US President Trump extended the country's national shutdown and social distancing rules.
- ⊙ Egypt began disinfecting the Giza Pyramids complex.
- ⊙ Russia, Moscow's authorities placed a lockdown after residents ignored official requests to stay at home.
- ⊙ Finland reserved testing for health

professionals only.

- ⊙ The NBA suspended the entire (something that rarely ever happens).
- ⊙ International Olympic Committee moved the 2020 Summer Olympics and 2020 Summer Paralympics 364 days.

Economy, Funds, and Donations

- ⊙ The first oil refinery shutdown in India and Europe were announced while global refinery demand decreased as countries were on lockdown.
- ⊙ The UN released \$15 million from the Central Emergency Fund to help countries fight COVID-19 and called for a \$2.5 trillion emergency package to help developing countries cope with the economic impact.
- ⊙ China's National Bureau of Statistics reported that industrial output fell 13.5%, fixed asset fell 24.5%, private sector fell 26.4%, and retail sales shrank by 20.5% between January and February 2020.
- ⊙ The UN donated 250,000 face masks to New York City health workers.
- ⊙ Ford and General Electric unveiled plans to manufacture 50,000 ventilators in 100 days.
- ⊙ Fanatics, Nike, Under Armour and others began producing face masks.

April 2020

Countries and Territories That Reported Their First Confirmed Cases in April 2020

- ⊙ Malawi, Falkland Islands, Western Sahara, Saint Pierre and Miquelon, South Sudan, São Tomé and Príncipe, Abkhazia, Artsakh, Yamen, Saba, Bonaire, Comoros, and Tajikistan.
- ⊙ Outstanding Data
- ⊙ China: 82,862 cases. (1,664 are imported).
- ⊙ Egypt: 4,782 cases.
- ⊙ Bangladesh: 3,772 cases (251 of them were doctors) and 120 deaths.
- ⊙ Brazil: 85,380 cases and 5,901 deaths.
- ⊙ Canada: 47,327 cases and 2,617 deaths.
- ⊙ Chile: over 10,000 cases and 133 deaths.
- ⊙ Croatia: 1,832 cases and 39 deaths.
- ⊙ Czech Republic: 5,000 cases and 195 deaths.
- ⊙ Ecuador: over 10,000 cases.
- ⊙ France: 28,055 hospitalised, 4,608 in intensive care and 23,293 deaths.
- ⊙ Greece: 1,425 cases and 53 deaths.
- ⊙ Indonesia: 10,118 cases and 792 deaths.
- ⊙ Ireland: 11,479 cases and 406 deaths.
- ⊙ India: over 30,000 cases and 1,007 deaths.
- ⊙ Italy: 205,463 cases and 27,967 deaths.
- ⊙ Japan: 12,800 cases and 345 deaths.
- ⊙ Malaysia: 6,002 cases, 102 deaths and 4,171 recoveries.
- ⊙ Mexico: 12,872 cases and 1,221 deaths.
- ⊙ The Netherlands: 39,316 cases and 4,795 deaths.
- ⊙ New Zealand: 1,476 cases (including 3 baby boys).
- ⊙ Pakistan: 15,759 cases and 346 deaths.
- ⊙ Peru: 36,976 cases and 1,051 deaths.
- ⊙ Philippines: 7,958 cases and 530 deaths.
- ⊙ Qatar: 8,525 cases.
- ⊙ Russia: 106,498 cases and 1,073 deaths.
- ⊙ Singapore: 16,169 cases and 15 deaths.
- ⊙ South Korea: 10,765 cases and 247 deaths.
- ⊙ South Africa: 5,350 cases and 103 deaths.
- ⊙ Spain: 213,435 cases and 24,543 deaths.
- ⊙ Sub-Saharan Africa: 238,00 cases and 900 deaths.

- ⊙ Switzerland: 28,677 cases and 1,309 deaths.
- ⊙ Thailand: 2,954 cases and 54 deaths.
- ⊙ Turkey: 120,204 cases and 3,174 deaths.
- ⊙ Iran: death toll exceeded 6,028.
- ⊙ UK: reported a death toll of 26,711.
- ⊙ USA: over 1 million cases and over 57,000 deaths.
- ⊙ UAE: 5,825 cases and 35 deaths.
- ⊙ Johns Hopkins University reported 1,004,483 global recoveries and 200,697 global deaths.
- ⊙ On April 16th, WHO's Europe reported over 1 million cases and 84,000 deaths across the continent.
- ⊙ On April 23rd, Africa's CDC reported 26,000 cases across the continent and 1,200 deaths.
- ⊙ Africa's CDC reported that 52 out of 55 African countries have been affected.

Science

- ⊙ US company Pfizer announced aiming to produce 10-20 million doses of a vaccine that is being developed for emergency use, all depending on the vaccine trial results.
- ⊙ WHO warned of a potential "second wave" in an update to governments, as some countries began to relax

lockdown measures.

- ⊙ WHO reported that there is no evidence that people who have recovered are protected against a second infection.
- ⊙ WHO reported that all available evidence suggests that the virus originated in bats and was not created in a laboratory.

Global News and Responses

- ⊙ Egypt's president Abdel Fattah el-Sisi postponed several megaprojects including the Grand Egyptian Museum and the New Capital.
- ⊙ Egyptian government maintained a night time curfew during the month of Ramadan.
- ⊙ Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi renewed the national state of emergency by three months, citing health and security concerns.
- ⊙ India announced plans to manufacture thousands of wristbands that will perform contact tracing, and aid health workers.
- ⊙ US former President Trump suspended all immigration to the states to combat the virus.
- ⊙ UAE announced that anyone who spreads fake news about the pandemic will get a fine up to 20,000 dirhams.

April 2020

- ⊙ Pope Francis called for European unity in combating the pandemic ahead of a European Union summit.
- ⊙ Saudi Arabia's King Salman approved performing Tarawih at the two Holy Mosques but pilgrims remained suspended.
- ⊙ The Saudi Council of Senior Scholars advised Muslims to pray at home and avoid gatherings during Ramadan.
- ⊙ 21 of the 44 European states that have imposed restrictions in response to the Coronavirus, have eased them by now.
- ⊙ The Union of European Football Associations suspended all Champions League and Europa League matches.
- ⊙ Apple, Inc. launched a site to help health authorities track down people's travel movements to ensure they are complying with lockdown requirements.
- ⊙ Chinese city Shenzhen banned the breeding, trade and consumption of wildlife animals.
- produce and ship 1 million face shields to medical workers at its factories in the US and China.
- ⊙ Uber announced shipping millions of masks to drivers and food delivery workers around the world.
- ⊙ Alibaba Group donated 500 ventilators, 200,000 suits, 2,000 thermometers, 1 million swabs and extraction kits and 500,000 gloves to all fifty-four African countries.
- ⊙ Africa's CDC announced that they will distribute 1 million test kits across Africa with the goal of testing 15 million people over the next three months.
- ⊙ The UN Economic and Social Commission reported that about 71 million people in the Arab world lack access to running water, increasing their risk of contracting the virus.
- ⊙ According to the World Trade Organization (WTO), 80 countries have imposed bans or limited the export of face masks and other protective equipment.
- ⊙ Turkey sent a military airplane carrying masks, face gears, eye gears, and anti-bacterial fluids to Spain and Italy.
- ⊙ China announced donating \$30 million to WHO's efforts to combat the virus.

Economy, Funds, and Donations

- ⊙ Twitter's CEO donated 28% of his fortune to create a \$1 billion fund (StartSmall), focusing on global relief efforts.
- ⊙ Apple Inc. announced that it will

- ⊙ European Commission limited restrictions on the export of protective equipment and exempted Western Balkan countries from restrictions.
- ⊙ Egypt's Prime Minister announced plans to negotiate a one-year financial support with the IMF.
- ⊙ Saudi Arabia announced pledging \$500 million to support international efforts to combat the pandemic and to help bridge a US\$8 billion gap.
- ⊙ Pakistan received \$1.5 billion loan from the IMF to deal with the economic fallout.
- ⊙ The World Bank approved a plan to invest US\$160 billion in emergency aid to help countries deal with the Coronavirus.
- ⊙ The IMF Managing Director described the spread of the Coronavirus as the worst crisis since the Great Depression.
- ⊙ IMF announced that it would provide immediate debt relief to twenty-five member countries under its "Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust".
- ⊙ US Department of Labour reported more than 30 million unemployed due to the pandemic.
- ⊙ The ILO reported about 1.6 billion people employed in the informal economy worldwide, but nearly half of them, could see their livelihoods

destroyed due to the lockdown.

- ⊙ The Eurozone's economy shrank by 3.8% in the first quarter of 2020 as a result of the pandemic.



May 2020

Countries and Territories That Reported Their First Confirmed Cases in May

- ⊙ South Ossetia, and Lesotho.

Outstanding Data

- ⊙ UK: 31,855 deaths.
- ⊙ Brazil: over 363,000 cases and 23,000 deaths.
- ⊙ India: 70,756 cases and 87 deaths.
- ⊙ Canada: 66,796 cases and 4,728 deaths.
- ⊙ Qatar: 21,331 cases.
- ⊙ Italy: 218,268 cases (1,034 of them in intensive care).
- ⊙ Australia: 6,927 cases and 97 deaths.
- ⊙ France: 26,380 deaths.
- ⊙ USA: 100,000 deaths (29,00 of them in New York state).
- ⊙ WHO reported that since April began, an average of 80,000 cases per day had been reported.
- ⊙ Africa's CDC reported over 50,000 cases in Africa with 8,000 in South Africa.
- ⊙ On May, 8th, the six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council reported 80,000 cases and 486 deaths.
- ⊙ International Council of Nurses reported 90,000 nurses have been affected, and 260 have died.
- ⊙ By May 10th, about 4 million cases were reported globally with over 279,000 deaths and 1.4 million recoveries.

- ⊙ A study by WHO found that 231 million people in Africa could be infected by the end of 2020.

Science

- ⊙ US CDC alerted doctors on a “multi-system inflammatory syndrome” in children with exposure to COVID-19, listed as one of the leading causes (one 5-year-old died).
- ⊙ Thirty countries and multiple international partners signed to support WHO-backed COVID-19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP), a “one-stop shop” for sharing data, intellectual property, and scientific findings to counter the disease.
- ⊙ UNAIDS initiated a petition requesting that when a successful vaccine is developed, it would be available for free to all.
- ⊙ WHO stated that the lessons learned from the eradication of smallpox four decades ago could be applied to the current pandemic.
- ⊙ UN ESCAP reported that due to lockdowns, the pandemic could help improve the well-being of oceans in the Asia-Pacific region.

Global News and Responses

- ⊙ On May 10th, Brazilian National Congress declared three days of mourning to mark the 10,000 Brazilians who died.
- ⊙ US former President Trump designated

churches, mosques and synagogues as essential services and asked state governors to let them reopen.

- ⊙ The UN launched a policy brief, “COVID-19 And the Need for Action on Mental Health”.
- ⊙ Economy, Funds, and Donations
- ⊙ The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) reported that as of mid-2020, the gross domestic product (GDP) of developed countries would drop 5.0%, while the output of developing countries would drop 0.7%, causing \$8.5 trillion in losses and destroying nearly four years of output gains.
- ⊙ UN Secretary General called for greater “unity and solidarity” and warned of 60 million pushed into extreme poverty and a ‘Great Depression’ like loss of \$8.5 trillion in global output.
- ⊙ The ILO reported that more than one in six young people stopped working since the beginning of the pandemic, creating a “lockdown generation”.
- ⊙ The World Food Programme warned that over 40 million people across West Africa faced desperate food shortages.



June 2020

No new countries or Territories confirmed their First Cases During June 2020, and Some Countries and Territories Still Remained at zero Cases.

Outstanding Data

- ⊙ Malaysia: 8,639 cases and 121 deaths.
- ⊙ New Zealand: 1,528 cases and 22 deaths.
- ⊙ Singapore: 43,907 cases.
- ⊙ Ukraine: 44,334 cases and 1,159 deaths.
- ⊙ USA: 44,732 cases.
- ⊙ Canada: 103,032 cases.
- ⊙ Mexico: 208,392 cases and 25,779 deaths.
- ⊙ Indonesia: 51,427 cases and 2,683 deaths.
- ⊙ Johns Hopkins University reported over 10 million people infected globally and over 500,000 deaths.
- ⊙ On May 11th, WHO's Africa reported over 200,000 cases and over 5,600 deaths across the continent.
- ⊙ Worldwide cases were growing at a rate of 1% to 2% per day. 100,000 to 200,000 new cases were being detected daily which was higher than the number of recoveries.

Science

- ⊙ German company CureVac announced that it was ready to begin clinical trials of a potential vaccine, becoming the

second company in the country to do so.

- ⊙ South Africa began trials for a potential vaccine, making them the first in the Africa.
- ⊙ Italian Health Minister announced that Italy, Germany, France and the Netherlands have reached an agreement with British company AstraZeneca to supply 400 million doses of vaccines at a cost of over \$800 million. AstraZeneca revealed that it had also entered discussions with Brazil, China, Japan and Russia regarding the supply of their vaccine.
- ⊙ Brazil announced spending \$127 million to produce a vaccine being developed by AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford.
- ⊙ WHO reported that COVID-19 can be transmitted by asymptomatic individuals.
- ⊙ WHO highlighted Central and South America as 'intense zones' for COVID-19 transmission.

Global News and Responses

- ⊙ In France, Eiffel Tower reopened to the public with strict hygiene and social distancing measures.
- ⊙ The national airline of Egypt, EgyptAir, announced resuming domestic and international flights in July.
- ⊙ Egyptian authorities announced the reopening of some tourist areas in regions with lower transmission rates.

- ⊙ All airports in Egypt will reopen on July 1st according to the country's Aviation Minister.
- ⊙ Egypt's Prime Minister announced that the country's night-time curfew would end on June 27th. On the same date, restaurants will be allowed to reopen at reduced capacity and places of worship too.
- ⊙ Saudi Arabia announced "very limited" Hajj and pilgrimage to Mecca would take place in July, allowing only Saudi residents due to fears of Coronavirus spreading.
- ⊙ President of Tanzania John Magufuli declared Tanzania to be free of the Coronavirus.
- ⊙ Palestine's Prime Minister announced that Hebron and Nablus would be closed to prevent further spread of Coronavirus.
- ⊙ Turkish President Erdoğan has lifted Turkey's stay-at-home orders for people over 65 and children.
- ⊙ Malaysia announced that citizens will not be allowed to make the annual Hajj due to concerns over Coronavirus.

Economy, Funds, and Donations

- ⊙ IMF warned that the economic recovery from the pandemic was projected to be slower than previously stated, with growth estimated at 4.9%, or nearly 2% below April projections, indicating a deeper recession.
- ⊙ The World Bank reported that the

pandemic would shrink the global economy by 5.2% in 2020, the deepest recession since World War II.

- ⊙ The IMF approved a loan of \$5.2 billion to aid Egypt's recovery from the pandemic.
- ⊙ The UN Conference on Trade and Development announced that international trade is predicted to fall by 27% in the second quarter and by 20% annually.
- ⊙ WHO and UNICEF reported that over 50,000 children in the Middle East and North Africa could die from Coronavirus.
- ⊙ The National Bureau of Economic Research has announced that the US has officially entered its first recession since 2009.
- ⊙ Germany's Federal Statistical Office reported that the travel industry declined by 23% in the first quarter of 2020, making it the largest decline since the 2008 financial crisis.
- ⊙ Tunisia found that their economy could shrink by 6.7% as a result of Coronavirus restrictions, and 275,000 people expected to lose their jobs.
- ⊙ Jordan revealed that the country's unemployment rate could rise to 19% and that the economy could shrink by 3.5% in 2020 due to the pandemic.
- ⊙ UK's data showed the British GDP decreased by 20.4% in April alone as a direct result of lockdown.

July 2020

Countries and Territories That Confirmed Their First Cases During July 2020

- ⊙ Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic.

Outstanding Data

- ⊙ USA: 4 million cases and 143 663 deaths.
- ⊙ UK: 292,552 cases and 45,119 deaths.
- ⊙ Brazil: over 2 million cases.
- ⊙ India: over 1 million cases, and over 25,000 deaths.
- ⊙ China: 83,611 cases and 4,634 deaths.
- ⊙ Palestine: 5,827 cases and 35 deaths.
- ⊙ Italy: 242,827 cases and 34,945 deaths (over 5.95 million people have been tested).

Science

- ⊙ China National Pharmaceutical Group stated that their potential vaccine could be available for purchase by the end of 2020.
- ⊙ Chinese company Fosun Pharmaceutical received permission to begin the first phase of human trials of their potential vaccine using technology developed by

German company BioNtechIndian.

- ⊙ European pharmaceutical companies GlaxoSmithKline and Sanofi reported being in discussions with the European Union to provide 300 million doses of potential vaccines.
- ⊙ German pharmaceutical company Merck reported reaching an agreement with the European Union to supply the company's vaccine upon request to member states of the EU.
- ⊙ The European Commission reported paying 63 million euros to secure a limited supply of the anti-viral drug Remdesivir, from the American company Gilead Sciences, to treat approximately 30,000 patients.
- ⊙ University of Oxford and AstraZeneca reported that their vaccine could be available by the end of the year after succeeding at the first stages of clinical trials.
- ⊙ The US announced paying over \$2 billion to European pharmaceutical companies GlaxoSmithKline and Sanofi, to secure vaccines for 50 million Americans. A total of 100 million doses, two for each patient.

- ⊙ American biopharmaceutical company Moderna and the National Institutes of Health announced that the vaccine being developed by them has moved into the late stage of human trials, involving 30,000 volunteers at 90 different sites.
- ⊙ WHO announced that it would be stopping trials of hydroxychloroquine to treat COVID-19 after failing to reduce the mortality rate among patients.
- ⊙ WHO stated that the first wave of COVID-19 was still going and that the virus was likely not impacted by seasonal changes like other viruses.

Global News and Responses

- ⊙ Face masks became mandatory in most countries and many places started shutting down again, depending on how bad areas were affected.
- ⊙ Vietnam's Prime Minister signed legislation prohibiting all wildlife imports and the operation of wildlife markets.
- ⊙ Saudi Arabia announced that the annual Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca will begin on July 29th, with social distancing guidelines and a heavily reduced capacity. All pilgrims would be required

to undergo mandatory COVID-19 tests and quarantine prior to the pilgrimage.

- ⊙ Palestine's President declared a state of emergency across the country for thirty days, with residents only permitted to leave their homes for essential reasons.
- ⊙ EgyptAir resumed operations, with airports, museums and landmarks including the Giza pyramid complex reopening to tourists across Egypt.
- ⊙ The Egyptian government extended operating hours for restaurants to midnight, and increased the permitted capacity to 50%.
- ⊙ US former President Trump formally withdrew the US from WHO.
- ⊙ The Food and Agriculture Organization issued a "call to action" highlighting millions of farmers in Asia-Pacific, who produce the majority of the world's food and whose lives are disproportionately suffering from the pandemic.
- ⊙ The Taipei Film Festival in Taiwan went ahead despite the pandemic, making it the first in-person film-festival to be held worldwide in 2020.

July 2020

Economy, Funds, and Donations

- ⊙ The Bank of Korea reported that South Korea's GDP decreased 3.3% between April and June, making it the biggest decline since 1998. The country's export industry also declined by 16.6%.
- ⊙ The African Union revealed that the continent lost \$55 billion in travel and tourism during the pandemic.
- ⊙ China's National Bureau of Statistics revealed that the GDP increased by 3.2% between April and June as a result of having more flexible lockdown rules.
- ⊙ Singapore's Ministry of Trade and Industry reported that the economy decreased by 41% between April and June, making Singapore enter its first recession since 2008.
- ⊙ Vietnam's General Statistics Office reported 900,000 job losses and 18 million people receiving lower income than before.
- ⊙ The French National Institute of Statistics reported 13.8% decrease in France's GDP in the second quarter of 2020.
- ⊙ Italy's National Institute of Statistics reported that Italy's GDP decreased by 12.4% in the second quarter of 2020.
- ⊙ Statistics Sweden revealed that in June, Sweden's unemployment rate reached 9.4%, the highest level of unemployment recorded since 1998.
- ⊙ Russian Finance Ministry reported that Russia's GDP would decrease by 5% in 2020. Revealing plans to cut government spending by up to 10% (about \$65 billion) between 2021 and 2023 as a result of increased spending during the pandemic.
- ⊙ Japan recorded losses of \$77 billion in the most recent fiscal year according to government data, the largest decrease since the 2008 financial crisis.
- ⊙ Spanish government announced providing 1.7 billion euros in aid to developing countries to help them fight the pandemic.
- ⊙ The European Council announced that leaders of the European Union agreed on an economic recovery fund that includes 750 billion euros of joint debt to be issued to assist all member states. It additionally includes 390 billion euros of grants and 360 billion euros of low-interest loans.
- ⊙ The IMF approved \$4.3 billion in aid to assist South African authorities in fighting the pandemic.



THE WORLD BANK

- ⦿ The World Bank announced \$4 billion in funding to increase the production and distribution of healthcare equipment for developing countries.
- ⦿ Chile's President Piñera signed a law allowing citizens to withdraw up to 10% of their savings to reduce the economic struggle of the pandemic.



August 2020

No New Countries and Territories Confirmed Their First Cases During August 2020.

Outstanding Data

- ⊙ India: over 3 million cases.
- ⊙ USA: over 5 million cases.
- ⊙ Brazil: over 3 million cases.
- ⊙ Global cases exceeded 22 million, with 780,000 deaths, and with several countries experiencing outbreaks again.

Science

- ⊙ WHO announced that there is a slim possibility of reinfection, citing documented cases of one in 23 million.
- ⊙ Africa's CDC announced that Cameroon, Liberia, Morocco, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Zambia and Zimbabwe will begin antibody tests to understand the spread of Coronavirus in the continent.
- ⊙ US revealed an agreement with the biotechnology company Moderna to secure 100 million doses of vaccines for a cost of \$1.5 billion.
- ⊙ Argentina and Mexico announced producing 150 million doses of vaccines developed by British company

AstraZeneca to supply all Latin American countries, except Brazil.

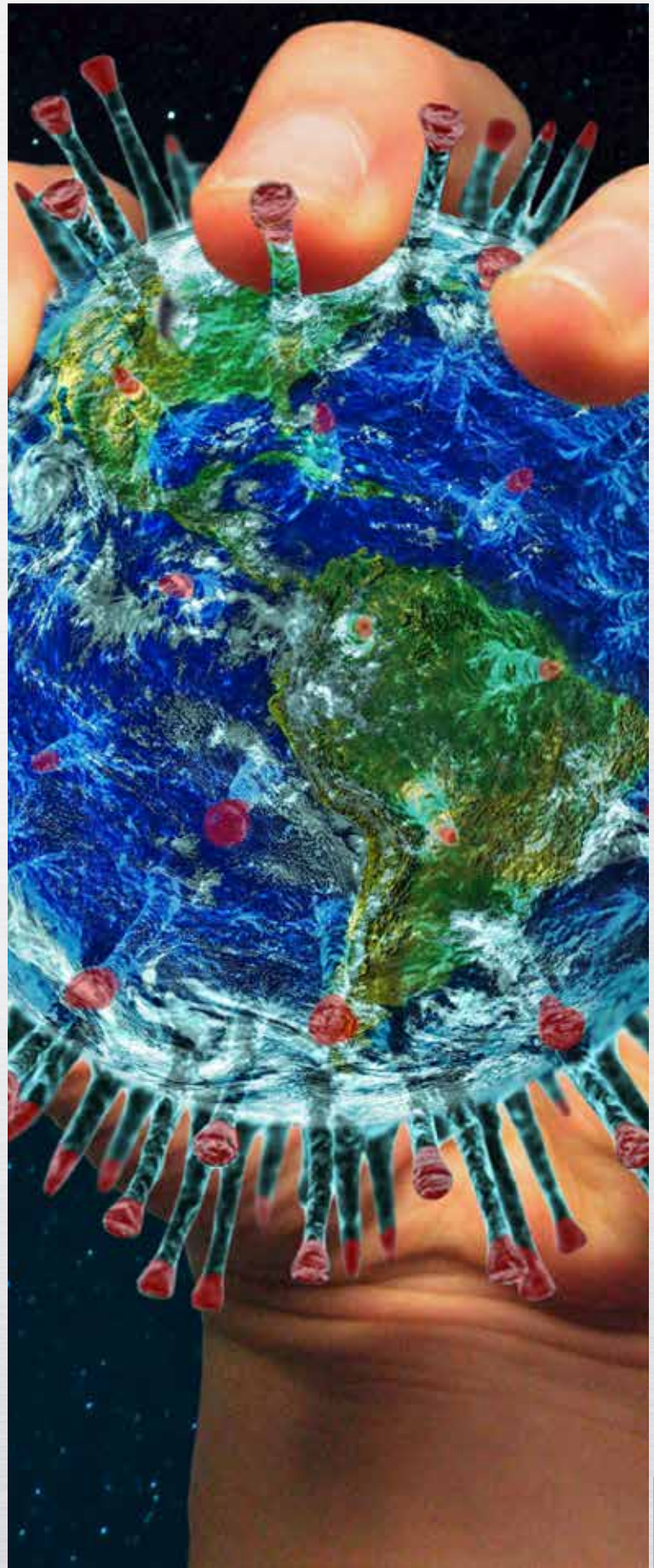
- ⊙ The Brazilian state of Paraná agreed to produce a vaccine developed by Russian researchers and approved by the country's drug regulator.
- ⊙ Russia announced that a vaccine developed by Russian scientists at the Gamaleya Research Institute received approval from the drug regulators, despite clinical trials not reaching the third phase.



**World Health
Organization**

Global News and Responses

- ⊙ A court in the Indian city Mumbai, ruled that actors and crew over the age of 65 will be allowed to resume production of Bollywood films.
- ⊙ China's National Health Commission sent a team of officials to Hong Kong to conduct mass COVID-19 testing after a rise in cases.
- ⊙ Vietnamese city Da Nang, revealed plans to provide tests for all of its 1.1 million residents after another outbreak, with the testing capacity scheduled to increase up to 10,000 a day.
- ⊙ The Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Programme, reported over 3 million people facing food insecurity due to COVID-19.
- ⊙ WHO warned against "vaccine nationalism", urging member states to join COVAX, a mechanism to guarantee fair access to vaccines for all countries.



September 2020

No New Countries and Territories Confirmed Their First Cases During September 2020

Outstanding Data

- ⊙ India: over 6 million cases.
- ⊙ USA: over 7 million cases.
- ⊙ Brazil: over 4 million cases.
- ⊙ On the 27th, the global death toll topped 1 million.

Science

- ⊙ WHO recommended prioritizing the elderly and health workers to take influenza vaccines as the world may face a potential shortage of vaccines.
- ⊙ WHO unveiled that the Coronavirus Vaccines Global Access Facility (COVAX) will deliver two billion doses of vaccines globally by the end of 2021.
- ⊙ UN Secretary General stated that greenhouse gas levels were at record and emissions that declined before, were returning to pre-COVID levels as global temperatures hit new highs.

Economy, Funds, and Donations

- ⊙ ILO reported that about 495 million

full-time jobs were lost globally in the second quarter 2020.

- ⊙ The UN Relief announced that it needs about \$95 million to cover emergency needs of 5.6 million Palestinian refugees until the end of the year.
- ⊙ The UN Women reported that the pandemic and its consequences will likely force about 47 million women into poverty, reversing decades of progress.



October 2020

Countries and Territories That Confirmed Their First Cases During October 2020

- ⊙ Solomon Islands, Wallis and Futuna, and Marshall Islands.

Outstanding Data

- ⊙ UK: over 1 million cases.
- ⊙ USA: over 9 million cases.
- ⊙ India: over 8 million cases.
- ⊙ Colombia: over 1 million cases.
- ⊙ France: 1 million cases.
- ⊙ Spain: 1 million cases.
- ⊙ Argentina: over 1 million cases.
- ⊙ Brazil: over 5 million cases.
- ⊙ Japan: overtaken china in numbers of cases.
- ⊙ Italy: a new record of 19,664 new cases on a single day.
- ⊙ A total of 45 million cases and nearly 1.2 million deaths were reported globally.

Science

- ⊙ WHO rejected the concept of “herd immunity” through exposure to COVID-19 as a solution to the

pandemic, describing it as “unethical”.

- ⊙ The UN reported that China, Korea and Nauru had joined COVAX vaccination program, raising the total of participating nations and economies to 171.
- ⊙ New Zealand established a fund of \$66.3 million to support COVID-19 immunisation and signed an agreement with Pfizer and BioNTech to purchase 1.5 million vaccines.

Global News and Responses

- ⊙ Former US President Trump and First Lady tested positive for COVID-19 resulting in a wider outbreak in the White House.
- ⊙ Spain declared a national state of emergency and imposed a curfew after an increase in cases.
- ⊙ France announced a nationwide lockdown.
- ⊙ Germany declared a four-week restriction period in response to an increase in cases.
- ⊙ British Prime Minister announced a four-week lockdown after 1 million new cases were reported.

October 2020

- ⊙ WHO announced that COVID-19 has become the fifth highest cause of death in Europe.
- ⊙ WHO estimated that 10% of the world's population may have been infected. Ten countries accounted for 70% of all reported cases and mortality, and three countries accounted for half.
- ⊙ WHO reported survey results showing that the pandemic has interrupted essential mental health services in 93% of countries surveyed.

Economy, Funds, and Donations

- ⊙ On International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, UN Secretary-General, called for solidarity, warning that 115 million could fall into poverty in 2020, the first increase in decades.
- ⊙ UNICEF estimated that 40% (3 billion) of the global population do not own home hand-washing facilities.
- ⊙ UN ECLAC stated that economic recovery from the pandemic in Latin America and the Caribbean would likely be slower than the recovery following the subprime mortgage crisis.



INTERNATIONAL
DAY **for the**
ERADICATION
of POVERTY
17 OCTOBER



November 2020

Countries and Territories That Confirmed Their First Cases During November 2020

- ⊙ American Samoa, Vanuatu, and Samoa.

Outstanding Data

- ⊙ USA: over 13 million cases.
- ⊙ Germany: over 1 million cases.
- ⊙ Brazil: over 6 million cases.
- ⊙ India: over 9 million cases.
- ⊙ Russia: over 2 million cases.
- ⊙ France: over 2 million cases.
- ⊙ Mexico: over 1 million cases.
- ⊙ Italy: over 1 million cases.
- ⊙ Johns Hopkins University reported that the global infections were above 60 million.

Global News and Responses

- ⊙ Italy enforced limitations for each region using a color-coded map to avoid further spread.

Economy, Fund, and Donations

- ⊙ The Bank of New Zealand announced shutting down thirty-eight branches over the next seven months as a result of the economic effects.

December 2020

Countries and Territories That Confirmed Their First Cases During December 2020

- ⊙ Antarctica.

Outstanding Data

- ⊙ Antarctica: first cases reported by Chile (36 total cases of 10 civilians and 26 officers).
- ⊙ Canada: over 500,000 cases.
- ⊙ India: over 10 million cases.
- ⊙ Italy: over 2 million cases.
- ⊙ South Africa: over 1 million cases.
- ⊙ USA: over 19 million cases.
- ⊙ Russia: over 3 million cases.
- ⊙ Brazil: over 7 million cases.
- ⊙ Iran: over 1 million cases.
- ⊙ Peru: over 1 million cases.
- ⊙ Poland: over 1 million cases.
- ⊙ Turkey: over 2 million cases.
- ⊙ UK: 55,892 new cases on one day (highest daily total at that point).
- ⊙ The total number global cases surpassed 80 million with 1.75 million deaths.

SCIENCE

- ⊙ South Africa announced the discovery of a new variant of the virus known as 501.V2 variant.
- ⊙ Different strains started spreading around the world. For instance, South Africa's strain spread to Switzerland, Finland, Zambia, Japan, Australia, and the UK this month.
- ⊙ The UK announced a new variant of SARS-CoV-2 is responsible for the rise in cases.
- ⊙ UK's strain hit the world starting with Germany, Gibraltar, Belgium, Denmark, Israel, New Zealand, France, Ireland, USA, Italy, and Switzerland this month.
- ⊙ Malaysia's Health Ministry confirmed identifying a new COVID-19 strain (A701B strain).
- ⊙ UK became the first country to approve the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for mass immunisation.

Global News and Responses

- ⊙ December 1st, marked one year since the index case of the pandemic occurred in Wuhan, China.
- ⊙ First case in a native wild animal has been detected.
- ⊙ French President Macron tested positive for COVID-19.
- ⊙ 90-year-old British woman Margaret Keenan became the first person to receive the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine.
- ⊙ Canada approved Pfizer–BioNTech’s vaccine, stating that it met its “safety, efficacy and quality requirements”. Canada has also purchased 20 million doses of the vaccine for its people.
- ⊙ US former Vice-President Pence and his wife received Pfizer–BioNTech’s vaccine in an effort to boost public confidence in its safety and effectiveness.
- ⊙ Bahrain’s National Health Regulatory Authority approved the emergency use of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine
- ⊙ German Chancellor Angela Merkel announced that Germany will enter into a “hard lockdown” during the Christmas period.

- ⊙ Many countries worldwide reimposed travel bans and restrictions on the UK in response to the emergence of the “more-infectious” and “out of control” variant.



December 2020

Countries and Territories That Confirmed Their First Cases During January 2021

- ⊙ Federated States of Micronesia.

Outstanding Data

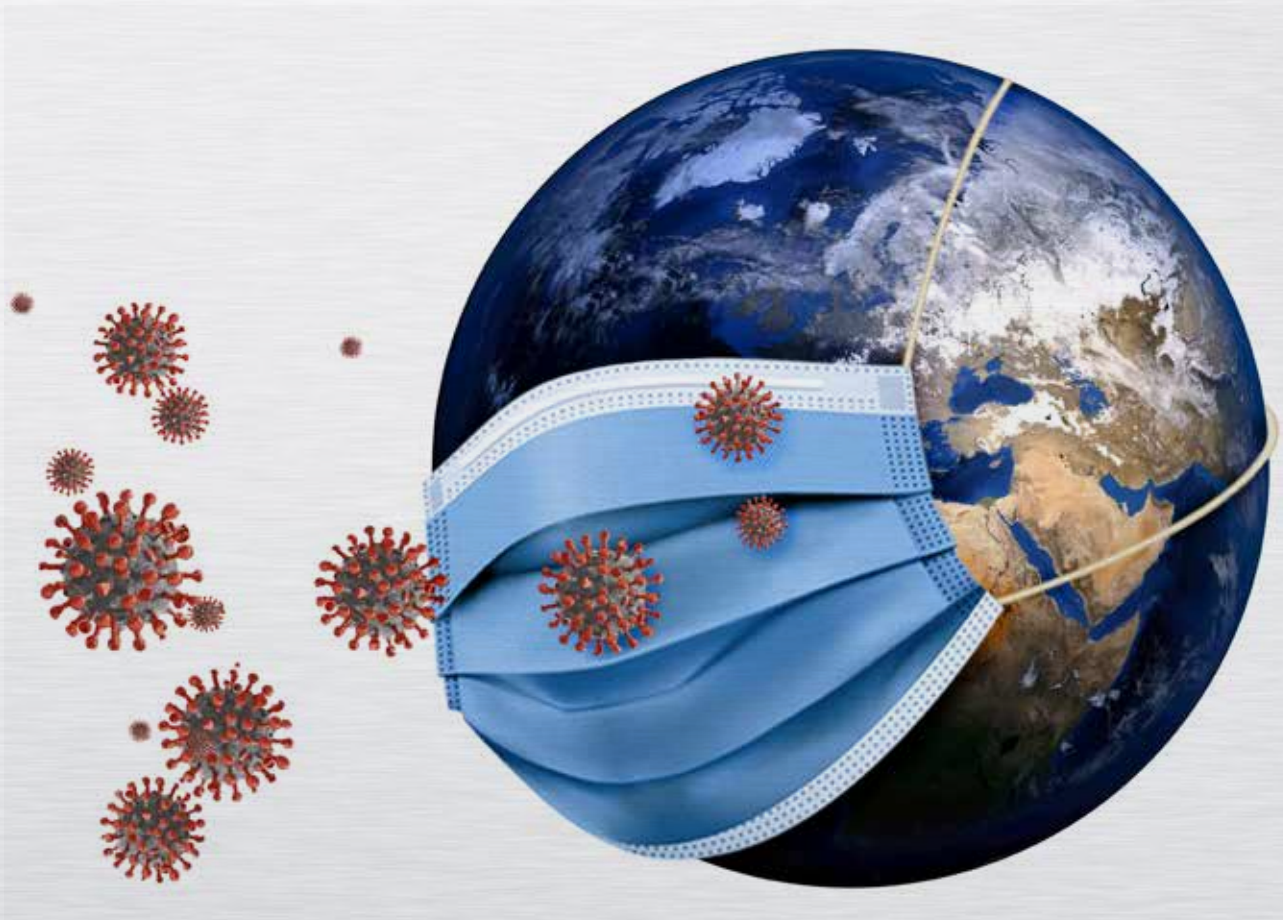
- ⊙ USA: over 26 million cases.
- ⊙ Brazil: over 9 million cases.
- ⊙ UK: over 3 million cases and 100,000 deaths.
- ⊙ Indonesia: over 1 million cases.
- ⊙ Colombia: over 2 million cases.
- ⊙ France: over 3 million cases.
- ⊙ Germany: over 2 million cases.
- ⊙ Spain: Over 2 million cases.
- ⊙ China: 1 death due to the virus since May 2020.
- ⊙ Russia: 3,425,269 cases making it the worst affected European country.
- ⊙ Africa's CDC reported 2,854,971 cases, 2,361,900 recoveries and 67,986 deaths.
- ⊙ The total number of cases reported worldwide hit the 100 million mark.

Science

- ⊙ Researchers reported the first reinfection case in Brazil involving the South African variant.
- ⊙ India's Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation gave final approval of both AstraZeneca-Oxford's vaccine and Bharat Biotech's vaccine for emergency use.
- ⊙ Norway vaccinated around 42,000 people in which many of them experienced side effects later.
- ⊙ Norway reported 29 deaths of people with serious health conditions, aged between 75 and 80 years, after receiving the Pfizer vaccine.
- ⊙ A delegation of WHO experts visited Wuhan to investigate the origin of the virus.
- ⊙ Japan reported a new variant of SARS-CoV-2, Lineage B.1.1.248.
- ⊙ South Africa's Health Minister announced that the country would be receiving one million doses of vaccines developed by the University of Oxford and biotech firm AstraZeneca in January 2021 and another 500,000 in February 2021.

Global News and Responses

- ⦿ January 9th, marked one year since the first death of COVID-19 in Wuhan, China.
- ⦿ South Africa's variant kept spreading and made it to Germany, Austria, and South Korea.
- ⦿ UK strain also kept spreading and made it to Oman, Iran, Austria, and Turkey.
- ⦿ British Prime Minister announced that England will enter a seven-week lockdown period.
- ⦿ Singapore suspended its "travel bubble" with Malaysia, Germany, and South Korea in response to a global spike of the new variants.
- ⦿ Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa tested positive for COVID-19.



February 2021

Countries and Territories That Have not Reported any Cases of SARS-CoV-2 in February 2021

- ⊙ (NOTE: some of these claims are challenged.)
- ⊙ Africa: Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha.
- ⊙ Asia: Christmas Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands, North Korea, and Turkmenistan.
- ⊙ Europe: Svalbard.
- ⊙ Oceania: Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Norfolk Island, Palau, Pitcairn Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, and Tuvalu.

Outstanding Data

- ⊙ USA: over 28 million cases.
- ⊙ Brazil: over 10 million cases.
- ⊙ Mexico: over 2 million cases.
- ⊙ UK: over 4 million cases.
- ⊙ Russia: over 4 million cases.
- ⊙ Argentina: over 2 million cases.
- ⊙ Spain: over 3 million cases.
- ⊙ Czech Republic: over 1 million cases (the 20th country to set that record).
- ⊙ Malaysia: 283,569 cases, 249,202 recoveries and 1,056 deaths.

⊙ New Zealand: 2,350 cases, 2,273 recoveries, and 26 deaths.

⊙ Singapore: 59,869 cases.

⊙ Ukraine: 1,304,456 cases and 25,103 deaths.

Science

- ⊙ South Africa suspended the Oxford–AstraZeneca vaccine after a trial proved it did not have an effect on the South African variant of the virus.
- ⊙ New Zealand formally authorised the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for use. The vaccine will be limited to people over the age of 16 years.
- ⊙ Malaysia confirmed that vaccines would be distributed freely to both Malaysians and foreigners residing in the country. However, Malaysian nationals will receive priority.
- ⊙ Indonesia announced that COVID-19 vaccines will be required for citizens and that it will seek the private sector's help in covering the population.

Latest Data:

- According to EDCCD, since 31 December 2019 and as of week 2021-8, 114,456,109 cases of COVID-19 (in accordance with the applied case definitions and testing strategies in the affected countries) have been reported, including 2,536,879 deaths.

Cases have been reported from:

- Africa: 3 898 190 cases; the five countries reporting most cases are South Africa (1,512,225), Morocco (483,766), Tunisia (233 669), Egypt (182 424) and Ethiopia (159 072).
- Asia: 21 677 877 cases; the five countries reporting most cases are India (11 112 241), Iran (1,631,169), Indonesia (1 334 634), Israel (778 172) and Iraq (695 489).
- America: 51 118 746 cases; the five countries reporting most cases are United States (28 605 661), Brazil (10 587 001), Colombia (2 255 260), Argentina (2 111 972) and Mexico (2 089 281).
- Europe: 37 701 908 cases; the five countries reporting most cases are Russia (4 257 650), United Kingdom (4 176 554), France (3 755 968), Spain (3 204 531) and Italy (2 925 265).
- Oceania: 58 683 cases; the five countries reporting most cases are

Australia (28 970), French Polynesia (18 387), Guam (7 737), New Zealand (2 022) and Papua New Guinea (1 275).

- Other: 705 cases have been reported from an international conveyance in Japan.

Deaths have been reported from:

- Africa: 103 718 deaths; the five countries reporting most deaths are South Africa (49 941), Egypt (10 688), Morocco (8 637), Tunisia (8 022) and Algeria (2 983).
- Asia: 360 513 deaths; the five countries reporting most deaths are India (157 157), Iran (60 073), Indonesia (36 166), Iraq (13 406) and Pakistan (12 896).
- America: 1 217 574 deaths; the five countries reporting most deaths are United States (513 091), Brazil (255 720), Mexico (186 152), Colombia (59 866) and Argentina (52 077).
- Europe: 853 847 deaths; the five countries reporting most deaths are United Kingdom (122 849), Italy (97 699), Russia (86 455), France (86 454) and Germany (70 105).
- Oceania: 1 221 deaths; the five countries reporting most deaths are Australia (909), French Polynesia (139), Guam (131), New Zealand (26) and Papua New Guinea (12).

Latest Updates Source: (COVID-19 situation update worldwide, 2021

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Times of Crises Taking Action in The Response of Egypt's Dar al-Ifta to the COVID-19 Pandemic



The day WHO declared the rapidly spreading coronavirus a pandemic ushered in a new reality. The world suddenly found itself face to face with a formidable global challenge that cut across almost all fields of human endeavor. The entire world was plunged in uncharted territory and the global population experienced living in fear that death would come at any moment.

As the pandemic intensified, it became clear that national and international institutions and organizations in their various capacities needed to work together to prevent and contain the spread of the virus. Religious institutions were no exception. They rose to the occasion by leveraging their capacity to make effective and meaningful contributions at times of national and global crisis.

In its capacity as the most authoritative provider of fatwa and guide for moral behavior in Egypt and the Muslim world, Egypt's Dar al-Ifta mounted a rapid response to the new conditions created by the COVID-19 outbreak.

In terms of discharging its duty of raising public awareness and shedding light on responsibilities, Egypt's Dar al-Ifta made the following:

- ⦿ From the very beginning, Egypt's Dar al-Ifta emphasized the legal obligation of following the instructions of health authorities.
- ⦿ Egypt's Dar al-Ifta issued a host of fatwas covering many aspects related to the pandemic.
- ⦿ Whereas it had previously declared the permissibility of holding public celebrations because they are devoid

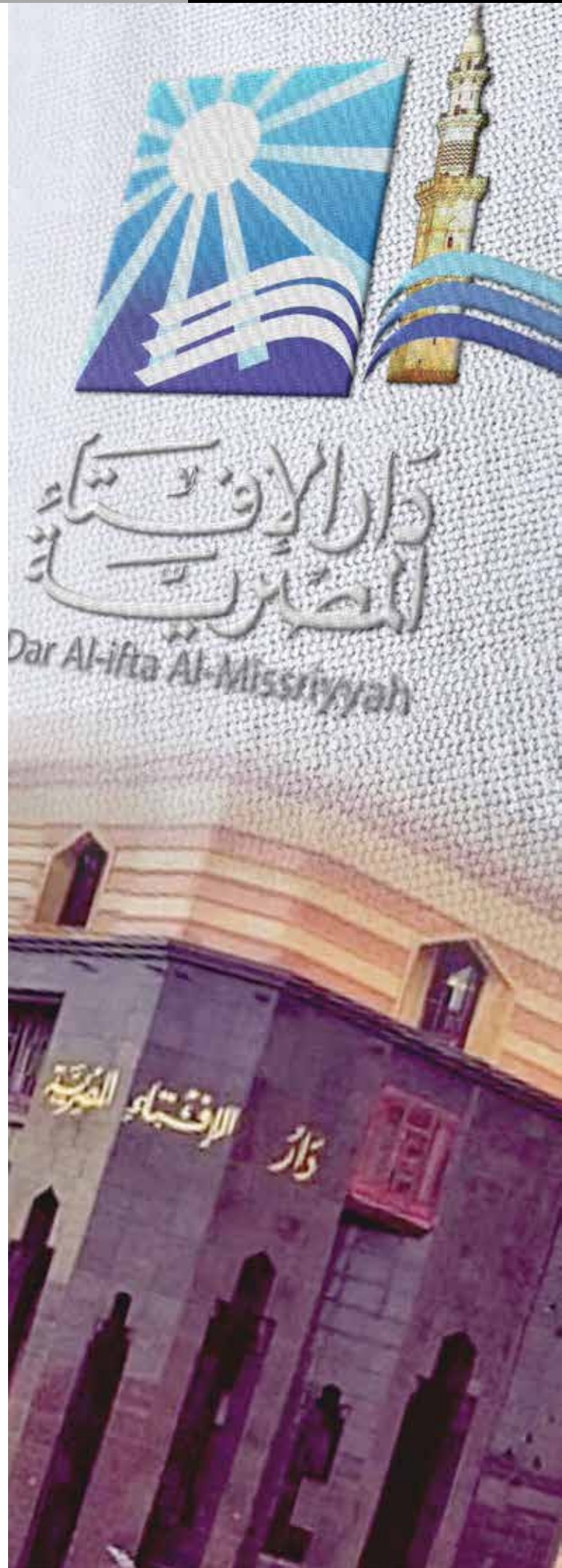


World Health Organization

of harm to the individual and society, do not violate Islamic law, and draw sustenance from social customs, Dar al-Ifta presently forbids any assembly to celebrate such occasions. This position, based on the principle that a fatwa changes with the change of time, place, custom, and circumstance, is designed to prevent the diffusion of the virus.

- ⦿ Egypt's Dar al-Ifta warned against calls to organize marches to ask God to end the pandemic, emphasizing that such conduct emanates from lack of understanding and awareness and does not rely on any Islamic legal evidence. It encouraged the people to pray at home instead and forgo any congregation.
- ⦿ Egypt's Dar al-Ifta refuted the rumors circulating on social media that the coronavirus was mentioned in some verses of the Quran.

- ⊙ Egypt's Dar al-Ifta again refuted the irregular fatwas that were in circulation about the permissibility of refraining from fasting during the month of Ramadan due to the spread of the virus. The Dar issued a fatwa confirming the obligation of fasting Ramadan and the impermissibility of refraining from this religious obligation except for a legal excuse such as illness or travel. The obligation comes in light of the fact that health authorities affirmed that fasting does not lead to COVID-19 infection.
- ⊙ There is no doubt that COVID-19 has affected day-to-day life. One of the most important areas affected by the spread of the virus for Muslims is congregational prayer. In this context, Egypt's Dar al-Ifta issued fatwas and statements highlighting the necessity of accepting the Islamic legal obligation to suspend religious rites performed in congregation during certain circumstances such as epidemics and pandemics. It likewise warned against exploiting Public religious sentiments and inciting the people to circumvent their country's restrictions applicable to such rites.
- ⊙ The General Secretariat for Fatwa Authorities Worldwide, an institution affiliated to Egypt's Dar al-Ifta bringing together fatwa authorities from different world countries to engage with fatwa-related issues of concern to the global Muslim community, issued numerous statements that examined the newly emerging juristic issues created by our current exceptional



circumstances. Similarly, Juzoor, the monthly newsletter issued by the General Secretariat for Fatwa Authorities Worldwide, addressed numerous COVID-19 related juristic issues as matters of urgency.

- ⊙ Da'm, a newsletter issued by the Center for Fatwa Research at the General Secretariat for Fatwa Authorities Worldwide to aid fatwa researchers, featured a number of topics focusing on the coronavirus.
- ⊙ On the preventive front, Egypt's Dar al-Ifta took the necessary measures from the very beginning of the pandemic to provide the best protection for its employees and their families as well as for the visitors to the Dar while simultaneously ensuring the smooth operation of its activities. The measures included:
 - ⊙ Reducing the number of employees present at the Dar at any given time by imposing rotational attendance of employees in a manner that ensures performance efficiency.
 - ⊙ Ensuring a safe work environment by putting into place the directions issued by the Ministry of Health concerning the wearing of masks by both employees and visitors, the use of hand disinfectants, maintaining the recommended social distance, and refraining from shaking hands.
 - ⊙ Suspending all activities related to the fatwa training and marriage rehabilitation programs in conformity with the presidential directions to suspend education and place restrictions

on public assemblies.

- ⊙ From the earliest stages of the pandemic, Egypt's Dar al-Ifta developed a comprehensive strategy focused on imposing strict measures to prevent infection by increasing its website's level of accessibility as an alternative to in-person visits to Dar al-Ifta. For this purpose, it increased the number of muftis to answer fatwa solicitors both for its website and telephone services in addition to developing a smartphone application to receive and answer inquiries.
- ⊙ In addition to the above, Egypt's Dar al-Ifta increased the number of live-streaming hours on its website during which it receives and answers inquiries, consequently increasing communication between fatwa solicitors and muftis.
- ⊙ Likewise, the scholars of Egypt's Dar al-Ifta make regular appearances on many Egyptian satellite channels, thereby greatly facilitating communication between fatwa solicitors and muftis during quarantine and lockdown restrictions.

Egypt's Dar al-Ifta leveraged its position as a leading fatwa issuing body to summon the public to act in solidarity and responsibility towards their fellow citizens by launching an online campaign titled "Charity is more urgent". The campaign was designed to reach out to those who are unable to perform 'umrah due to Saudi authorities' resolution to suspend the rite over safety procedures, encouraging them to donate their 'umrah expenses to the poor, the needy, and irregular and daily laborers



who are the most affected by the economic impact of COVID-19. In the statement it issued on the catastrophic impact of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable communities, Egypt's Dar al-Ifta said, "The doors of charity are wide open before you. Your charity is a sincere act of worship that transcends your own interests and entails a greater reward than that of 'umrah."

Similarly, Egypt's Dar al-Ifta sent a message to all 'umrah hopefuls who are prevented from performing this religious rite by the current crisis saying, "Donate your 'umrah expenses to the poor, the needy, and daily laborers for charity at the time of crises and alleviating the distress of the needy is more rewardable before God Almighty."

On a related note, Egypt's Dar al-Ifta issued a fatwa permitting paying out zakat to daily laborers and hired hands as well as to those whose income was badly hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. The fatwa likewise permits paying zakat in advance to this category of workers to fulfill their needs and alleviate their deprivation and hardship.



Additionally, the fatwa encouraged the rich and prosperous to give charity and financial help to daily laborers and hired hands and others whose income was slashed during this critical time of the pandemic. In fact, according to the fatwa, all citizens should come to the aid of these people and provide them with financial and emotional support.

Finally, yet just as importantly, Egypt's Dar al-Ifta sought to make a stand against the bullying and the harassment levelled at COVID-19 patients and the mishandling of bodies of those who died of the infection. Egypt's Dar al-Ifta observed many cases in which COVID-19 victims including health-care workers who lost their lives while on the frontline of efforts to treat COVID-19 patients. Other incidents of violence, harassment, and stigmatizations took place against infected persons. The incidents included preventing patients from reaching their homes and forcing

them to leave the area. In response to this phenomenon, Egypt's Dar al-Ifta clarified the Islamic legal ruling in relation to such harassments, the dangers it presents, and the sin it entails.

Dar al-Ifta moreover explained that COVID-19 victims enjoy the status of martyrs due to the pain and suffering they endured. In addition, doctors who sacrificed their own lives in the line of duty deserve grateful recognition, respect, and honor.

There is no doubt that Dar al-Ifta's urgent response to the current pandemic was driven by its responsibility to its duty and mission on both the religious and national levels as well as by its commitment to engage in advocacy to advance the spiritual, material, and health welfare of the people.

What is a Fatwa?



A fatwa is the elucidation of a ruling of Islamic law concerning an occurrence in the world. Ultimately, none but God issues fatwas; others merely transmit His rulings pertaining to specific matters. The first person in Islam to carry out this role was the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), as he was issuing fatwas by delivering the message of God. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) was followed by his Companions, who were then succeeded by the scholars from amongst their followers (al-tabi'un).

In order to perform the duties of a mufti, one must be Muslim, sane, mature, knowledgeable, specialized, and just. One must have also attained the scholarly status of “mujtahid,” which characterizes those possessing advanced ability in independent legal reasoning.

There is certain etiquette by which the mufti should abide and its importance is such that it may become requisite in our age. This etiquette calls on the mufti to make things easy for people by bringing them into God's religion, protecting them, and providing a means whereby they can act in accordance with a position that is acknowledged by Islamic law. This approach is recommended because it eases the path and thus prevents people from leaving religion entirely and falling into grave moral error.

The main goal of the mufti is to create a legal tool that aids in the actualization of the Islamic juristic tradition without departing from the tradition or making it a barrier to contemporary Muslims.

The mufti should have a methodology concerning the hierarchy of evidence he

employs in his rulings. When the mufti is asked about an issue, he should first consult the Quran. If he does not find evidence in the Quran, then he should turn to the Sunnah. If the Sunnah does not provide guidance on the issue, then the mufti should employ analogy in the evidence for his ruling. It is required that the rulings not breach consensus. As for disputed evidence, such as in the case of juristic preference (istihsan) and the law of communities that preceded us, the mufti may issue fatwas based on these sources only if his own legal reasoning (ijtihad) leads him to accept them as true. The protocol established by the schools of jurisprudence allows the mufti to issue fatwas following any of the mujtahid schools, so long as his own ijtihad does not lead him to believe that the truth lies elsewhere. A fatwa goes through four major stages in the mufti's mind before it is put in the form that the questioner hears or sees. These stages are: conceptualization (taswir), designation (takyif), the elucidation of the ruling (bayan al-hukm), and the issuing of the fatwa (ifta').

Stages of a Fatwa

During the first stage, conceptualization, the mufti grasps the issue that has been raised by the fatwa solicitor. A correct conceptualization must be in accordance with the reality of the inquired-upon action, and is an essential condition for issuing sound fatwas that are appropriate for the world in which we live. The burden of conceptualization rests primarily on the shoulders of the inquirer, but the mufti should check that he/she is not confused

by making inquiries on the four aspects of the action (time, place, people, and conditions), since the alteration of these details could effect change in the fatwa.

The second stage, designation, is the act of linking the concept under question to the appropriate categories and issues of jurisprudence.

The third stage, elucidation of the ruling, involves deriving the ruling from the Quran, the Sunnah, or consensus. The ruling may also be composed through judicial analogy (qiyas).

The final stage generates the fatwa when the mufti applies his formulated ruling to the reality that he has perceived. At this stage, the mufti must ensure that his fatwa does not go against the goals (maqasid) of Islamic law, or contravene one of its definitive texts, an agreed upon consensus, or an established legal maxim.

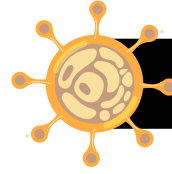
Fatwas differ according to their specific time, place, people, and conditions. If, for example, customs were to remain unchanged for a number of centuries, nobody would be able to change the fatwa concerning them. As for rulings that are not based on customs and local practices, as well as essential rulings based on definitive texts that embody commands and prohibitions, these fatwas do not change regardless of time, place, or people. Examples of these steadfast rulings are the obligations to pray, to fast, to pay alms (zakat), and to be honest and trustworthy. The permissibility of commerce and the prohibitions of fornication and consumption of alcohol also fall into this category of essential rulings.

COVID-19 and Divine Punishment



question

Some extremist movements claim that the COVID-19 virus is a punishment from God which he has inflicted upon His enemies from among the followers of the tyrants of our age and their followers, electors, minions, and soldiers. What is the position of Islamic law on this?




Answer

Afflictions and tribulations fall in the scope of divine providence and mercy. They carry within them a capital of grace, kindness, benevolence, and grants. And although afflictions seem to be anything but momentary, they too shall pass like countless others. Patience and perseverance are, however, what we need most at such times.

Epidemics are ultimately a mercy from God almighty. ‘Aisha, the Mother of Believers (may God be pleased with her), once asked the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) about the plague. He replied, “[Previously], it was a means of torture sent by God on whoever He willed, but then God made it a source of mercy for the believers. So no servant of God who remains in the land in which plague has broken out, exercising patience and knowing that nothing will befall him except what God has ordained for him, except that God will grant him a reward similar to that of a martyr.”⁽¹⁾

We are invited to look at epidemics from the perspective of mercy, not in their outward manifestation, but in terms of their repercussions and the rewards that ensue from them. All trials, hardships, and distress are in reality working for us, not against us, at a higher level; they elevate the rank of a believer, increase reward, and remove punishment. Mercifully, nothing goes unrewarded by God Almighty, not

(1) Sahih Al-Bukhari.



even something as minor as the prick of a thorn. ‘Aisha (may God be pleased with her) narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, “No affliction that befalls a believer, were it the prick of a thorn or something greater, except that God raises him one degree in rank or removes one of his sins by it.”⁽²⁾

If a believer is rewarded for the prick of a thorn, then a fortiori fatal diseases and epidemics! God Almighty says, “And God made it not except as [a sign of] good tidings for you and to reassure your hearts thereby,”⁽³⁾ and “And We tested them with good [times] and bad that perhaps they would return.”⁽⁴⁾

Contrary to the apparent, the ultimate purpose of adversity include knowing God’s power and might, turning to Him, and submitting to His will and decree as per the words of God Almighty, “Then why, when Our punishment came to them, did they not humble themselves?”⁽⁵⁾ and “And We had gripped them with suffering [as a warning], but they did not yield to their Lord, nor did they humbly supplicate.”⁽⁶⁾

With this in mind, it is important not to despair of God’s mercy, tire of supplicating Him, or allow undue distress to creep into our hearts due to the protraction of affliction since we do not know the wisdom behind it nor can we fathom its essence.

(2) Sahih Muslim.

(3) Quran, 3: 126.

(4) Ibid., 7: 168.

(5) Quran, 6: 43.

(6) Quran, 23: 76.

The current pandemic that is sweeping across the globe is considered a matter of the unseen, the truth of which no one knows except God Almighty. Consequently, it is impermissible for us humans to speak without knowledge of God's will and truth and anyone who does so is to turn to God in sincere repentance and ask Him for forgiveness as well as do good deeds in abundance. All of this brings relief from adversity for God Almighty says, "And if God should touch you with adversity, there is no remover of it except Him."⁽⁷⁾ It is erroneous to ascertain that the pandemic is a punishment from God because He has no use for our obedience or disobedience. Similar adversities, hardships, and epidemics occurred during the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and our pious Predecessors and they did not perceive them as divine punishment nor as a cause for being cast out of God's mercy but faced them with resignation and submission to the will of God Almighty.

Based on this, despite seeming outwardly an affliction from God, the COVID-19 virus is not a punishment as some claim it to be. Rather, it is a mercy for believers and therefore it is necessary that we construe this pandemic in terms of consequences and the ensuing rewards generated by patience and acceptance. We should not only look at the outward reality of afflictions but also at the unseen realities and sublime wisdom they hold.

We are certain that we will overcome this adversity by raising humble prayers and earnest solicitations to God Almighty. We are likewise certain that God will protect

us especially after we learned the necessity of prioritizing, how to function at times of crises, and the importance of infection control behaviors and preventive measures in reducing infection rates.

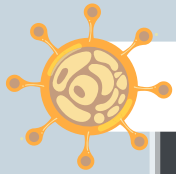
As for those who categorically assert that COVID-19 is a punishment from God, their claims are nothing more than questionable predictions and ignorant assumptions. However, we should ask God Almighty for a cure and repentance. We are to invoke peace and blessings upon the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), do good deeds, and make supplications to God in abundance in affirmation of His words, "And if God should touch you with adversity, none can remove it except Him."

And God Almighty knows best.



(7) Ibid., 6: 17.

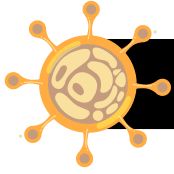
Burying COVID-19 Decedents in Caskets



question

What is the ruling for burying those who die from the COVID-19 virus in specially prepared caskets to prevent the spread of infection to others?





Answer

This issue needs to be broken down into two legal objectives to reflect first, protecting the living by preventing their infection and second, honoring the dead by burial.

God Almighty has sanctioned burying and concealing the bodies of the dead to contain the odor emanating from the corpses and prevent them from being preyed upon by wild animals, indicating the respect and honor given to the human body after death. He says, “From the earth We created you, and into it We will return you, and from it we will extract you another time”⁽¹⁾ and “Have we not made the earth a container of the living and the dead?”⁽²⁾

Jurists have maintained that the minimum legal criteria required for any form of grave is that it conceal the mortal remains of the dead and the odor emanating from them and ensure that they are not tampered with.

One of the five universal objectives of Islamic law is the protection of lives and, in this context, the main aspect of this protection is the prevention of harmful diseases and fatal epidemics. Islamic law consequently cautions against contagious diseases and exhorts efforts to contain them. It also introduced pioneering preventive methods in observance of the universal objectives and preventing danger to the entire society.

(1) Quran, 20: 55.

(2) Ibid., 77: 25-6.



First, with regards to the first of these objectives in the context of COVID-19, is the concern over cross-contamination hazards from COVID-19 decedents. COVID-19 has been proven to be a highly contagious disease that is spread from one person to another either through the respiratory droplets released from an infected person or through mixing with and direct contact with an infected person without taking the precautionary measures. According to the Field Manual for the Management of Dead Bodies issued by the Pan American Health Organization, some contagious diseases continue to pose cross-contamination hazards even after the death of the infected person and that only trained and professional personnel are to handle dead bodies during an epidemic. The manual also states technical recommendations for body handlers to protect them from occupational risks associated with the contagion such as placing bodies in specially designed body bags and then placing them in coffins according to the respective customs and cultures before taking them to the cemetery for burial.

The preventive medicine sector at the Egyptian Ministry of Health stipulates the necessity of washing and shrouding the dead and transporting them to their graves in body bags optimized against leaks and with clear hazard warning signs. Further stipulations include:

- ⊙ Having the minimum possible number of people at the funeral car.
- ⊙ Placing the body in a reusable sealed casket that will be later cleaned and disinfected.
- ⊙ Having the people attending the funeral wear appropriate personal preventive equipment such as gloves and masks.
- ⊙ Refraining from opening the casket during the funeral prayer for any reason.
- ⊙ Having the minimum possible number of people enter the body in its place of burial.
- ⊙ Strictly complying with the proper hygiene after the burial procedures.
- ⊙ Disinfecting all surfaces that come in contact with the body.

Based on this, it is permissible to bury COVID-19 decedents in coffins since a coffin burial is no more than a means to meet the above-mentioned objectives.

Second, according to Islamic law, the dignity of the dead must be respected by all possible means. While Islamic burial rituals do not prescribe coffin burials, this does not mean that they violate the dignity and sanctity of the dead. Taking an interest and need-based approach to this issue, jurists have permitted the deployment of all means necessary to ensure airtight sealing of coffins. They consequently allow coffin burials whether the casket is made of wood, concrete, or iron. Imam Ibn al-Haj, the Maliki scholar, maintained the permissibility of coffin burials especially if the earth in which the deceased is to be buried is soft.⁽³⁾ According to Ibn Hajar al-Haytami, although coffin burials are disliked based on scholarly consensus, they are nevertheless deemed permissible when there are justifications to prioritize them. These include moist or soft earth,

(3) Ibn al-Haj, Al-Madkhal.



the risk of animals digging up the graves, or the earth itself is unstable and the only means to preserve the body is to place it in a coffin.⁽⁴⁾

It is permissible to bury the dead in coffins that protect the bodies of the dead and safeguard their dignity and sanctity. In addition, coffin burials protect those present during burial from infection spreading from the dead to the living. The scholarly verdict of dislike must not dissuade the public from coffin burials since it has been established that such a verdict is overridden by the minimum need. If this is so, then a fortiori, a necessity associated with the preservation of lives.

Finally, it is necessary to follow the instructions and preventive procedures issued by the relevant authorities regarding dead body management in the context of infectious disease transmission.

And God almighty knows best.

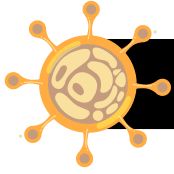
⁽⁴⁾ Al-Haytami, Tuhfat al-Muhtaj.

Using Convalescent Plasma to Treat Covid-19 Patients



question

Is it permissible to use plasma collected from recovered COVID-19 patients to help other infected patients?



Answer

Plasma is the clear yellowish liquid portion of the blood that remains after red blood cells, white blood cells, platelets and other cellular components are removed. Plasma is a valuable therapy in the treatment of many conditions.

The world woke up to a new reality this year, to the rapid and insidious spread of the new coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, to every country. Currently, there is no specific treatment for the disease and various drugs and therapies are used to treat the symptoms. Amid the rush of clinical studies to find effective drugs and treatment, convalescent plasma is being touted as a potential coronavirus treatment.

In light of this possible valid treatment option, convalescent plasma donation has become both a religious and a national duty due to the needs of patients in critical condition. This is because, in such cases, convalescent plasma is a means for the protection of human life which is a duty confirmed as one of the most important necessities defined by the five objectives of Islamic law. Moreover, it is determined in Islamic law that the means take the same ruling as their objectives. In the context in question, if it is a duty to save a human life, then the means by which that life can be saved is itself a duty. God Almighty says, “And whoever saves one – it is as if he had saved mankind entirely.”⁽¹⁾

(1) Quran, 5: 32.



Quoting examples on the prioritization of some masalih (interests) over others, whether obligatory or recommended, the great scholar, Al-'Izz Ibn Abdul-Salam said, "It is established that to rescue a person from an imminent danger is — above everything else — the fulfillment of a duty owed to God with regard to the preservation of human life."⁽²⁾

The necessity of protecting human life is a right owed to God more than a right owed to fellow humans. For this reason, Islamic law elevated it from the category of rights to that of obligations. Consequently, God Almighty prohibited suicide and incurring harm upon oneself with the words, "And do not kill yourselves [or one another]. Indeed, God is to you ever Merciful. And whoever does that in aggression and injustice - then We will drive him into a Fire. And that, for God, is [always] easy."⁽³⁾ He also says, "... And do not throw [yourselves] with your [own] hands into destruction."⁽⁴⁾

Individuals who have contacted COVID-19 and recovered miss the opportunity of saving human life to which Islamic law accords the highest level of priority if they abstain from donating their plasma to severely affected patients. Since blood is under a constant state of renewal, the amount donated for plasma does not cause any harm or weaken the donor. In fact, it is safe to say that the amount of donated blood is in surplus to the donor's needs. The desirability of helping others in need with any surplus beyond one's needs is

evidenced by the hadith reported by Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri (may God be pleased with him) who said, "While we were on a journey with the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him) a rider came to him and began looking left and right. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him) said, 'Whoever has an extra mount should give it to him who does not have one, and whoever has surplus food should give it to him who has none.' He then proceeded to mention other kinds of property until we thought that none of us had any right to one's surplus property."⁽⁵⁾

Moreover, the donation of convalescent plasma to help in the treatment of COVID-19 patients is both a responsibility and a duty upon Muslims towards fellow humans. Nu'man Ibn Bashir (may God be pleased with them) narrated that the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "The believers in their mutual kindness, compassion and sympathy are like one body. When one part of the body suffers, the whole body responds to it with wakefulness and fever."⁽⁶⁾

The Ruling

Based on the above and in reference to the question, taking plasma from blood donated by people who have recovered from COVID-19 is not only permissible in Islamic law but a rewardable responsibility towards one's society. In fact, with the number of severely infected patients on the rise, we can say that the donation of convalescent plasma is obligatory. It is however important to take all the medical necessary precautions and conditions.

And God Almighty knows best.

(5) Recorded by Muslim.

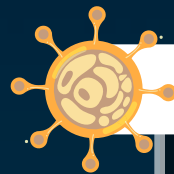
(6) Recorded by Al-Bukhari and Muslim.

(2) Ibn Abdul Salam, Qawa'id al-Ahkam fi Masalih al-Anam, 1/66.

(3) Quran, 29-30.

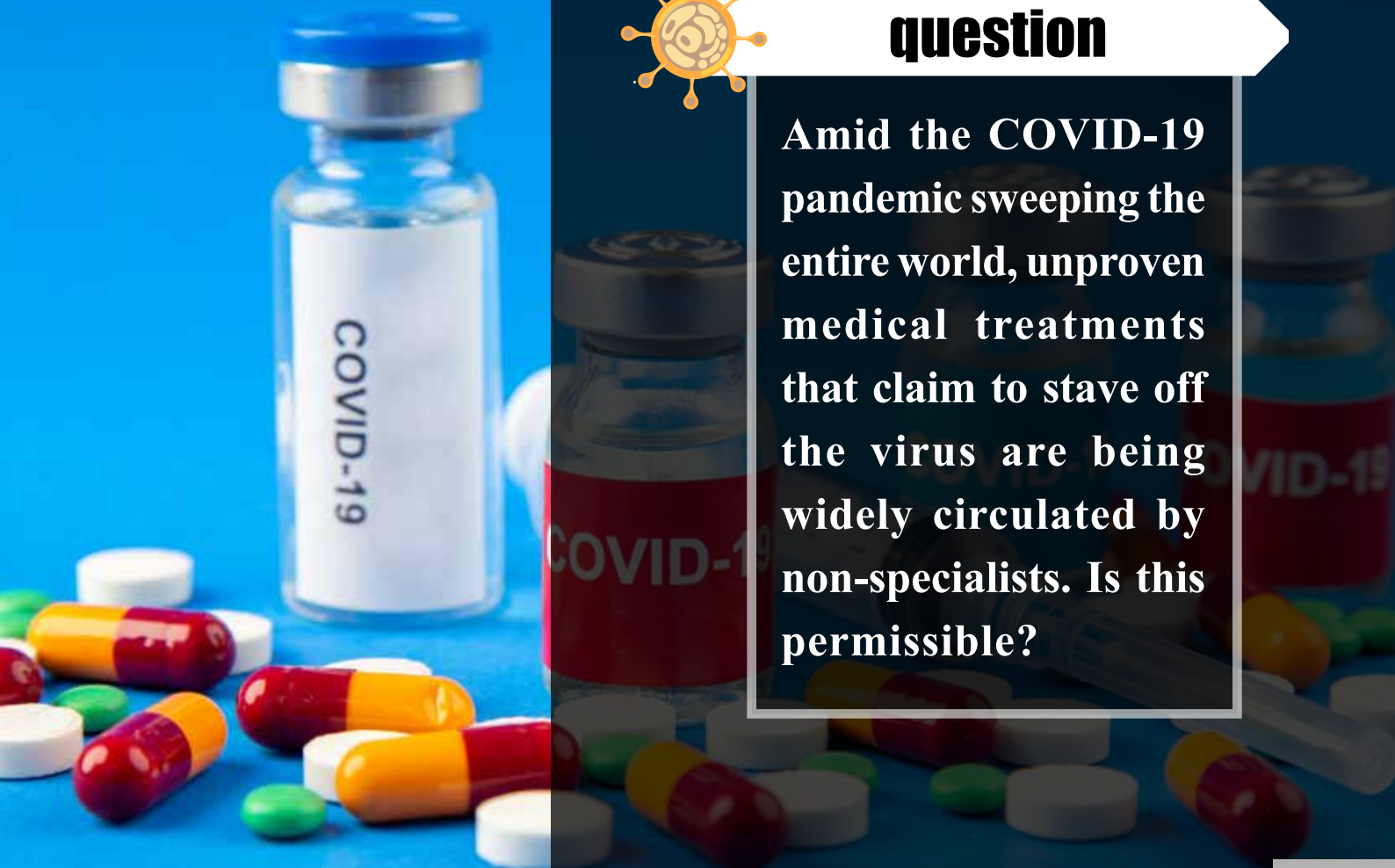
(4) Ibid., 2: 195.

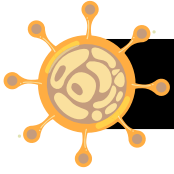
Non-specialists Promoting Medical Remedies to Combat COVID-19



question

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic sweeping the entire world, unproven medical treatments that claim to stave off the virus are being widely circulated by non-specialists. Is this permissible?





Answer

The noble Islamic law guides us to seek trusted sources of information and commands us to seek the people of knowledge about matters of which we are ignorant. God Almighty says, “So ask those who have the knowledge if you do not know.”⁽¹⁾ The people of knowledge are those who have developed specialization and expertise in a particular art or science. Commenting on this verse, the scholar al-Zagag said that it does not specify a particular group of people but refers to those who are known to have knowledge regardless of their religion. According to him, this interpretation is based on the general meaning of the words of the verse and not on its particular cause of revelation; the general interpretation of the verse’s wording takes precedence as long as there is nothing to restrict it. ⁽²⁾

It is necessary to solicit information about the various secular or religious fields of inquiry only from specialists in them. According to Imam al-Qarafi in *Sharh Tanqih al-Fusul*, the explicit mention of “those who have the knowledge” in the noble Quranic verse implies the prohibition of seeking out non-specialists.

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him) warned against seeking medical treatment from non-specialists i.e., other than physicians. He added that

whosoever takes it upon themselves to treat others while being unqualified i.e., not having the necessary medical education and training, will be accountable for their actions and any professions of good intentions are inexcusable. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him) said, “Anyone who practices medicine without having any prior knowledge of medicine will be held liable.”⁽³⁾ Another wording of the hadith says, “Anyone who practices medicine without having any prior knowledge of medicine and kills or harms a human being will be held liable.”

Practicing medicine without having qualified scholarship is as dangerous as meddling in religious sciences while lacking the necessary knowledge, thus leading to corruption in belief and religion. Similarly, whoever intrudes upon medical sciences and upon every matter related to human safety as in medicine, pharmacy, and engineering jeopardizes human lives. The preservation of human life is among the higher objectives of Islamic law and the most important of the essentials of the five objectives of Islamic law.

Prescribing medicine or dispensing medical advice is a form of delving into matters of which we have no knowledge, a matter which God Almighty prohibits with the words, “And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart - about all those [one] will be questioned.” ⁽⁴⁾

Moreover, the negative consequences of publishing such prescriptions by

(1) Quran, 16: 43.

(2) See Al-Qarafi, *Al-Iqd al-Manzum* by Al-Qarafi, p. 738; Al-Mardawi, *Al-Tahbeer*, 6/2843.

(3) Recorded by Abu Dawud, al-Nasa'i, Ibn Majah, and al-Daaqutni. Al-Hakem recorded it in *al-Mustadrak* and graded it authentic.

(4) Quran, 17: 36.

non-specialists are far greater than their claimed benefits. The good intentions of their publisher are not enough to justify the act because it involves tampering with the lives and health of people and this is directly antithetical to the objective of Islam with regard to the preservation of human life. God Almighty says, "Because of that, We decreed upon the Children of Israel that whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land – it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one – it is as if he had saved mankind entirely."⁽⁵⁾ In addition to the above, it is considered propagating lies and mistruths which is prohibited by many legal evidences such as the hadith of Ibn Mas'ud (may God be pleased with him) who narrated that the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "Truth leads to piety and piety leads to paradise. A man speaks the truth and persists in telling the truth until he is recorded as truthful in the records of God. Lying leads to wickedness and wickedness leads to hellfire. A person tells lies and persists in telling lies until he is recorded as a liar in the records of God."

The diagnosis of health conditions, prescription of medicine, and dispensation of medical advice are all within the province of the treating physician who is entrusted with examining the patient. No one, pharmacist or otherwise, has any claim to prescriptive authority because, even though people may have similar symptoms, the medication that may be suitable for one patient may not be for another.

Anyone of sound mind should think twice about compromising one's health by following the advice of those who presume to know everything. It is likewise necessary to refrain from taking unproven drugs.

And God Almighty knows best.

(5) Ibid., 5: 32.



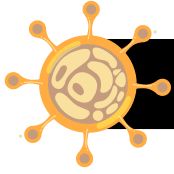


Symptomatic COVID-19 Carriers Evading Quarantine



question

What is the ruling on COVID-19 carriers who conceal their infection to evade quarantine?



Answer

Quarantine is a strategy prescribed by Islamic law to protect and safeguard the lives of people. Towards this end, Islamic law has dictated preventive measures in the context of epidemics and transmission of diseases with the aim of preventing and controlling infection. The Prophetic tradition, “Flee from the leper as you would flee from a lion,” provides an analogy to our current situation. Leprosy is a severe infectious disease spread by droplets via the nose and mouth. The general meaning of the tradition which applies no less today (in the context of COVID-19) than it did during the Prophet’s time, is based on the principle we now know as social distancing. In light of the dangerous nature of infectious diseases, the Prophet’s words provide sensible guidance for people on keeping well and avoiding infectious diseases.

Concealing one’s COVID-19 infection and avoiding quarantine is a grave offence equivalent to spreading corruption and harming others. God Almighty warns against this, saying, “Do no mischief on the earth, after its reformation, but call on Him with fear and aspiration (in your hearts): for the Mercy of God is (always) near to those who do good.”⁽¹⁾ The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) likewise said, “Do not cause harm nor reciprocate harm. Whoever harms others, God will harm him and whoever is harsh with others, God will be harsh with him.”⁽²⁾

(1) Quran, 7: 56.

(2) Recorded by Al-Hakem, al-Daraqutni, al-Bayhaqi, and al-Dinauri.

COVID-19 carriers who evade quarantine will bear the consequences of their actions for they may be the cause of the death of many innocent individuals. Anyone infected with COVID-19 should therefore take all precautionary measures to protect others from infection by following the instructions of the relevant authorities and experts.

Islamic law has granted the political authority the right to enforce the necessary measures to ensure the welfare of the people and determined that the actions of a ruler is based on interest through which he seeks to apply the universal objectives of Islamic law and realize public interest, one of which in our current health crisis is quarantine.

Based on the above, it is obligatory to follow the directions and guidelines of the relevant authorities mandating quarantine for infected patients with the aim of curbing the spread of the fatal COVID-19 virus which has been declared a global pandemic. It is established in Islamic law that repelling harm takes precedence over promoting benefit as does public interest over individual interest.

The preservation of life is the most important of the universal five objectives in all faith traditions. COVID-19 patients should therefore comply with the decisions and preventive measures of their respective countries to limit the spread of this deadly virus.

And God Almighty knows best.

EXPLOITING CRISES:

Terrorists and the COVID-19 Pandemic



After the spread of COVID-19, the world started changing and we started seeing a new reality. Health has been the main concern internationally. Governments had to direct their energy and efforts toward containing the virus in any possible way. In the meantime, terrorist groups adapted very fast to this new reality. In fact, they started using COVID-19 and stay-at-home orders to their favor, capitalizing on the global socio-economic impacts of the pandemic. They reinvigorated their campaigning efforts, advocating for their views, reinforcing their power, recruiting new members, and rebuilding online and on-ground support base.

Global lockdown measures helped make the process easier for terrorist groups to expand and grow their influence. They used the time to increase their engagement rates online and made use of the long time spent by young people on social media, intensifying their recruitment process and adding new tactics to target new supporters. On March 25th, 2020, ISIL (the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) issued the second edition of their online magazine, Voice of Hind. The magazine specifically targets Muslims in India. In this edition, ISIL encouraged Muslims in India to join the “heroic jihadists” by twisting and decontextualizing Quranic verses. One such verse is found in Surat Al Nisaa, where God says “Wheresoever you may be, death will overtake you even if you are in fortresses built up strong and high”. This verse was used in hopes of enforcing radical takfirist views and encouraging members to carry out violent terrorist attacks.

The persistent problem at present is that many people get these messages and believe they are true. Depending on who they are and their backgrounds, some people end up joining terrorist groups and others become Islamophobic. The result is usually the Muslim community suffering between both cases. Social media platforms play a big role in this process and can have control over the content when needed. For instance, in October 2019, many propaganda videos of violent extremist content were posted on the social media application, Tik-Tok. The messaging that was used in these videos was framed by bellicose rhetoric. The videos included statements like “we pledge allegiance till death”. They were finally deleted later by the application after dozens of anonymous pro-ISIL accounts uploaded and shared them.

According to the Counter Extremism Project, Terrorists exploited COVID-19 to their advantage by embedding the global health crisis. In March 2020 and in 226th edition of ISIL’s Al-Naba newsletter, ISIL claimed that the pandemic is a punishment sent by God to reveal the brittleness of the global economy and that believers will not be infected by the virus because it is a disease that only targets infidels to punish them for their sins. The newsletter also stated that the pandemic will be the worst nightmare for crusaders, urging the public to quickly adhere to the group before they suffer God’s punishment. Adding to that, extremists fueled hate and fanned the flames of conspiracy, blaming western states for the creation and the spread of the virus. For instance, the Al-Shabab Movement, an affiliate organization of Al

Qaeda based in Somalia, accused the west and its supporting countries of spreading the virus, calling them “the crusader forces and their polytheist allies”.

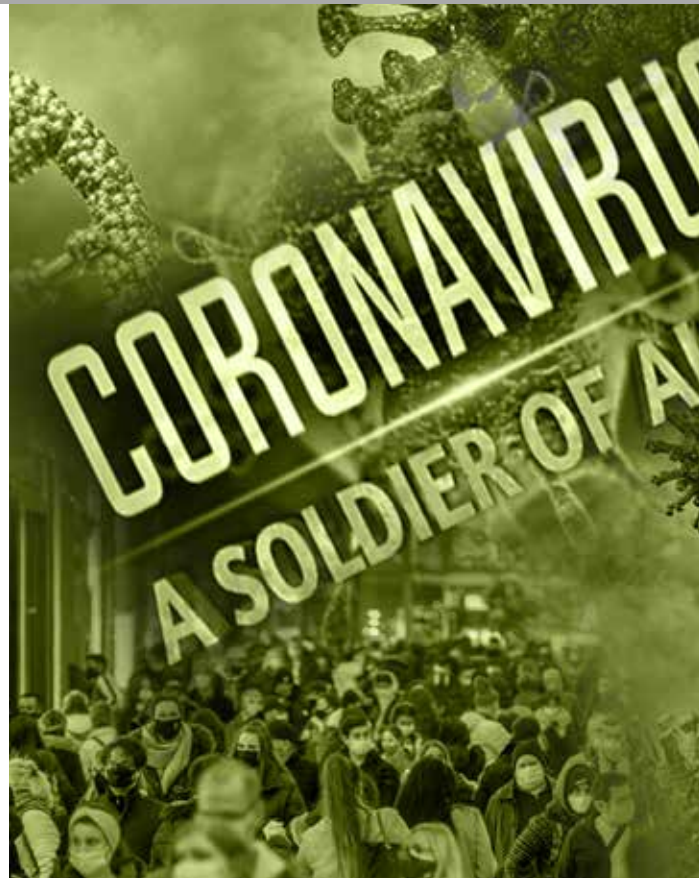
As terrorists work on harnessing every opportunity that arises to promote their message, it is all too easy to notice contradictions in their assertions, no credibility, false messaging, and weak unfounded arguments based solely on self-interest. Everything they claim is extraneous to Islam and its teachings.

Although ISIL has previously stated that COVID-19 only targets infidels to punish them for their sins, they could not resist the opportunity to use the pandemic as an improvised form of a biological weapon to promote their agenda even though it contradicts their previous claims. They, therefore, proceeded to incite their infected followers and supporters (including children) to intentionally spread the virus and annihilate the disbelievers. For instance, in the pro-ISIL lockdown



special edition of Voice of Hind- (Believers Stand Tall, It's Time for Kuffar to Fall), ISIL assured that the pandemic is far greater and stronger than any weapon, urging Muslims to spread the virus.

Terrorist groups are not just working online, they are still on the ground trying to make a comeback. They are seizing the opportunity to grow stronger and have sought to re-consolidate their footholds in previously controlled territories. In April 2020, Iraq saw the highest rate of terrorist attacks by ISIL, setting a record of nearly a hundred attacks. Both ISIL and Al-Qaeda have been assuring that the pandemic is God's wrath upon the west. They termed COVID-19 as a soldier of God sent to punish western invaders and expel them from Muslim lands. According to the Global Fatwa Index by Egypt's Dar Al-Ifta, nearly 40% of ISIS discourse aimed to foster the terrorism insurgency by urging Muslims to make use of the divine gift, pointing out the ongoing situation of COVID-19.



In conclusion, COVID-19 represented a great opportunity for terrorist insurgence. They have campaigned on various social media platforms for their radicalistic views of jihad aiming to increase their support base. They have urged their members to become biological bombs to spread the virus everywhere. Additionally, they are trying to attack previously controlled areas. Moderate religious institutions such as ourselves have a crucial role to play in combating the sinister extremist rhetoric that exploits COVID-19. We have to promote alternative moderate discourse that refutes the deliberate falsification by terrorist media centers.

In that regard, Egypt's Dar Al-Ifta takes a moderate Islamic legal approach towards the new emerging realities and contemporary issues. We aim to refute the radicalized terrorist propaganda, prioritize the combat of terrorism and rebut its extremist rhetoric.