



INTERNATIONAL WEBINARS AND LIVE EVENTS

INEQUALITY AND DISCRIMINATION DURING COVID-19*

RightOn – 15 April 2020

Moderated by **Marc Limon - Executive Director of the Universal Rights Group (URG):*

Amb. Rui Macieira - Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations Office at Geneva:

Portugal, adopted a number of **economic and social measures** to support directly the **most vulnerable**: people can stay at home and benefit from **wages**; **financial support** for workers who need to stay at home; **social security protection** until June; **resident permits have been extended** until June.

About macro-economic measures: the objective is to **reduce the spike of poverty** we've had in the past. A 13 billion scheme to help **small and medium companies** was established; plan to help companies in the **tourism sector**; **avoid any dividend distribution** until 1st of October.

Ms Leilani Farha - United Nations special rapporteur on adequate housing:

The virus exposed **what doesn't work for people in society**. **Underlying discriminations** against **homeless people** are exacerbated, for them "stay at home" means "continue to live in **shelters and informal settlements**". Many aspects of the current crisis **pre-date the pandemic: homelessness, precarity, low incomes**. All this is not new, but it is **made visible by the COVID19** crisis.

If the **right to adequate housing** was implemented by states, broader population would **benefit** from it on the long term, especially in case of a **new global pandemic** like this one.

Dr Frans Viljoen - Director of the Centre for Human Rights at the Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria:

This crisis is exacerbated by **inequalities** and **inequalities are exacerbated by the crisis**.

Measures to **curb the spread**: wash your hands and observe social distance. But just in **South Africa**, for example, not everyone has **access to clean water and sanitation**. The same applies with **social distancing**. Those not enjoying **right to adequate housing** cannot apply this measure properly.

Right to education: formal schooling is stopped but replaced by **virtual schooling and home schooling**. However the majority of people in **rural areas do not have access** to virtual schooling or **cannot** do home schooling.

We have also seen **many examples of "scape goating"** since the beginning of the crisis.

Dr Joanna Bourke Martignoni - Senior Research Fellow at the Geneva Academy:

Debt will continue to be an issue for many **small income countries**. It will continue to have a long-term effect. We witness the **interconnectedness of global economy**. Several large **multinational businesses** cancelled big contracts in the Global South, causing huge **job loss**. More needs to be done in term of **corporate responsibility**. We should encourage **international financial institutions**, including World Bank and the IMF, to engage in an **emergency response** that would allow Global South countries to **restructure their economies**.

This crisis is an **exacerbation of existing problems**, coupled with new issues to deal with.

Dr Hanna Kienzler - Department of Global Health & Social Medicine at King's College London:

Such crises are **very fruitful for decision-makers**. We have seen it during **Macron's speech** when he saw the crisis as an **opportunity** for the country. **France** is facing a similar situation that the one in **UK** or **USA**.

Leaders' interventions are not enough if we consider the COVID crisis as a **health and social issue**. It is important to think about the **causes of the causes** when dealing with the crisis. If we are not **addressing root causes**, we cannot hope to be optimistic in the **long term**.