Press Release
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Coalition of global civil society organisations launch COVID-19 human rights risks toolkit

1. In response to COVID-19, governments around the world are urgently passing emergency measures that in many instances are having a disproportionate impact on, and in some cases specifically targeting, marginalised and vulnerable groups. These laws are coming into effect with little to no democratic accountability or oversight.


3. The toolkit provides a guide for civil society organisations (CSOs) and human rights defenders (HRDs) to monitor and act on emergency laws and policies; ensure the process of enacting emergency laws and their content adhere to the rule of law and international law obligations; and identify and respond to emergency measures having a disproportionate impact on marginalised and vulnerable communities.

4. While proactive action is needed to protect lives and livelihoods, these broad-based emergency powers carry significant risks of abuse and must be subject to reasonable checks and balances. The toolkit advocates for nuanced, locally responsive and evidence based policies which take into consideration the impact on different sectors of the community, in particular the most vulnerable and marginalised. CSOs must, where possible, be involved in the development and review of emergency powers, and be able to continue to operate effectively including to identify and assist those most vulnerable to the impact of the measures.

5. This toolkit identifies numerous examples of minority groups, migrant workers, detainees, asylum-seekers, refugees, women, children, the elderly and low socioeconomic segments of society (particularly the un-housed) who are disproportionately suffering as a result of Government actions.

6. The toolkit also highlights how policies of social distancing, nation-wide lock down and restrictions on freedom of expression are undermining the ability of civil society to operate and closing civic space. Some governments have restricted or entirely closed down judicial institutions, political opposition and democratic events, like elections and protest movements. Such actions are making it impossible to have effective oversight and scrutiny of emergency measures.
Quote from **Yasmine Ahmed, Executive Director** of Rights and Security International:

“The impact of COVID-19, as well as the emergency measures that are being implemented in response to it, are significantly impacting vulnerable and marginalised groups globally. This toolkit, which has been developed in partnership with civil society organisations from across the world, is designed to help civil society respond to emergency measures particularly those that are having a disproportionate impact on the vulnerable and marginalised in their communities. We look forward to working with our civil society partners to implement the toolkit in their domestic and regional contexts.”

**Notes:**

The contents of the toolkit are drawn from Rights and Security International’s, and our partner organisations’, analysis of the current responses of Governments to the pandemic, and well as Rights and Security International’s 30 years of experience in analysing and responding to the use of emergency and exceptional powers in the context of counter-terrorism law and policy.

The toolkit is currently available in English, and will be translated into Arabic, Hindi, Spanish, Bahasa Indonesian, Urdu, Bengali, Kazakh, Amharic and Russian. You can continue to follow Rights and Security International at @rightssecurity, and keep up to date with the release of related work.

For more information about the toolkit and associated training, please contact us at covid19@rightsandsecurity.org