



INTERNATIONAL WEBINARS AND LIVE EVENTS

DEMOCRACY AND RULE OF LAW IN CRISIS*

RightOn – 22 April 2020

Moderated by **Marc Limon, Executive Director of the Universal Rights Group (URG) and **Felix Kirchmeier**, Manager of Policy Studies at the Geneva Academy.*

*Ms **Annika Ben David** - Sweden's Ambassador for Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law:*

Sweden aims to curb the **global threat facing democracy**. We are concerned about the responses provided by states and their **effect on human rights**, and the effect of the crisis on the international human rights system. **Authoritarian regimes** will use this opportunity to spread their messages and strengthen their positions. We think a human rights based **multilateral approach** is the best response.

Priorities for Sweden are **transparency**, fight against **disinformation**, **multilateralism** and cooperation.

*Ms **Annika Silva-Leander** – Head of the Democracy Assessment and Political Analysis (DAPA):*

There are numerous challenges to holding an **election during a pandemic**. Most of the countries have decided to postpone their elections. Going ahead with an election during the pandemic is a **risk**.

We should be worried about **political leaders** denying the severity of the health crisis. It can put large amount of people at **risk**. This is especially concerning in countries with **weak health systems**.

The situation forces us to **rethink how democracy is exercised**. It is important that innovations and changes in practices triggered by the crisis do not affect the **fundamental principles of democracy**.

*Ms **Ilze Brands Kehris** - Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and head of UN Human Rights Office in New York:*

In some countries, the **use of state of emergency** goes well beyond the current crisis and does not provide a **proportional response** to it. Our office will soon issue a **guidance** on the use of state of emergency.

When we talk about **checks and balance**, are we really talking about the **crisis of democracy** ? Maybe we should talk about a potential **crisis of governance** which goes beyond corruption and the rule of law.

*Mr **Yuval Shany** - Member of the UN Human Rights Committee and lecturer at Geneva Academy:*

Whenever a state is **derogating from a legal obligation**, it has to issue a formal notification, but out of 96 states under state of emergency, only 11 submitted notification of derogations to the UN. The use of emergency power is always characterized by **more power for executive power**. In terms of power logic, this a very **tempting situation for governments** with authoritarian tendencies.

The whole idea of derogation is that the goal of it is to **return to normal enjoyment of human rights**.

*Mr **Marcin Walecki** - Head of Democratization Department of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights:*

We are monitoring situations with states of emergency. We are concerned about the situation of **parliaments, elections** and targeting of **vulnerable groups** under states of emergencies.

We also see some **positive developments**, where parliaments and judiciary use **technologies to adapt** to the context. Normally it would take years to adopt such new practices but they are adopted within weeks.