



Implications of Discrimination and Racism during the Corona Pandemic

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Preface

The emergence of the Corona epidemic in Wuhan, China at the end of 2019 and its spread in all countries of the world affected public health and social life. Global reactions were diverse with the epidemic. The role of countries increased by their interventions and declaring states of emergency and not depending on informal institutions by taking precautionary measures and total or partial closure. Some forms of international cooperation in the health field also prevailed among many countries, especially by sending aid to countries that were unable to face the repercussions of the virus outbreak.

However, the emergence of the pandemic accompanied an escalation of racial discrimination against non-citizens and colored people in many places around the world. There are some examples of criticism in the behavior of some countries towards China, as it is the source of the outbreak of the virus. Most people from East Asia have been subjected to racism and hatred outside their countries and to bullying at other times. The Anti-Defamation League and the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the United States indicated that the spread of the virus led to an increase in anti-Semitism incidents.

With the discovery of vaccines in the companies of major countries, developing and poor countries faced their financial ability and their right to obtain them due to the companies' attempt to make a profit on one hand, and the bias in favor of the peoples of rich countries to receive the vaccine on the other hand. This casts doubt on the claims of some developed countries about the fact that they support other countries, especially in Africa, with regard to international coordination to overcome Corona.

The report discusses the manifestations and implications of racism and discrimination that countries and people are exposed to during the spread of the Corona pandemic. In addition, to address the global efforts undertaken by countries and international organizations and institutions to reduce forms of discrimination and racism.

I) Manifestations of Racism and Discriminations of Corona

Racism is an immoral act that expresses the inferiority and external structural view of discrimination towards an individual, group, or state, whether this view is based on race, religion, or culture. With the spread of the Corona pandemic, forms of discrimination and bullying appeared on the basis of the country where the outbreak was concentrated (China), and to the peoples belonging to the East Asian people, or in the way in which the infected person and his family dealt, which is what is called “Corona-phobia”.

A- Racism and Discrimination toward Countries

1- The Chinese Virus

Some countries were exposed to racism as a result of the outbreak of the Corona virus, especially China and East and Southeast Asian countries. This scene was led by former US. President Donald Trump, who violated the scientific title “COVID-19”, and ignored the fact that it is an epidemic that not related to nationality or any background. He must start to help preventing the outbreak and to stop its spread. He tended to politicize the conditions and accused China of intending to create the

virus in its laboratories and spreading it. And China put itself in under suspicion, especially its intention to cover up at the beginning of the spread of the virus, and not to allow any transparent investigations. The "Associated Press" agency indicated in a report that the Chinese authorities were conducting secret research to reach the origin of the emerging corona virus in natural caves, which it described as "black hole".

Meanwhile, an article appeared in the "Wall Street Journal", bringing the discussion back to the beginnings about the origin of the epidemic that first appeared in the fish market in Wuhan, China. The article is based on an intelligence report by the US Central Intelligence (CIA) indicating that experts from the Chinese Wuhan Institute- close to the fish market- complained at the end of 2019 of symptoms similar to those caused by Covid-19.

From its side, the World Health Organization (WHO) suggested that the second stage of the investigation into the origin of the virus should include an audit in Chinese laboratories under increasing pressure from the United States to conduct an investigation into the activities of the "Wuhan Institute of Virology". Suspicions returned to the frontage again, which prompted US President Joe Biden last May (2021) to order the intelligence agencies and to deliver him a report on the origin of the virus within ninety days. Biden stated before that the American intelligence did not have enough information to confirm how the spread of the new Corona virus began. And whether it appeared as a result of human contact with an infected animal, or spread out from the Wuhan Virology Laboratory.

On the other side, China sees itself at the position of defending itself and its rights, and claims that the virus was not created inside the Wuhan laboratory. Especially

when a study published on June 16, 2021, indicated that the Corona virus had been present in the United States at least since December 2019, in the same period in which the virus appeared in Wuhan, China.

2- Titling Virus's strains

Titling the viruses backs officially to International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses, and titling any new virus is often delayed because the concentration is on confronting it and protecting human lives. In order to avoid the continuation of the nickname "Chinese virus", corona viruses were named by this name due to their view under the microscope, which appears with pointed tips like a crown. The commission has some stories about past virus outbreaks. The (H1N1) virus was dubbed in 2009 as "swine flu", and that title led Egypt to kill its pigs in Egypt, although the virus was spread by individuals, not pigs.

One of the new forms of discrimination towards countries in our time is titling the Corona virus variants with the names of countries where they appear, such as "Chinese virus", "British strain", "South African strain", "Brazilian strain", and Indian strain." And whenever a new strain is formed, the list will include other countries.

The WHO intervened to rename the covid-19 mutants in a simplified way that relies on the Greek alphabet, and if they run out, the names of the star constellations are used. It should be taken into consideration that the name of the new Corona virus does not include: any reference to a geographical location, the names of any people, the name of any animal or type of food, or a reference to a specific culture or industry.

Eleven variants have been titled, classified according to their degree of severity. The first classification includes "variants of concern", such as: (alpha, beta, gamma, and delta). And the second classification is "interesting variables", such as: (lambda, Epsilon, and lambda).

3- Vaccine distribution

The discoveries of Corona vaccines in developed countries made a difference in the fairness of their distribution between rich countries and poor countries, and thus people in developing countries were affected by deficiencies in their health rights. Because of the international scramble and competition among rich countries to obtain these vaccines, the companies that manufacture them have turned their backs on countries that are unable to compete in the international market to obtain them.

The African peoples are the most affected, followed by the Asian peoples due to their weak economies and large population compared to the rich and developed countries. Thus, the epidemic impedes the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially the tenth goal: "Reducing inequality within and among countries."

It is not far from the discrimination and racism that the Palestinian people are exposed to during the pandemic that narrows their lifestyles under the Israeli occupation. The Israeli government is exploiting the outbreak of the virus in the occupied territories as a tool of pressure to acquiesce in the occupation demands. There were some arbitrary decisions against some Palestinian construction workers, whom the occupation authorities refused their return to homes in the West Bank at the beginning of the crisis. Israel is the most immunized country in

the world for its people from the Corona virus, in addition to it develops its strategies to become a center for exporting vaccines in the Middle East and the world. Given that the Palestinian people did not have the opportunity to get a few of them, and even in the times when small quantities of them were passed were corrupt. This is a clear premeditation of international racism towards the Palestinian people, which requires international intervention.

To mitigate disparities in access to vaccines between rich and developing countries, the United Nations General Assembly established the “COVAX mechanism” as an initiative to accelerate the equitable availability of COVID-19 tools to all countries (the ACT Availability Accelerator). The first phase of COVAX includes distributing the largest number of doses during the first half of this year 2021. According to this list, the countries that will receive the doses are India, Nigeria, Ghana, Pakistan, Indonesia, Brazil and Bangladesh.

B- Racism and Discrimination toward Individuals

The emerging virus infected millions of people in the world, closed borders, prevented gatherings, and led to the suspension of work, travel and movement, as well as affecting the education process in schools and universities, and other civil and economic rights, in a clear and explicit derogation of individual rights. The common belief of the people is that these conditions may end after a period when the epidemic is eliminated.

In this context, the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCR) issued in June 2020 a report entitled "Racial discrimination in the context of the COVID-19 crisis." The report addressed the health rights of African and Asian people, as well as in Rome and marginalized peoples of the world. It also addressed the impact of racial discrimination on law enforcement and the administration of justice during the pandemic, in addition to how COVID-19 racism has affected the fairness of the right to education, housing, food shortages and access to water.

While countries are busy dealing with the repercussions of the outbreak of the virus, individuals and groups challenge racism as a result of their infection with "Covid-19". The most prominent of these cases appear in countries where the number of infected people increases, such as in Italy, China, and the United States of America.

Among the prominent forms of personal racism and electronic bullying on social media against Chinese and Asian people in hate speeches and publications attributed to some politicians and media professionals. For example: Italian officials asked Asian nationals not to leave their homes at the beginning of the pandemic, and described them as intruders, subjected to personal attacks and sabotage of their trade, and demanded that they return to their country. The purpose of such moves is more political gains.

Not only that, in China there were some forms of discrimination and distance from the citizens of Wuhan Province in other Chinese provinces. The vast majority of victims of racial discrimination in China were non-citizens and colored people rather than citizens.

Fear of disease has turned into persecution of the sick person and his family, and the look of society and the circles close to them changes, so any connection with the infected person has become called “social stigma.” Stigma can make people feel guilty or bad about themselves if they are infected or isolate to avoid discrimination. people may be less likely to be tested or treated for the virus if they fear they will face discrimination. People who have COVID-19, or believe they have had contact with an infected person, may avoid quarantine to hide the fact that they are sick. Finally, stigma and discrimination can also lead to increased anxiety as a person has to worry about how to manage discrimination.

For example, the people of a village in Egypt refused to bury a female doctor who died as a result of the virus, even though she was treating patients in the village’s quarantine hospital.

In a statistical study issued by the Pew Research Center in the United States released in October 2020, it was found that Americans of Asian descent and colored people are more likely than other groups to report negative experiences related to their race during the epidemic. 58% of Asian Americans and 45% of colored Americans say it has been common for people to express racist views of their group since the coronavirus outbreak. And 39% of Asian Americans and 38% colored people say that someone has acted uncomfortable around them because of their race since the coronavirus outbreak.

Racism may also play a role in health risks, as stress from dealing with racial discrimination can have a negative impact and causes premature aging (according to recent data from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

As governments around the world begin to reopen public life and ease restrictions and quarantines, a wide range of human rights issues and concerns arise that can lead to further racial discrimination or negative impacts on ethnic groups and groups. These issues include vaccination development, off-border access testing and protocols; the immunity of passports; monitoring and tracking tools; discriminatory treatment of Virus survivors; and immigration policy and border control management. There are also growing concerns about economic livelihoods and the continued marginalization of people from caste groups and racial and ethnic communities in employment, health, education and housing.

II) Global Efforts to combat implications of Corona's Racism

Under international human rights law, countries must prohibit and eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms and guarantee the right of every individual, without discrimination on the basis of race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin. Countries must also guarantee the right of each individual to equality before the law. Although some human rights may be restricted for reasons of public health, the law must provide for such necessary, proportionate, and non-discriminatory restrictions.

The General Assembly, in its first resolution related to the Coronavirus, emphasized the need for full respect for human rights, and stressed that no form of discrimination, racism and xenophobia should have a place in the response to this pandemic. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres noted that racism and discrimination are a rejection of everything the United Nations stands. He adds that "rotten racism erodes institutions, social structures and daily life."

"The pandemic has shown that racism, discrimination and poverty constitute a vicious cycle that constitutes an obstacle to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals," UN Human Rights Chief Michelle Bachelet said in a statement.

A- The Individual level

Many individuals used social media to spread awareness and stop hate incidents, with the hashtag [#IoNonSonoUnVirus](#) spreading on social media in Italy throughout the crisis, while [#IAmNotAVirus](#) has spread in English-speaking countries, and [#YoNoSoyUnVirus](#) in Spanish-speaking countries. [#IkChinees](#) was introduced by the Chinese community in the Netherlands, encouraging people to order food at Chinese restaurants, take a selfie and share it on social media using the hashtag.

B- Movements in the internal level

Some countries have taken measures to demonstrate that even in response to a global crisis, firm values and principles can be adopted. For instance, In Spain, the cooperation launched between the Spanish Council for the Elimination of Racial or Racial Discrimination and investigation platforms seeks to combat the spread of fake news related to the Coronavirus and hate speech about Italian society on social media. In Lausanne, Switzerland, an information point has been set up to respond to the needs of migrants on a variety of issues related to the pandemic- including racism. In New York, the City Commission on Human Rights organizes free educational workshops on human rights and obligations under the law, especially in communities facing high levels of discrimination, bullying, and harassment.

C- Efforts of International Organizations

international organizations were also active in confronting the repercussions of racism. For example, The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has launched a social media campaign in Mexico to inform citizens of the importance of avoiding hate speech and xenophobia during the coronavirus emergency. Also, The United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect has issued a comprehensive Guidance Note that provides guidance to Member States, civil society, the media and other relevant actors such as religious and civic leaders and influencers to address COVID-19 and combat any hate speech.

Conclusion

With all this scientific and civilized progress, it was expected that the shapes of racism and discrimination would decrease in the world, and with all these measures taken to confront the emerging virus, but racism and discrimination still penetrated the ethics of many nations and societies. Although most countries of the world have joined treaties and conventions related to human rights, as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to eliminate all inferior views and abuses towards human beings, there is still a gap in the application of these rules.

Despite all the very positive examples and messages, much remains to be done to preserve the integrity of the principles of equality and non-discrimination and to combat social stigma, hate speech, xenophobia, racism and discrimination. Racial discrimination has a significant impact on human relations, mental health and

general well-being, and the growing problem of racial discrimination must be addressed amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many other measures have become essential in this time of crisis. This includes fact-based information, national awareness campaigns targeting the public to undermine false and misleading information, and provision of guidance and specialized training to national authorities and civil society organizations to ensure that those with a role in protecting rights have the capacity to address the problem. These will be effective tools against discrimination and xenophobia. At the same time when organizing actions in the community, both the communities spreading hate messages and the affected communities themselves must be actively involved.