

# #TWMUNONLINE



# | UNHRC

**AGENDA: HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS FACED BY  
MINORITIES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.**

## Table of Contents

Letter from the Executive Board.....	2
Introduction.....	4
Committee Mandate Of The UNHRC .....	4
AGENDA - Human Rights Violations of Marginalised Communities during the Covid-19 Pandemic.....	5
Who are marginalized communities? How are they classified? .....	7
Effect of the Coronavirus Pandemic in widening the gap between the ingroup and marginalized communities .....	13
Country/Continent-specific problems faced and the response of the relevant organizations and Governments involved in the same. ....	18
Questions a Resolution must answer: .....	22
Further Reading and Resources: .....	23

## Letter from the Executive Board

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the United Nations Human Rights Council being simulated at Techfest World Model United Nations, IIT Bombay 2020. It is our honour to serve as your executive board members for the simulation.

We are certain at this moment that you are experiencing pangs of anxiety and excitement while you are into your preparation for this Conference. You might be a little nervous about meeting new people, or perhaps are a little eager to get into those fancy formals. You might be visualising yourself speaking in front of a large crowd of unknown faces. You must be wondering what the judges will be like. You'll feel concerned about the outcome of your efforts at the end. It is okay. Enjoy these moments while you are at it.

However, we must also mention that you have been entrusted upon a task which is much more important than winning a trophy. And that is – to do justice to the responsibility of finding solutions to one of the most critical and challenging problems which we face as humanity.

The success of the committee as a committee will depend on each delegate. A council is defined by its delegates more than by its executive board. It is you, the participating delegates, which shape the outcome. You must therefore be prepared to participate for a truly rewarding experience. Apart from the research on the agenda, Delegates should be aware about their country's historical background and current situation in global politics and international relations. Delegates should come into the committee with a clear foreign policy as the representatives of the governments of their countries.

We are unaware of your individual credentials/experience with Model United Nations, however, no matter what that may amount to, it is a given that there can be no productive simulation in the absence of substantial research. There are multiple approaches to preparing for a simulation such as this and we shall not dictate to you which of these you must adopt, that is upon you to decide, however, we can assert with confidence that the commonality among all these approaches is that research constitutes their first step.

So once the research process is initiated, it needs to be coupled with proactive attempts to understand the agenda. Application of the information acquired through research always requires understanding. There is no particular point at which research concludes and analysis thereof begins, these are two intermittent processes which may continue till the last minute of the simulation.

Besides research, both on the agenda and the mandate of the committee, participants are required to have a firm grasp on diplomatic conduct. Diplomatic conduct can be general and country-specific, what constitutes general diplomatic conduct (which includes language, gestures and any other kind of expression) can be gauged from the definition of the term diplomacy.

Country specific diplomatic conduct can be determined by a study of past actions of your country (country allotted which a participant is called the delegate of) in the international fora. Speeches, statements, voting records, instances of walk-outs, boycotting of meetings et cetera can contribute to building an understanding of the same, apart from these sources, video graphic recordings of these sessions and meetings can greatly help this understanding. It is expected of all participants to conduct themselves impeccably, the concept of MUN's wasn't created simply to get students to talk about things diplomats would usually talk about, but to also hone their conduct, their reasoning, logic, negotiation and lobbying skills, all of which can be referred to as 'soft skills'.

The background guide is a preliminary research brief pertaining to the committee and the agenda. It is NOT meant to provide participants with exhaustive information. It serves as a base upon which the research is built. Nothing in the background guide has any evidentiary value, it can never be used as conclusive proof in the committee. It is necessary for delegates to dig deeper from where the background guide leaves them.

That being said, we wish you the best of preparations and hope that this simulation shall mutually benefit all those involved in it. We hope we can learn from you and impart our knowledge to you in the process. For any doubts that you may have, you may contact any member of the executive board.

Looking forward to seeing you all.

Regards,

Prakhar Rathi

**President**

Vignesh Narayan

**Vice-President**

Anusha Sankholkar

**Rapporteur**

## Introduction

The UN Human Rights Council is an intergovernmental suggestive body that comprises of 47 states out of the 193 member nations elected for a 3-year term by The General Assembly. It's a suggestive body which comes under the jurisdiction of the UNGA (United Nations General Assembly). It replaced the previous Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights which was established in December 1993.<sup>1</sup>

## Committee Mandate Of The UNHRC

The UN Human Rights Council works on the implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (adopted on 10th December 1948) to make sure that each person worldwide has the basic fundamental rights and that all communities should be treated as free and equal. It promotes and protects human rights worldwide and fosters dialogue between Governments and provides them with technical assistance for human rights activities like public information programs and human rights education. All these parameters were initially defined by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights through its resolution 48/141, just some months after the World Conference on Human Rights adopted the Vienna Declaration and Plan of Action.

There are many other documents further outlining the importance and emphasizing on the Human Rights of individuals in several areas whether it be socio-economic, civil or political. There are many conventions regarding crimes against humanity, rights of

---

<sup>1</sup>

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ABOUTUS/Pages/Mandate.aspx#:~:text=Mandate%20of%20UN%20Human%20Rights&text=UN%20Human%20Rights%20is%20mandated,protect%20the%20right%20to%20development>

the child, rights of persons with disabilities, minority rights and prevention of discrimination among many others.

## **AGENDA - Human Rights Violations of Marginalised Communities during the Covid-19 Pandemic**

i). Understanding how minorities are defined and their prominent types

Before going forward with the agenda explanation, we have to grasp what exactly minorities are. There is no internationally agreed definition on which groups constitute minorities. It is often stressed that the existence of a minority is a question of fact and that any definition must include both objective factors (such as the existence of a shared ethnicity, language or religion) and subjective factors (including that individuals must identify themselves as members of a minority).<sup>2</sup>

Merriam Webster defines it as a part of a population different from others in some characteristics and often subjected to differential treatment.<sup>3</sup> The Oxford Dictionary of English further elaborates on this definition by designating it a small group of people within a community or country, differing from the main population in race, religion, language, or political persuasion.

The difficulty in arriving at a widely acceptable definition lies in the variety of situations in which minorities live. Some live together in well-defined areas, separated from the dominant part of the population. Others are scattered throughout the country. Some minorities have a strong sense of collective identity and recorded history; others retain only a fragmented notion of their common heritage.

<sup>2</sup> Oxford Dictionary of English (Google) Definition of minorities

<sup>3</sup> “Ethnic minorities.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, -  
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ethnic%20minorities>. Accessed 17 Oct. 2020.

Whatever be the case, the requirement to be in a non-dominant position remains important. In most instances, a minority group will be a numerical minority, but in others, a numerical majority may also find itself in a minority-like or non-dominant position, such as the Africans who lived under the system of apartheid in South Africa.<sup>4</sup>

So far, minorities have been spoken about in general, but we increasingly see more animosity between two specific types of minorities, namely Ethnic Minorities and Religious Minorities.

#### ii). ETHNIC MINORITIES

In today's day and age, many of us are familiar with the concept of ethnic minorities. The worst kind of human rights atrocities committed against them is invariably mass genocide.

The specific legal definition given by the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide states five acts that can constitute genocide if they are done “with the intent to destroy an ethnic, national, racial or religious group”. Killing and use of mental or bodily harm onto such groups as well as the deliberate infliction of the conditions of life required to wholly or partly facilitate the physical destruction of the group constitute the majority of it. Forced contraception and the separation of children from their families also constitutes genocide.<sup>5</sup>

Without provable intent, a group or individual can still be guilty of “crimes against humanity” or “ethnic cleansing” but not genocide. We need to understand that ethnic cleansing only constitutes the expulsion of a certain group of people from an area

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Minorities/Pages/internationalaw.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/whats-the-difference-between-genocide-and-ethnic-cleansing>

whereas genocide regards terminating them. However, ethnic cleansing may have some elements of genocide attached to it as well.

### iii.) RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

Religious minorities exist in practically every single country today. Countries with a more secular standpoint do not have a large amount of law-based religious violence, but those that chose to ingrain the state ideals of religion in their youth do exhibit this. For example, many Middle Eastern Countries including Iran do have laws that inhibit a person from the Sunni Minority group becoming the Head of State, although they are granted arbitrary voting rights. Apart from Iran, we also have social exclusion of religious minorities in many parts of the world. These usually get amped up in the run-up to larger events, often resulting in riots or communal violence. Due to the coincidence of violent non-state actors being from a particular religion, a new term has been coined under the concept of xenophobia - Islamophobia. Granted, this is an offshoot of migrant classification, it is especially relevant as we see increasingly biased media coverage of these ideologies, leading impressionable minds to believe that to be the norm. Incidences of communal violence and riots can be prevented from the grassroots level just by the implementation of better soft policies.



## **Who are marginalized communities? How are they classified?**

The marginalisation of communities is an incredibly relevant issue. Here, we must make a distinction between them and the minority groups. In simple terms, when minorities are cast away, ill-treated or are subject to discrimination and violence, they are classified as marginalised. The use of the word marginalisation - means that such groups live on the margins of society and that the care provided for them under the law of their administrative authority either does not include them entirely or, even after either minimal or substantial inclusion, the implementation of those laws are likely to not meet with international standards. This is exactly what the UNHRC strives to prevent.

### **Classification of Marginalised Communities**

Canada's National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health defines a marginalised community as those communities that experience socio-economic and political discrimination and exclusion because of unequal power relationships across the economic, cultural, social and political spheres. Ultimately, different factors such as sexual orientation, gender, geography, ethnicity, religion, displacement, and disability, contribute to this phenomenon.

The different types of marginalisation in greater detail as stated above are -

1. **Economic marginalisation** - It prevents the achievement of the goal of equality of opportunity (through the zip-code phenomenon among many others), thus hindering further income and job opportunities for the people discriminated against. Economic marginalisation may also prevent access to basic services like those of healthcare and primary education designated by the United Nations.

2. Political marginalisation - This occurs when political parties or people in positions of power consciously make a decision to overlook the status of particular regions of the country as well as ignoring the conditions of certain ethnic groups and migrants among others.
3. Social marginalisation - Arguably, this is the most widespread type and all of us are familiar with it in a lesser form. It can have an impact on a wide range of groups, discriminating based on age, gender, sexuality, religion and disability among others.

#### Effects of Marginalisation

- i). United Nations Development Program Report - The Journey to Extremism.<sup>6</sup>

Marginalisation exists in many ways and forms. According to a United Nations Development Program report by Mohamed Yahya, the UNDP Africa Regional Programme Coordinator, marginalisation, poverty and perceived abuse of power and neglect by governmental officials are some of the major reasons for the growth of extremist violence in Africa. The marginalisation of a group stems from society's collective neglect of it. Extremist groups in Africa also used societal neglect manifesting as the marginalisation of certain age-groups as a tool to their advantage.

This is where the kind of marginalisation plays a huge role in understanding why children as young as eight or nine years old are susceptible to joining such militias. Such children are from increasingly economically marginalised backgrounds, that is, their families are excluded from the mainstream workforce and their benefits. Owing to this, they have had to live in areas which were not exposed to the best kinds of

---

<sup>6</sup> <https://journey-to-extremism.undp.org/content/downloads/UNDP-JourneyToExtremism-report-2017-english.pdf>

secular and religious education, hence, in a way, being socially marginalised as well. They were subject to constant criticism regarding the areas they lived in by the general population, which further encouraged them to join an extremist militia. An interesting statistic which was the product of this survey was that, although some of these children were students of UN-supported schools, they had very low levels of general education (ranging from just one to five years), as they all felt the compulsion to drop out and help their families earn money.

Something that isn't quite often brought to light though, is the fact that close to fifty-seven per-cent of the five-hundred children interviewed had very poor religious literacy skills. Biased media reporting often depicts them as the ones fighting for their religion, and this is why the religions they are associated with also cause fear and apprehension in the minds of the people consuming and listening to this kind of media.

They are paid relatively well for their work with the militia, which in turn has the power to drive them and their families out of being economically marginalised. Social marginalisation no longer poses a problem for them as many described the environment that the extremist groups provided as a 'brotherhood' of sorts, where they felt accepted and welcome. Some of them had stated that government involvement in their lives earlier is what expedited their admission in such groups. This is a direct consequence of political marginalisation. Such marginalisation also manifests in the insensitivity of treatment of young people and disadvantaged families by the government officials that come in contact with them, primarily security forces such as the police officers sent to patrol the areas where they live.

It is ultimately all about the ideology that they are taught. Many peaceful measures can be taken such as an increased emphasis on religious literacy and vocational training, equipping children with the skills of the future, much akin to the idea of

India's proposed New Education Program. Targeted attention to the situation of the poorest and most socially and economically excluded and marginalized communities is essential to break the vicious cycle of discrimination, exclusion, poverty and underdevelopment.

What are the major problems suffered by the marginalised communities/minorities?<sup>7</sup>

#### >>>Education

Minorities continue to face disparities in access to education and are less likely to complete a full course of schooling. Parents are also usually quite reluctant to enrol their children in schools where they may be subject to discrimination and may be exposed to irrelevant or hurtful cultural education about their particular group. These obstacles prevent the achievement of universal primary education and contribute to long-term problems of unemployment, cultural erosion and social deprivation.

#### >>>Exclusion in health plans and programs

A majority of countries are in agreement with each other about the need for cheap, accessible healthcare, emergency response framework and access to better pharmaceuticals as well. The Human Development Index rate in many such countries is low and it is argued that minorities are more likely to experience lower life expectancy due to unequal access to health care and a higher incidence of some diseases than the majority groups.

#### >>>Child vulnerability

---

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Minorities/UNDPmarginalisedMinorities.pdf>

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) includes special protection for minority children (article 30). Which notes that - “State obligations under the Convention apply to

each child within the State’s territory and all children subject to its jurisdiction”. The CRC rights are not limited to children who are citizens of a State party and must be available to all children - including asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children - irrespective of their nationality, immigration status or statelessness. This is because minority children may be stateless and lacking registration documents, which can increase their vulnerability to abuse, trafficking, child labour and other forms of exploitation.

>>>Exclusion of minorities by the law

Many countries in the world have specific clauses that discriminate against certain minority groups which might make them non-eligible for many things such as seats in Parliament, economic incentives, basic healthcare services etc. This includes religious, gender-based, caste-based and economic discrimination. Some countries have imposed criminal penalties on those who practice discrimination or violate laws protecting minorities. In Brazil, for example, the 1988 Constitution criminalizes acts of racism with high penalties of imprisonment (See Law 7716 of 1989 and Law 9459 of 1997). In India, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 prescribes criminal responsibility for a wide variety of offences against Dalits and Adivasis.<sup>8</sup>

A focus on non-discrimination and participation will be beneficial for all minorities. Measures to improve the implementation of laws against discrimination and supporting minorities to participate in decision-making that affects them will go a long way towards reducing inequality and achieving inclusive growth.

---

<sup>8</sup> “Minority right to establish and administer professional educational institutions a juristic critique in the background of recent developments” <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/195026>

States will be able to better tackle inequality and reduce tensions within their societies if they acknowledge that ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity exists and that groups may face discrimination and exclusion along these lines.

Given that minorities are frequently excluded from public participation, the UN Declaration on the Rights of National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities states, “persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in decisions on the national and, where appropriate, the regional level concerning the minority to which they belong or the regions in which they live.” The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples calls upon the “organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations” to establish a “way and means of ensuring participation of indigenous peoples on issues affecting them.” This includes the rights of self-determination and free, prior and informed consent.

All the previously mentioned forms of marginalisation are experienced by the poorest communities in almost every country. Although most are not enticed into juvenile extremism as mentioned earlier, many are forced into mentally and physically demanding activities on account of many variables - their position and stature, sometimes even gender or caste. In a collaboration with the United Nations Development Program, the Human Rights Council has created a tool kit and guide for the achievement of the MDGs and SDGs (Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals) without neglecting marginalised minorities altogether, allowing them to move forward and have true equality of opportunity.

## **Effect of the Coronavirus Pandemic in widening the gap between the in-group and marginalized communities**

The Coronavirus Pandemic (or Covid-19 pandemic) has majorly shocked the entire world. Industries have come to a standstill, Some minority groups have suffered death rates several times higher than other groups during the pandemic. Emergency measures have had a profound impact on people from minority groups, particularly migrants.<sup>9</sup>

In certain regions or countries, minorities are more likely to live in overcrowded housing conditions, making physical distancing and self-isolation more challenging, and some live in conditions with inadequate or communal access to water and sanitation. Limited digital access and parental education gaps may also make home-schooling more difficult. Those minorities living in poverty often are less able to cope with lockdowns, as they do not have cash savings or food stocks. In many places, minorities are on the front lines with at-risk and low-paid jobs, such as cleaning, transport, or other services that leave them more exposed to COVID-19. Only recently has it been noticed by many that a large number of essential workers form either a part of the minority groups or are migrants in these countries and that most of these workers, despite being “essential”, are often very poorly compensated for their efforts.

Minority females have experienced worse during the pandemic though. These women are excluded from non-contact formal sector jobs, conventionally reserved for men and are instead employed as nannies or emergency aides to relatively affluent classes. Now that their homes are closed due to lockdowns, they no longer have viable jobs to stick by. Due to the employers’ insensitivity, they also have the chance to lose out on a lot of their integral income. It is a little better for women working as janitors or as

---

9

[https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Minorities/OHCHRGuidance\\_COVID19\\_MinoritiesRights.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Minorities/OHCHRGuidance_COVID19_MinoritiesRights.pdf)



workers in schools (especially in developing countries) as they appear on a particular corporate/school's payroll, hence they do not tend to lose out as much of their income. It isn't all that great though, as only a small percentage of these women work in the organised workforce and whatever their job is, it does not come under the skill set that most companies regard adequate to be provided health insurance under. This makes them increasingly susceptible in this situation of a Global Pandemic. Most are forced to care for their many children as well as travel long lengths to find access to clean and sanitized resources.

At the same time, navigating the new COVID-19 environment can be more challenging for members of minority communities. Information on how to prevent and address COVID-19 and on availability of health services and economic and social relief can be more difficult to access as it is often not readily available in minority languages, including sign languages. Minority communities are often not fully integrated into policy-making processes so that the specific concerns and needs of members of these communities are not sufficiently understood and addressed.

In India, the lower castes and economically backward inevitably overlap and hence are denied opportunities because of their community. Although caste-based reservations have long existed in India, it can be implemented much better. This aims to provide increasingly equitable access to education, but often lowers the criteria for merit, sometimes un-equitably so. For a proper reform of this policy, we need to ensure holistic growth of the minority individual, not just a foothold into an institution. This can be achieved by the aforementioned primary education plans, similar to those implemented by the United Nations officers in parts of Africa so that every child gets the same quality of education right from the beginning, to ensure no further disparity in their growing years.

Due to the Coronavirus, social injustices against minorities are also rapidly on the



rise. Not just specifically the communities, but we are seeing activists and advocates getting arrested by the authorities in their attempt to peacefully protest for the inclusion of certain sects of society into the constitution. An upside to this is the increased information and awareness that is spreading because of the spotlight on these issues provided to it by many prominent social media platforms.

Covid-19 has also seen a rapid increase in homelessness and unemployment for marginalised communities who do not receive as much compensation or safety nets in case of their sudden removal from the job. This also is one of the factors contributing to them being at a higher risk of contracting the Coronavirus.

Coupled with inequitable access to healthcare, often prejudiced against by the human bias of those operating and admitting them into these facilities, the death toll of marginalised communities is already at a higher number than the average middle class. The only thing we can do now is to ensure that the gap between the two groups remains constant or gradually decreases.

Last but not least, many of these people act as travel guides, and in general hold jobs in the travel and tourism sector, which coincidentally has been badly hit by the COVID-19 Pandemic. As a result of the pandemic, many countries and regions have imposed quarantines, entry bans, or other restrictions for citizens of or recent travellers to the most affected areas. Other countries and regions have imposed global restrictions that apply to all foreign countries and territories or prevent their citizens from travelling overseas.

Together with a decreased willingness to travel, the restrictions have had a [negative economic impact](#) on the travel sector in those regions. Many members of marginalised communities work in these sectors to showcase their talents and culture. Being naturalised guides, as they usually know their way around their own countries, they also act as tour guides and travel assistants, leading groups from different countries

and introducing them to their home country's culture. This is useful for two reasons - it helps prevent the phenomenon of cultural erasure while simultaneously providing an economic incentive for showcasing familial or communal talents.

Now, due to the absence of regulatory bodies, indigenous communities face a risk of irrelevance as well as that of deep-rooted financial insecurity. New Zealand (NZ) provides the cultural context for this commentary. International tourism markets disappeared overnight resulting in many tourism businesses ceasing operations. When tourism activities that revitalised Maori economies ceased during the COVID-19 pandemic some alternative economic and social activities arose. Such strategies can be observed in South Asia and Africa as well.

In the next segment, we will delve deeper into the country/continent specific problems as well as responses given by the relevant organisations involved.

## **Country/Continent-specific problems faced and the response of the relevant organizations and Governments involved in the same.**

### **TREATMENT OF SUNNIS AND WOMEN IN IRAN:**

Up until 2014, Sunni Muslims in Iran felt like they were “second-class citizens”. Reports from human rights organizations such as Amnesty International reveal that the religious freedoms and rights of Iranian minorities continue to be violated. Many even face systematic persecution and discrimination daily.

One specific example of the ongoing harassment and persecution by the Iranian authorities is linked to the regime’s targeting of Sunni religious leaders. Sunnis constitute the largest religious minority - roughly 5 to 10 percent of the population - in the Shiite-majority nation, limiting their political participation and employment and banning them from building mosques in major cities. Until now, in the ministries and embassies of the Islamic Republic’s government, no Sunnis are employed, and they haven’t taken any important positions like governor or administrator. This doesn’t mean that there are no competent, principled or resourceful people among Sunnis. Rather, it shows the lack of trust towards them.

### **CONCEPT OF FEMICIDE IN TURKEY**

Earlier this year, the #ChallengeAccepted movement on social media highlighted Turkey’s history of femicide and put it up to the forefront of discussion. The killing of women due to the fact that they were women, just their gender was the detriment for whether they lived or died. Many of these weren’t organised crimes, rather they were crimes of passion- those which stemmed from extreme feelings directed towards the victim. A series of 27 murders of young women occurred because their significant others were angered at the end of their relationships with the victim and decided to

inflict it upon them in kind.

Although the concept of femicide is not unknown to us, this campaign did a brilliant job of bringing it to the forefront and highlighting the rampant discrimination against women.

### **CASTE DIFFERENTIATION IN INDIA**

Social discrimination has always been prevalent in India, especially amongst the upper and lower castes. Even before independence these differences were deeply entrenched and have been passed on generationally. Proper modern education helps reduce the disparity and differences of opinion and hence, the New Education Policy to integrate social and cultural lessons is a welcome move on India's part. We have also seen caste-based disclusion and caste-based violence increase and be documented at a greater rate as over the course of this Pandemic.

Due to these communities economic disparities and inequitable access to education, they often take up jobs as peons, sanitation workers - exposing them further to the virus as well as unhealthy amounts of waste. Because of the sheer size of India, it is difficult to estimate exactly how many of these workers are at-risk.

The manual scavengers and the garbage pickers have no PPEs or protective gear. Other than a mask, they have not been given extra gloves or plastic wraps to keep themselves safe. Many of the cases of active discrimination are coming from narratives of the workers.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> <https://amnesty.org.in/opinion-the-novel-coronavirus-and-its-impact-on-the-most-marginalised-communities/>

We must understand that even religious minorities can be treated as marginalized and outcasts depending on their geographic location - i.e, the country that they live in.

<sup>11</sup>During pandemics, people often look for scapegoats. Amidst the current COVID-19 outbreak, there has been growing discrimination in western countries against Chinese and other communities of Asian descent. In Asian countries, immigrants and religious minorities have been blamed for the spread of the virus. For instance, in China, Africans and Caucasians have been targeted, while in India, Muslims are in danger. Similarly, in the Middle East, South-East Asians and East Africans have been singled out.

In Pakistan, several incidents have been reported in which Christians and Hindus were denied food rations. Christians form a sizable portion of frontline workers in Pakistan, and they are at a high risk of contracting the virus because they are not endowed with the protective kits that are considered essential by health experts. At a time when being at home for “social distancing” is of paramount importance for both individual and collective health, there have even been reports of Hindu houses in the bordering areas of Punjab being demolished.

In an April 13 press release, coronavirus-related food aid was highlighted through the case of the Karachi-based Saylani Welfare International Trust, which denied food aid to Hindu and Christian homeless and seasonal workers on the grounds that such aid was reserved only for members of the Muslim community.

There has also been a proliferation of conspiracy theories and hate- or bias-based discourse in connection with COVID-19, including with Anti-Semitic, Anti-Muslim, Anti-Roma (based on Anti-Gypsyism), or other racists, xenophobic or sectarian subtexts. Such narratives - stressing on geography rather than medical terminology to

---

<sup>11</sup> <https://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/online-articles/covid-19-catalyst-minority-exploitation-pakistan>

refer to COVID-19 are stigmatizing, and encourage racist or xenophobic attitudes, including against persons and groups who are forcibly displaced who may be at greater risk during the pandemic. Such attitudes exacerbate fear and worsen the situations of various minority groups, people of African descent, people of Asian descent, or people considered foreigners - basically - those already facing threats of discrimination, exclusion and intolerance.

Early in the pandemic, UN High Commissioners Michelle Bachelet and Filippo Grandi warned that “when fear and uncertainty kick in, scapegoats are never far away. We have already seen anger and hostility directed at some people of East Asian origin.” Further groups in a vulnerable situation are minorities, the marginalized or anyone labelled “foreigner”. The UN Special Rapporteur on racism flagged that COVID-19-related expressions of racism and xenophobia online have included harassment, hate speech, proliferation of discriminatory stereotypes, and conspiracy theories. The UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues has highlighted minority specific concerns in this regard.

**Questions a Resolution must answer:**

1. What provisions are being done to improve the status of minorities in your respective allotted countries? These could include policies passed and implemented and ensuring access to basic water and food resources.
2. What measures are being taken to improve the general standard of education, religious literacy and access to digitalisation so that minorities and marginalised communities are not left out of the race?
3. How are your governments going to collaborate with the United Nations and various Organisations for the welfare of these communities in your country and around the world?
4. What precautions are being taken by the government to ensure that the minorities are adequately protected and insured against their losses during the pandemic?
5. How is the protection of minorities going to be carried out long-term in your respective regions?

### Further Reading and Resources:

1. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/universalhumanrightsstruments.aspx>
2. <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Minorities/UNDPmarginalisedMinorities.pdf>
3. [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Minorities/OHCHRGuidance\\_COVID19\\_MinoritiesRights.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Minorities/OHCHRGuidance_COVID19_MinoritiesRights.pdf)
4. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ABOUTUS/Pages/Mandate.aspx#:~:text=UN%20Human%20Rights%20was%20created,protection%20of%20all%20human%20Rights>
5. <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/ethnic-cleansing.shtml>