

**STATEMENT BY 11 NGOS AHEAD OF INFORMAL DISCUSSION WITH THE UN
SPECIAL PROCEDURES AND UN MEMBER STATES ON THE COVID-19
PANDEMIC
30 April 2020**

We thank the Coordination Committee for the update on the work undertaken by the Special Procedures to date to highlight the human rights impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As States undertake extraordinary measures to curb the spread of COVID-19, we recognize the good faith efforts of many States to effectively protect the right to life, the right to health and other human rights as well as the well-being of their populations, and to curb the spread of COVID-19. States must ensure that quality health services and goods necessary for prevention and care are accessible, available and affordable for all. Health workers and other front-line workers should be provided with adequate protective equipment, information, training and psycho-social support. Key health services, including sexual and reproductive health information and services, should be confirmed as essential services and their provision guaranteed.

We also recognize that in other contexts, States have used emergency powers to enact repressive measures that do not comply with the principles of legality, proportionality and necessity and that may have the effect or intention of suppressing criticism and minimizing dissent.

In this regard, we take heart at the Special Procedures statement that "[t]he COVID-19 crisis cannot be solved with public health and emergency measures only; all other human rights must be addressed too".¹ We particularly value the vast and interconnected responses by the Special Procedures highlighting the wide-ranging effects of the pandemic itself, as well as of measures taken by states in the name of responding to the global health crisis.

The Special Procedures have addressed the impact on economic, social and cultural rights, such as the rights to health, housing, water and sanitation, food, work, social security, education, healthy environment and adequate standard of living, and to equality and non-discrimination as cross-cutting rights.

The Special Procedures have also highlighted the increased risks of people with underlying health conditions, older people, people who are homeless or in inadequate housing, people living in poverty, persons with disabilities, LGBTI people, children, migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, people living in refugee or IDP camps, and people deprived of liberty. They have also highlighted the effects on women and girls, calling for responses to consider factors such as their "sex, gender, age, disability, ethnic origin, and immigration or residence status among others".²

We also welcome the various tools that have been developed by some mandate holders, such as the COVID-19 Freedom Tracker, the Dispatches, video messages and guidelines in addition to the vast number of press releases.³ Making these tools readily accessible to all stakeholders is critical, as is considering ways to receive feedback and share learnings about their application. We encourage the Special Procedures to continue to deepen their analyses of state responses, including through reports to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly, and to offer guidance, through the tools mentioned, to states on how to respond to the crisis in a human rights compliant manner.

¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25746&LangID=E>

² <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/News.aspx>

³ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/COVID-19-and-Special-Procedures.aspx>

Last but not least, we urge UN member states to cooperate fully with the Special Procedures. While country visits are suspended for the time being, this should not be used as an excuse not to cooperate. We call on states to respond in a timely manner to communications from the Special Procedures and to seek technical and expert advice from relevant mandate holders in relation to draft legislation to ensure that these are in line with states' obligations to respect, protect and fulfil all human rights.

Amnesty International

Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)

Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS)

CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation

Conectas Direitos Humanos

DefendDefenders (East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project)

Human Rights Law Centre

Human Rights Watch

ILGA World – The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (International Lesbian and Gay Association)

International Commission of Jurists

International Service for Human Rights