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## *HUMAN SECURITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC*

### **1. Entry**

Human security is closely linked to human rights. The concept of human security has been developed as a result of the demands of time and social developments, in order for the individual to feel as safe as possible while facing the dangers and threats to his life and future.

Safety does not exist where people do not have enough food, clean water, or medical conditions needed to survive. Lack of hope can destroy a society from within.<sup>1</sup>

The UN, with the United Nations Development Program (1994), aimed to change the concept of security, not simply interpreting it as territorial, national, or global security, but by focusing on human security, including seven components: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, political security. A year later,

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<sup>1</sup>Barack Obama, Remarks at the Acceptance of the Noble Peace Prize, 10 December 2009, Oslo, Norway, [www.whitehouse.gov/.../remarks-president-acceptance](http://www.whitehouse.gov/.../remarks-president-acceptance)

in 1995, the UN further expanded the concept of human security, with the report of the Global Governance Commission, "Our Global Neighborhood"<sup>2</sup>, which included security from threats such as hunger, disease and repression, as well as from emergency situations.

Today, human security is threatened by terrorism, drugs, infectious diseases, clandestine immigration, and so on. "Any event or process that leads to large-scale death, or reduction of life chances and undermines states is a threat to international security."<sup>3</sup>

The coronavirus pandemic jeopardized the stability and security of many states. The prevalence and spread of this disease has reduced security, undermining social and economic conditions, which in turn increases instability, crime, domestic violence, protests and the shaking of international relations.

## **2. The concept of human security and the relationship with human rights**

Hunger, disease and natural disasters have killed more people than war, genocide and terrorism combined.<sup>4</sup> Increasingly, civilized society around the world has become aware that "the world will never be at peace if people do not enjoy human security in their daily lives."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>*Our Global Neighborhood*, The Report of the Commission on Global Governance, Chapter 3

<sup>3</sup>A More Secure World, [www.un.org/en/.../pdf/.../blp\\_more\\_secure\\_world.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/.../pdf/.../blp_more_secure_world.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Human Security Report 2005. War and Peace in the 21st Century, Human Security Centre, University of British Columbia, Canada, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. VIII.

<sup>5</sup>*Bertrand G. Ramcharan*, Human Rights and *Human Security*, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, p.15.

The concept of human security is becoming increasingly clear and is becoming substantially distinct from the concept of human rights.

- The concept of human rights is a thousand-year-old tradition, according to the principle: "All human beings are created equal by God and all have equal obligations before him." The concept of human security is a new concept, developed after the Cold War, developed as a result of political, economic and social processes, the aim of which is mainly to improve the functions of the state for the security of the individual.
- Human rights are conceived as absolute, fundamental, indivisible, inalienable, constitutional.
- Human security is conceived as a response to the dangers and threats that may come to the individual, which must be faced by the state, which has the responsibility to protect its citizens.
- Human rights are universal, necessarily applicable equally to all people on the planet. The more humanity moves toward globalism, the more sensitive, tangible, and easily enforceable these rights are.
- Human security, and especially its special components such as social, health, environmental and economic security, are threatened by global trends.
- Human rights are at the core of the international legal order. They are legally recognized and binding on states and international organizations.

- Human security legitimizes the moral responsibility, obligation and commitment of the state / states for the life and secure future of the individual. Security does not mean the absence of a threat, but protection against a threat.

The common denominator between human security and human rights can be found in the search for the promotion and protection of the fundamental values of human beings. The notion of human security is largely built on the logic of International Law.

Following and applying the principle of International Humanitarian Law, for the prohibition of unnecessary human suffering, the concept of human security today can be seen as a logical development of the basic principles proclaimed in the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907.<sup>6</sup>

And while there have been and are many theoretical discussions and debates on the relationship between human security and human rights, it is normal to have discussions, debates and contradictions in the concrete case of coronavirus disease, this unusual and extremely challenging pandemic.

### **3. Human security, human rights during the coronavirus pandemic**

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<sup>6</sup> Anastasov, Angel, "Are nuclear weapons illegal? The role of public international law and the International Court of Justice", in 15 Journal of Conflict and Security Law 65, Spring 2010, p. 71.

The extraordinary pandemic that appeared aggressively on our planet, in addition to its many dangers, problems, challenges and unknowns, highlighted some human rights abuses, in the name of security, or even the inclination of many different state leaders to exploit this situation in their interest, for authoritarianism.

At the time of a pandemic, the task of protecting life forces states to take appropriate measures to remove threats to life, such as the “virus”. From this point of view, the reaction of states to coronavirus has consisted mainly in restrictive measures, such as closing non-essential trade activities, blocking the population, banning rallies, social and physical distancing, but also criminalizing the spread of fraudulent information about the virus.

If these measures were intended to stop the spread of the virus, they also severely restricted some of the rights and freedoms that people are accustomed to have, taken for granted, and acquired over the centuries. Such measures violate freedom of movement, freedom of assembly, the right to personal liberty and, in certain circumstances, freedom of expression and of the press.

Of course, when values clash, states are faced with the difficult task of choosing what to protect and what to sacrifice, but this must be done based on concrete legal references, because governments cannot act according to their wishes. International Human Rights Law aims to ensure that the fundamental rights of individuals are respected and guaranteed by the actions of states at all times. However, under human

rights treaties, states are authorized to restrict certain rights and freedoms on behalf of social imperatives, namely public order, health, morals and national security. But at the same time, there are specific guarantees to ensure that such restrictions are in line with human rights. States governments must ensure that any urgent action is legal, proportionate, necessary and non-discriminatory, and has a specific duration to help protect public health, but at the lowest possible cost for human rights.

In this sense, the coercive measures adopted in many states to restrict human rights, with the aim of eliminating the risk of the virus, are not in themselves illegal. However, their legitimacy ultimately depends on how the state exercises its rights, to limit human rights in practice.

First, states themselves must act as responsible actors within the bounds of the law when deciding to restrict certain rights and freedoms. Second, internationally established mechanisms, such as the Council of Europe to oversee the avoidance of States and the European Court of Human Rights to decide on them, must work in a timely and effective manner to ensure that guarantees are respected and state prerogatives are not abused. The discretion of states to respond to emergencies and suspend certain segments of human rights should not serve as a pretext to pursue basic illegitimate goals, such as

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restricting the freedom of political debate, nor should deviations be adopted without any time limit.<sup>7</sup>

Amnesty International USA, in a teleconference organized with human rights personalities, stressed that: Global leaders are using coronavirus to violate human rights. A global emergency is the best authoritarian friend. The pandemic is eroding human rights. " More than 80 countries have declared a state of emergency and there are growing reports of human rights abuses around the globe. Some heads of state are taking advantage of the virus to hit civilians in ways they had not seen before Covid-19." - emphasizes Joanne Lin, AIUSA's national director for advocacy and government affairs. The organization also raised concerns about governments that have tried not to be transparent about information about the virus. For many countries in the world that still have problems with war, civil unrest, the migration crisis and other catastrophes, the Covid-19 pandemic adds another layer of urgency, for which leaders may not be willing or unable to respond.<sup>8</sup>

The Chinese government ignored reality. Failure to heed their doctors' warnings gave Covid-19 a devastating three-week start, as millions of passengers entered and left Wuhan and the virus spread to China and

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<sup>7</sup> Altea Rossi, Junior Programme Officer at the GCSP, Covid-19: the "fine balance" under human rights law, 17 april 2020, <https://www.gcsp.ch/global-insights/covid-19-fine-balance-under-human-rights-law>

<sup>8</sup> [Devon Haynie](https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2020-04-30/amnesty-international-warns-of-human-rights-abuses-tied-to-covid-19), Assistant Managing Editor, April 30, 2020, <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2020-04-30/amnesty-international-warns-of-human-rights-abuses-tied-to-covid-19>

around the world. The Chinese government is setting its political goals prior to public health and does not allow for independent verification. In Thailand, Cambodia, Venezuela, Bangladesh and Turkey, governments have banned journalists, opposition activists, healthcare workers and anyone else who dares to criticize the official response to coronavirus.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi minimized the threat of coronavirus for weeks, apparently to avoid damaging Egypt's tourism industry. US President Donald Trump initially called the coronavirus a "fraud".<sup>9</sup>

Some executives see coronavirus as an opportunity not only to censor criticism, but also to undermine controls and balances in their power. Just as the "fight against terrorism" was used to justify some long-term restrictions on civil liberties, so the fight against coronavirus is threatening long-term damage to democratic rule. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán used his party's parliamentary majority to secure a state of emergency that allows him to rule by decree and imprison, for up to five years, any journalist who distributes news that is considered "false".<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> [Kenneth Roth](https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/03/how-authoritarians-are-exploiting-covid-19-crisis-grab-power), Executive Director, How Authoritarians Are Exploiting the COVID-19 Crisis to Grab Power, Published in [The New York Review of Books](https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/03/how-authoritarians-are-exploiting-covid-19-crisis-grab-power), April 3, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/03/how-authoritarians-are-exploiting-covid-19-crisis-grab-power>

<sup>10</sup> Nick Thorpe, BBC News, Budapest, Coronavirus: Hungary government gets sweeping powers, 30 mart 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-52095500>



Some governments are breathing easily, because coronavirus is a good reason to limit political demonstrations. The Russian government has even banned protests with a single person. Other governments are using coronavirus to intensify digital surveillance. China has deepened and expanded oversight to identify some of the one million Uyghur and other Turkish Muslims in order to stop and force indoctrination.<sup>11</sup> South Korea has broadcast detailed and investigative information about the movements of people and their contacts. The Israeli government has quoted the coronavirus to authorize its internal security agency, Shin Bet, to use large amounts of data to determine the location of ordinary Israeli cell phones.<sup>12</sup> In Moscow, the Russian government is installing one of the world's largest surveillance camera systems, equipped with face recognition technology.<sup>13</sup>

It can be difficult to turn back from these ways even after the crisis has subsided. Therefore, public opinion must be wary of leaders who use this crisis to serve their political goals, because it can have serious consequences for democracy.

What was noticed during this pandemic is the use of military terminology in its definition. Defining pandemic as a war, with battles

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<sup>11</sup> Vaishnavi Chaudhry, The impact of COVID-19 on Uighur Muslims: An Ignored Crisis, april 23th 2020, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/humanrights/2020/04/23/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-uighur-muslims-an-ignored-crisis/>

<sup>12</sup> [Kenneth Roth](#), Executive Director, How Authoritarians Are Exploiting the COVID-19 Crisis to Grab Power, Published in [The New York Review of Books](#), April 3 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/03/how-authoritarians-are-exploiting-covid-19-crisis-grab-power>

<sup>13</sup> Sofia Svensson, Russia: AI and hi-tech surveillance to fight the Covid-19 epidemic amidst fears of rights violations, 30 mart 2020, <https://observatoryhr.org/news/russia-ai-and-hi-tech-surveillance-to-fight-the-covid-19-epidemic-amidst-fears-of-rights-violations/>

and sacrifices, provokes unnecessary emotions and increases the level of anxiety in public opinion and especially in those affected by this virus.

I think there are several reasons for using this terminology. One reason is to gain widespread collaboration from the public, to ensure that he has the proper care and is properly intimidated by the threat of the virus.

Authorities themselves feared that the escalation of pandemics could reach such proportions that it would collapse not only the country's health system, but the entire country.

Another reason is to ensure that the public accepts legal changes for the effect of this situation, as soon as possible. Another reason is the authoritarian attitudes of various leaders.

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, in a statement regarding the pandemic situation, opposed the views of several other leaders, saying pandemics are not a war.

"No, this pandemic is not a war. Nations are not against other nations, nor are soldiers against other soldiers. It was a test of humanity."<sup>14</sup>

During this pandemic, what can be easily verified is that the most vulnerable are the poor, with economic and social problems. This is a problem not only in our country, but also in developed countries. Among the most endangered categories in our country have been the

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<sup>14</sup> Coronavirus pandemic 'test of our humanity,' German president says, <https://www.euronews.com/2020/04/11/coronavirus-pandemic-test-of-our-humanity-german-president-says>

employees of the fason and call center system, which are considered as systems with poor working conditions and low salaries. Globally, pandemic-stricken communities are those communities that are most discriminated against and with the least political power. The solutions that many people consider to be good, such as staying home, social distance, washing hands, etc., are impossible for individuals who need to continue working, for those who do not have suitable living conditions.

Officials in Michigan, USA, released statistics showing that people of color make up 40% of Covid-19 deaths, despite the fact that only 14% of the state's population is colored. Globally, pandemic-stricken communities are those communities that are most discriminated against and with the least political power. The effects of the virus also reveal profound inequalities in wages, employment, access to health care, and a range of social protections.<sup>15</sup>

Healthcare, as one of the seven components of human safety, aims to guarantee a necessary minimum of protection against disease, especially infectious, epidemic and poor living conditions. State institutions have a responsibility to guarantee medical treatment as needed. Ignoring or rejecting this service, even to a single citizen, can have fatal consequences for national security. A significant example

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<sup>15</sup> JoAnn Kamuf Ward, The Human Rights Lesson from Covid-19, April 9, 2020  
<https://www.justsecurity.org/69602/the-human-rights-lessons-from-covid-19-equality-requires-economic-and-social-rights-protections/>

of this is the focus on coronavirus, neglecting other people's health needs.

#### 4. Conclusions

During the Covid-19 pandemic, it became clear that people wanted to live freely, enjoy the rights they deserve, even at the risk of their own safety. ” If you want total security, go to prison. There you're fed, clothed, given medical care and so on. The only thing lacking... is freedom.”<sup>16</sup>

It is the duty of the authorities to respect human freedom even in emergency situations, or various disasters, and not to hide shortcomings, by taking measures which, for the sake of security, infringe on human freedom.

This pandemic raises the need to reassess the concept of human security, to reassess threats to our survival, and to use human resources and security budgets efficiently.

What can be said in advance is that in our country it is being successfully faced, due to the precautionary measures taken by the authorities, population care, long-term immunization measures, the commitment of professionals, etc.

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<sup>16</sup> President Dwight D. Eisenhower, during a 1949 speech, asserted the concept that Americans should not trade liberty for security. <https://eisenhowerleadership.com/2012/07/15/eisenhowers-common-sense-leadership-on-national-security-and-the-economy/>

For the way the state protects its citizens from dangers and threats, it must not only have the legal responsibility to account to its citizens, but must also improve the culture of transparency and accountability of the whole society. Important in this regard is the improvement of the culture of ordinary citizens, professionals and decision makers, in maintaining attitudes and making decisions on various situations when security is in question, that the trend is that human security should be placed at the center, without neglecting in any case his fundamental freedoms.

The state must consider itself an instrument in the service of its people.

It is the duty of the state to analyze, evaluate and consider as serious threats to its security: poverty, environmental degradation and infectious diseases, investing in them with efficient human and financial resources.

In the context of the emergence of new problems, often unknown and unpredictable, it is necessary to make continuous efforts to resize security problems, especially for specifications related to: What values to protect? From what kind of threats? On what purpose? At what cost?

The Covid -19 pandemic caused chaos and collapse even in developed countries, with strong economies and advanced health systems. It is still too early to make final analyzes, studies and assessments of this global disaster. A second or third wave of pandemic is

discussed. Other infectious diseases can threaten humanity. The experience and lessons learned from this pandemic should serve to make such a potential situation as less emergency as possible in the future. Important for this, among other things, is the evaluation and respect of professional communities.

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