



Statement of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI) on the COVID - 19 Pandemic

Nairobi, Kenya

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NANHRI is alarmed by the rapid and exponential spread of the novel corona virus COVID-19 pandemic within the African continent, thus posing far-reaching risks and threats, particularly to the right to life and health of African populations.

African States have been already affected by COVID-19. According to the current figures published by the African Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC), there are thousands of confirmed cases of corona virus in Africa and hundreds have unfortunately lost their lives.

NANHRI continues to monitor the situation with particular attention to the measures taken to combat the pandemic.

NANHRI expresses its deep concern over the impact on vulnerable groups including the elderly, persons with disabilities, and persons with weakened immune systems. NANHRI is also concerned about the increased risks to the health of the homeless, internally displaced persons, detainees in prisons and other places of detention, people living in highly congested and poor neighbourhoods, migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers who are in need of adequate health care during this time of global health emergency.

NANHRI is gravely concerned by the economic repercussions of this pandemic that may further weaken the most disadvantaged members of the society, notably casual workers and people working in the informal sector.

NANHRI commends the efforts exerted by African States to prevent and contain the pandemic, as well as the measures taken to address its devastating impact on the economy and employment.

NANHRI urges all African States to follow the health-related recommendations provided by the CDC and the World Health Organization (WHO), NANHRI also calls on the African States to implement the recommendations of the competent organs of the African Union and the United Nations, to enable all individuals to overcome this ordeal to their full dignity. This cannot be done without ensuring that the negative impacts of the pandemic on the social, economic and health aspects are limited. Moreover, social and financial support should be provided to the most vulnerable groups affected by this pandemic.

NANHRI appeals to its members to continue monitoring the human rights situation, particularly during the state of emergency.

NANHRI calls upon the African population to support their authorities by complying with the preventive measures taken to combat the pandemic and its spreading, including confinement, so as not to put their lives and those of others in danger.

NANHRI also urges the entire population to avoid spreading any fake news on social networks, in any way that would distort the correct information conveyed by the competent authorities. African National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) have been engaging in awareness-raising initiatives and advocacy actions, as part of their mandate to ensure that individuals are well informed and sensitized as per their national context.

Awareness-raising efforts need to be supported by capacity building for the benefit of several stakeholders, in an attempt to support the necessary awareness in the management of the crisis. Hence, fundamental principles of human rights have to be taken into account when implementing public health emergency measures.

The limitation of rights imposed by the global health emergency must be proportionate to the requirements of achieving the objective of preventing and controlling the spread of the virus. They must be temporary and must end once the objectives of preventing and controlling the spread of the virus have been achieved.

Restrictions on rights must not, in their application, have a disproportionate impact on the rights of individuals, let alone vulnerable groups. In this regard, NANHRI highlights Article 4 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

NANHRI underlines the necessity, in order to overcome this crisis, that African nations have to consolidate their efforts within the continent and globally. NHRIs members of NANHRI have to exchange information, experience and good practices within the African Network and also with GANHRI and its other regional networks.

NANHRI also emphasizes that protection of human rights must not be stopped, but strengthened during and after this crisis.

Mr. Mohamed FAYEK

NANHRI Chairperson