

# **The COVID-19 Pandemic Magnifies the Crisis of “U.S.-Style Human Rights”**

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The sudden and unexpected outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic is the most serious global public health emergency that humanity has experienced since the end of World War II. It is also a “big test of human rights conditions” for all countries across the globe. The virus does not respect borders, nor is race or nationality relevant in the face of the disease. Given this, to honor our common commitment to human rights, governments of different countries are obliged to adopt scientific measures for the prevention and control of the virus and do their best to ensure the health and safety of their people. Nevertheless, the U.S. government’s self-interested, short-sighted, inefficient, and irresponsible response to the pandemic has not only

caused the tragedy in which about 2 million Americans became infected with the virus and more than 110,000 have died from it, but also caused the exposure and deterioration of the long-existing problems within the United States, such as a divisive society, the polarization between the rich and the poor, racial discrimination, and the inadequate protection of the rights and interests of vulnerable groups. This has led the American people into grave human rights disasters.

### **1. The U.S. Government's Ineffective Response to the Pandemic Leading to Human Rights Disasters**

Being distracted, slack, and opinionated in the face of the pandemic, the United States Federal Government declared a national emergency on March 13, after tens of thousands of deaths had occurred. The pandemic statistics released by Johns Hopkins University in the United States showed that as of June 9 Eastern Standard Time (EST), there had been 1,971,302 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 111,620 deaths from the virus in the United States, with both figures significantly higher than those of other countries. For the United States, which boasts the strongest economic and technological strength and the most abundant medical resources in the world,

this is a sad irony.

**Ignoring the Pandemic Warnings.** According to the revisited timeline of the pandemic in the United States, which was released by *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* in April 2020, the U.S. government had repeatedly ignored the pandemic warnings and slacked off on pandemic control. In early January, the National Security Council (NSC) received intelligence reports predicting the spread of the virus in the United States. On January 29, Peter Navarro, Director of the Office of Trade and Manufacturing Policy at the White House, laid out in striking detail the potential risks of a coronavirus pandemic: as many as half a million deaths and trillions of dollars in economic losses. U.S. health officials and medical experts, such as Secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services Alex Azar, also repeatedly warned of the deadly pandemic in the United States. Unfortunately, the U.S. government ignored these warnings. Instead, it focused on controlling the spreading of information, restricted medical experts' freedom to release information on the pandemic to the public, and even published false information to mislead the public, such as calling the virus "a flu", claiming that

the virus has low infection and fatality rates, and saying that “One day it’s like a miracle, it will disappear.” Under such circumstances, the “golden window” period for infectious disease prevention and control was wasted. Even then, many members of the U.S. Senate, including Richard Burr, who was the chairman of the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee, were involved in insider trading scandals. They used their positions to understand the serious situation of the pandemic earlier, but they downplayed the risk of the pandemic in front of the public while selling a large number of stocks before the pandemic triggered a stock market crash. In this way, they had a “perfect hedge”.

**Prioritizing Capital Interests.** The website of *The New York Times* reported on April 13, 2020, that the White House COVID-19 Response Working Group and the NSC jointly prepared a memo dated February 14, which was titled “U.S. Government Response to the 2019 Novel Coronavirus.” According to the report, the memo documented drastic pandemic-control measures including: “significantly limiting public gatherings and cancellation of almost all sporting events, performances, and public and private meetings that cannot be convened

by phone. Consider school closures.” Nevertheless, the decision-makers immediately rejected the memo after hearing that the measures would lead to the collapse of the U.S. stock market. This showed how the U.S. government prioritized capital interests and the response of the capital market, rather than making the people’s right to life and health a priority. Due to this, the U.S. government failed to give effective warnings to the public and failed to get prepared for the potential consumption of medical resources caused by the pandemic, bringing the American people to the brink of infection and death.

**Politicizing the Anti-pandemic Endeavor.** When the virus broke out in the United States, some U.S. politicians used it as a weapon to attack political opponents and seek election benefits instead of regarding the drive to protect the lives and health of their people as their top priority. The website of *The Lancet*, an authoritative medical journal, published an editorial on May 16, which was a rare case for the journal. The editorial explicitly pointed out the intervention of political parties in the public health sector of the United States, and the weakening role of the Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention (CDC). It criticized the U.S. government for not actively adopting basic medical and anti-pandemic measures such as detection, tracking, and isolation, placing its hopes on “magic bullets” such as vaccines and new drugs, and hoping that the virus would eventually “magically disappear”. On May 4, the famous U.S. political scientist Francis Fukuyama published the article *The Wages of American Political Decay* on the website *The National Interest*, pointing out that the highly polarized party politics made the political checks and balances an insurmountable obstacle to decision-making; that the pandemic, which should have been an opportunity to put aside differences and show unity, further deepened the political polarization. Politicians viewed the pandemic as an opportunity to seize power and partisan interests, and this came at the cost of the lives of countless American people.

**Leading to Catastrophic Consequences.** The website of *The New York Times* reported on May 20, 2020, that research by Columbia University of the United States showed that delays in adopting movement restrictions had caused at least 36,000 people to die. According to the research, if the U.S. government had

adopted movement restrictions one week earlier, it could have saved 36,000 lives, and if the U.S. government had adopted movement restrictions two weeks earlier, 83 percent of the deaths from COVID-19 could have been avoided. On May 24, *The New York Times* unprecedentedly dedicated its entire front page to 1,000 U.S. COVID-19 victims. Their names, ages, and brief descriptions were listed under the headline “U.S. Deaths Near 100,000, an Incalculable Loss,” with a subheadline reading: “They Were Not Simply Names on a List. They Were Us.” The website of the *Time* reported on May 20 that the delayed social-distancing measures caused 90 percent of the deaths from COVID-19 in the United States, and observed that such a huge loss of life was essentially a failure of U.S. democracy.

## **2. Inequality within U.S. Society Being Fully Exposed during the Pandemic**

In the United States, both liberal and conservative scholars agree on one basic fact that there is stark inequality within U.S. society. The deep-seated institutional reason for such inequality is that the U.S. government and political parties have long been manipulated by interest groups, and are unable to

formulate and implement tax, industrial, and social security policies that promote social equality. During the pandemic, the social and economic inequality within U.S. society has been exposed and exacerbated.

**The Elite Class of the United States Being Specially Treated in Coronavirus Testing.** Viral infection does not distinguish between rich and poor, but the limited testing and medical resources were not fairly allocated in the United States. The website of *The New York Times* reported on March 19, 2020, that many dignitaries in the United States somehow underwent virus testing when they had no signs of infection and when nearly every state in the country lacked testing equipment. Uche Blackstock, an emergency medicine physician, said frustratedly, “As a physician, I find it upsetting that celebrities and government officials without symptoms have been able to access testing quickly with same-day results, while I’ve had to ration out testing to my patients with turnaround times of five or seven days.” This obvious injustice has made the public increasingly raise questions. When medical staff and many patients cannot be diagnosed, whether the privileged class obtains priority testing means that the



ordinary people are deprived of testing opportunities. The website of *The Guardian*, a British newspaper, published an article on March 21 and commented that when the Titanic hit the iceberg and sank, women and children were protected and rescued first, but in the face of COVID-19, the United States has first rescued the rich and powerful groups. The gap between rich and poor in getting the virus tests in the United States has exposed the slackness, confusion, and injustice in its pandemic prevention and control system.

**People at the Bottom of U.S. Society Facing an Increasingly Dangerous Situation.** The pandemic has made the lives of people at the bottom of U.S. society increasingly difficult, and further intensified the social polarization between rich and poor. According to a CBS report in 2019, nearly 40 percent of Americans would struggle to cover a \$400 emergency expense, and 25 percent of Americans skipped necessary medical care because they could not afford the cost. The website of *The Atlantic* reported in April 2020 that low-income people in the United States would usually delay seeing a doctor when they became ill, not because they did not want to recover, but because they had no money at all.

Faced with the COVID-19 pandemic, tens of millions of people in the United States are not covered by medical insurance, when intensive care for COVID-19 costs as high as tens of thousands of dollars in the country. “To be or not to be” is not just a philosophical proposition of some literary work, but a realistic choice that the people at the bottom of U.S. society have to make. *Russia Today* reported on April 30 that a Gallup survey revealed that one in seven American adults said that if they or their family members developed symptoms related to COVID-19, they would probably give up medical treatment because they were worried that they could not afford the costs. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Philip Alston, pointed out on April 16 that the poor in the United States were “being hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic”. He observed, “Low-income and poor people face far higher risks from the coronavirus due to chronic neglect and discrimination, and a muddled, corporate-driven federal response has failed them.”

**High Unemployment Rates Leading the Working Class into a Crisis of Survival.** According to data released by the U.S. Department of Labor on May 28,

2020, the cumulative number of Americans applying for unemployment relief from March 15 to May 23 has for the first time reached 40.8 million. Given the high unemployment rate brought about by the pandemic and the long-existing structural discrimination and polarization between rich and poor, the U.S. working class's ability to resist risks has greatly diminished. *Vox News* reported on April 10 that from the catering industry and tourism to the media industry, the entire U.S. economy has felt the impact of the pandemic, and just like the impact of other crises, the most vulnerable groups bore the brunt of the economic impact. According to the report, during the pandemic, the people who are most vulnerable amid layoffs are those who earn the lowest salaries, such as low-wage workers in the catering and retail industries. According to the report released by the National Restaurant Association on April 20, two-thirds of restaurant workers (about 8 million people) have been dismissed or put on vacation due to the pandemic. When the U.S. government launched the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), which was intended to help small- and medium-sized enterprises, some large companies with sufficient funds took advantage of the

rule loopholes to acquire huge loans, but small businesses and small shops that urgently needed loans to sustain themselves could not get the help. The above-mentioned report also showed that at least 60 percent of employers said that the existing relief plan of the federal government could not help them reduce layoffs. All this has revealed that the U.S. working class was the first to feel the pain of the economic recession brought about by the pandemic, and became the victims of the U.S. government's inefficient anti-pandemic measures.

### **3. Racial Discrimination Being Intensified within the United States during the Pandemic**

The systemic racial discrimination is a chronic illness of U.S. society. Since 2016, white supremacy has revived and racial discrimination has intensified in the United States. Social tensions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially the unequal allocation of limited anti-pandemic resources, have further deepened mainstream society's discrimination against minorities, such as Asian, African, and Hispanic Americans.

#### **Asian Americans Suffering from Stigmatization.**

The website of *The Guardian*, a British newspaper, pointed out on April 1, 2020 that stereotyping of Asian Americans still happens in the United States, and when reporting on the COVID-19 situation, some U.S. media always attach photos of Asian faces. The website of *The New York Times* observed on April 16 that the COVID-19 pandemic meant isolation for Asian Americans. Since the outbreak of the virus, Asian Americans have often been humiliated and even attacked in public places. Some U.S. politicians even deliberately misled the public. After the World Health Organization officially named the new coronavirus “COVID-19”, senior U.S. leaders, including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, still insisted on referring to the virus as the “Chinese virus” or “Wuhan virus”. They also refused to correct that mistake even after being strongly criticized by the international community. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Tendayi Achiume, pointed out on March 23 and April 21 that politicians of relevant countries proactively expressed xenophobic opinions or made xenophobic implications by deliberately replacing COVID-19 with other names that

linked this particular disease to a particular country or nation, which was an irresponsible and disturbing expression. The current pandemic-related discrimination has fully exposed the once-concealed racial prejudice. In the United States, which bills itself as the “beacon of freedom”, government officials blatantly incite, guide, and condone racial discrimination, which is tantamount to humiliating the modern concept of human rights.

**African and Hispanic Americans Falling Victims to Severe Racial Inequality.** Racial discrimination is deeply rooted in the history and reality of the United States. The COVID-19 pandemic has put this issue underneath a magnifying glass and tragically exposed its negative consequences. African Americans across the country are infected with and die from COVID-19 at a disproportionately higher rate than any other group in the United States. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) released a racial breakdown of the state’s confirmed COVID-19 cases and COVID-19 deaths on April 2, 2020, which showed that African Americans, who make up only 12 percent of Michigan’s population, accounted for 33 percent of Michigan’s confirmed COVID-19 cases and 40 percent of the state’s

COVID-19 deaths. National statistics released by the CDC showed that as of May 13, African Americans accounted for 22.4 percent of deaths from COVID-19 in the United States. This percentage is significantly higher than the African Americans' 12.5 percent share of the total U.S. population. African Americans in Kansas, Illinois, and Missouri accounted for only 5.7 percent, 14.1 percent, and 11.6 percent of the total population of the states, respectively, but accounted for 29.7 percent, 30.3 percent, and 35.1 percent of these states' deaths from COVID-19. Hispanic Americans also have disproportionately higher infection and fatality rates during the pandemic. In early April, New York City released a racial breakdown of the city's deaths from COVID-19. According to it, Hispanic Americans accounted for 34 percent of the city's fatal cases of COVID-19. The website of *The New York Times* pointed out on April 14 that the fact the pandemic infected and killed African and Hispanic Americans at disproportionately higher rates was the result of a health gap directly created by the historical inequality of wealth and opportunities. The website of the *Financial Times*, a British newspaper, pointed out on May 15 that African

Americans and Hispanic Americans were more likely than whites to perform the work that was necessary for the maintenance of social operations, making them more susceptible to poverty, diabetes, high blood pressure, and COVID-19. The report also pointed out that this pandemic exacerbated the racial differences in the United States, and that nothing could better display the difference in skin color in the United States than the life and death stories in the pandemic shutdown. On May 25, George Floyd, an African-American man from Minnesota, died after a white police officer pressed his knee on Floyd's neck for several minutes during his arrest. This led to large-scale protests and demonstrations across the United States, once again exposing the dissatisfaction and anger that the American people have for the worsening racial inequality.

**Frequent Racist Violence.** During the pandemic, racist violence has haunted the United States, and Asian Americans suffer from venomous personal attacks. From March 19 to April 1, 2020, alone, the U.S. nonprofit organization "Stop AAPI Hate" received more than 1,100 reports of hate incidents. In February 2020, a 16-year-old Asian boy in Los Angeles was accused of being a "virus



carrier” and viciously beaten at school. On March 14, in a supermarket in Midland, Texas, a 19-year-old man deliberately stabbed an Asian man and his two young children with a knife on the ground that “they were Chinese and were spreading the novel coronavirus to others.” On April 5, an Asian woman in Brooklyn, New York City, was attacked by a racist who spilled unidentified chemical liquid on her to severely burn her upper body, face, and hands when she was emptying rubbish at her door. Violent incidents have further exacerbated the social tension during the pandemic, and problems such as a divisive society, racial divide, and the proliferation of guns have worsened. On April 15, nearly 200 U.S. foreign policy scholars and former diplomats jointly issued a statement in *USA Today*, pointing out that hate crimes and violent attacks against Asian Americans sounded the alarm for the United States, and that leaders at all levels and in all sectors should take action to oppose racism against Asians and end hate crimes against Asian communities.

#### **4. Vulnerable Groups in the United States Struggling to Survive during the Pandemic**

The care for the survival of socially disadvantaged

and marginalized groups represents the virtue of a society. It is also a touchstone for the human rights situation in a country. During the pandemic, the features of the United States' cruel capitalism have been fully exposed, which have forced the elderly, homeless people, and children into a tragic situation.

**The Elderly, the “Victims” of the Government’s Ineffectiveness in Fighting the Pandemic.** UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has repeatedly stressed that the elderly, like young people, have the same rights to life and health amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and no person is expendable. Unfortunately, during the epidemic in the United States, the elderly group, which is naturally at greater risk, has been further weakened and marginalized due to age discrimination, and the elderly’s right to life has not been ensured. On March 23 and April 22, 2020, Texas Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick expressed in interviews with *Fox News* that he would rather die than see public health measures damage the U.S. economy and take the risk of restarting the U.S. economy at the cost of elderly people’s lives. Ben Shapiro, the editor-in-chief of *The Daily Wire*, which is a right-wing U.S. media outlet, declared coldly on an

interview show on April 29, “If somebody who is 81 dies of COVID-19, that is not the same thing as somebody who is 30 dying of COVID-19.” He also said, “If grandma dies in a nursing home at age 81, and that’s tragic and that’s terrible, also the life expectancy in the United States is 80.” The website of *The New York Times* reported on May 11 that at least 28,100 occupants and staff members of long-term care institutions such as nursing homes in the United States have died of COVID-19, accounting for about one-third of COVID-19 deaths in the United States. In these care institutions, many elderly people live in a relatively closed environment, so their risk of death from COVID-19 infection is very high. The website of *The Atlantic* published two articles respectively on March 28 and April 29, titled *Ageism Is Making the Pandemic Worse* and *We’re Literally Killing Elders Now*. They pointed out that long-existing defects in the old-age care system, such as insufficient capital investment and staffing, caused the United States to fall behind in ensuring the rights and interests of the elderly, and that such a situation was due to many political reasons. The website of the *Washington Post* observed on May 9 that the U.S.

anti-pandemic action had become a state-approved massacre that deliberately sacrificed the lives of the elderly, the working class, African Americans, and Hispanic Americans.

**The Homeless Having Nowhere to Go during the Pandemic.** The website of *USA Today* reported on April 22, 2020, that more than 550,000 people were homeless every night in the United States. The report also pointed out that according to the statistics released by the Homeless Alliance, about 17 out of every 10,000 Americans have experienced homelessness and about 33 percent of them are families with children. Many of the homeless Americans are elderly people and disabled people. Given their originally poor physical health and bad living and hygienic conditions, they are susceptible to the virus. During the epidemic, the homeless who are living on the streets are deported and forced to live in temporary shelters for isolation. The website of *Reuters* reported on April 23 that the crowded shelters made it impossible for the homeless who lived there to maintain social distance, which made it easier for the virus to spread. As of April 20, 43 homeless people living in New York City's shelters had died from infection of

COVID-19, and 617 tested positive for COVID-19. The website of *The New York Times* reported on April 13 that the shelters for the homeless had become a delayed-action bomb of a virus outbreak in New York City, where more than 17,000 people lived and slept almost side by side in centralized shelters. The website of *Nature* journal reported on May 7 that when researchers began conducting virus testing on homeless people in the United States, they found that the situation there had gotten out of control. The website of the *Boston Globe* reported on May 4 that 596 homeless people in Boston had been diagnosed with COVID-19, accounting for one-third of the confirmed cases in the region. The website of the *Los Angeles Times* reported on May 14 that research showed that due to the impact of the pandemic, the number of homeless people in the United States might surge by as much as 45 percent within a year, further exacerbating the public health crisis.

**Worrisome Situation of Poor Children and Immigrant Children.** The United States has not yet ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is one of the core international human rights conventions. In recent years, child poverty and

abuse has remained a grave problem in the United States. This problem has been exacerbated by the pandemic. *Forbes News* reported on May 7, 2020 that a survey showed a large number of American children were facing hunger during the pandemic. As of the end of April, more than one-fifth of American households had been facing food crises, and two-fifths of American households with children under 12 years of age have been facing such crises. *Forbes News* reported on May 9 that the number of child exploitation reports in the United States surged during the pandemic. The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children received 4.2 million reports in April, an increase of 2 million from March 2020 and an increase of nearly 3 million from April 2019. Apart from that, a more worrisome fact is that a large number of unaccompanied immigrant children are still being held in detention centers in the United States. They are currently in an extremely dangerous situation during the pandemic. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on human rights of migrants Felipe Gonzalez Morales and other UN human rights experts issued a joint statement on April 27, requesting the U.S. government to transfer immigrants from overcrowded and insanitary detention centers. On

May 29, 15 experts of the Special Procedures of United Nations Human Rights Council issued a joint statement urging the United States to take more measures to prevent virus outbreaks in the detention centers. The website of the United Nations reported on May 21 that since March, the U.S. government had repatriated at least 1,000 unaccompanied immigrant children to Central and South America regardless of the risk of the pandemic. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) criticized this move, for it would expose the children to greater danger.

### **5. Relevant Behaviors of the U.S. Government Seriously Violating the Spirit of International Human Rights Law**

When the citizens' right to life and health is severely threatened by the spreading pandemic, the U.S. government, instead of focusing on controlling the pandemic, wields a hegemonic stick and fans the flames of trouble everywhere, trying to divert attention and shirk responsibility. Its behaviors have seriously undermined the international community's concerted efforts to control the pandemic.

### **Ineffective Anti-pandemic Efforts Failing the**

## **National Duty of Ensuring the Citizens' Right to Life.**

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) stipulates that every human being has the inherent right to life, and countries are obliged to take proactive measures to guarantee their citizens' right to life. As a party to the convention, the U.S. government, however, has not given priority to its citizens' right to life and health during the pandemic. Instead, it has been prioritizing the political campaign at home and the political drive to suppress China abroad, rather than safeguarding the lives and safety of its citizens. Given this, it has missed the best chance to curb the spread of the virus, and caused a grave human rights disaster in which about 2 million people have been infected with COVID-19, and more than 110,000 have died from the virus. Clearly, the U.S. government has failed to fulfill its due national obligations to protect its people's lives from the threat of epidemics. The website of *The Independent*, a British newspaper, commented on April 10, 2020, that the United States, an active advocator for human rights, ignored its own human rights obligations and blatantly overlooked its citizens' lives. The website of the *Huffington Post* reported on May 6 that after making a



rigorous assessment of the U.S. government's poor performance during the COVID-19 pandemic, Yale University epidemiologist Gregg Gonsalves directly pointed out that this was getting awfully close to genocide by default.

**Maliciously Stigmatizing China in Violation of the Principles of Equality and Non-discrimination.**

The principles of equality and non-discrimination are the core norms of international human rights laws and are confirmed by a series of international human rights instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Since the outbreak of the virus, high-ranking U.S. government officials have violently disregarded human conscience and ethical bottom lines. To maintain the U.S. hegemony, these officials have politicized the pandemic and constantly stigmatized China by referring to the virus as the “Wuhan Virus” or the “China virus”. When the scientific community came to the conclusion that the exact source of the virus was from nature, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo still repeatedly claimed that the virus came from some lab in Wuhan according to some “intelligence reports” he read. These politicians’ behaviors have clearly violated World Health

Organization Best Practices for the Naming of New Human Infectious Diseases, which was jointly issued by the World Health Organization, the World Organization for Animal Health, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 2015. The way they refer to the virus goes against the World Health Organization's suggestion for the official name of the novel coronavirus disease. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Tendayi Achiume, pointed out on March 23 that some U.S. government officials refused to use the internationally-recognized name of the virus and deliberately replaced it with other names that linked this particular disease to a particular country or nation, which was an irresponsible and disturbing expression that came from and would give rise to racism, xenophobia, stigmatization, and exclusion of certain groups, and violence against certain groups. She held that such behaviors were unforgivable and incompatible with the obligations stipulated by the international human rights laws.

### **Suspending the Payment of WHO Membership**

**Fees Impeding the Joint Anti-Pandemic Efforts of the International Community.** In order to shirk its responsibility for its disastrous anti-pandemic measures, the U.S. government tried to scapegoat the World Health Organization by fabricating false charges against the organization and threatening to stop paying its membership fees. On April 14, 2020, the U.S. government announced its suspension of paying dues to the WHO, which was unanimously criticized by the international community. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres issued a statement on April 14 stating that when the world was fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, it was inappropriate to reduce the resources required by the WHO or any other humanitarian organization for operations. The President of the American Medical Association, Patrice Harris, issued a statement on April 15 stating that combating the pandemic required international cooperation and that the suspension of financial support to the WHO at this critical moment is a dangerous step in the wrong direction. Josep Borrell, the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, expressed on April 15 that at this time, there was no reason to justify such an action. On

April 15, the website of *The Guardian*, a British newspaper, published an editorial and commented that when the world desperately needed to jointly overcome this threat that the world had never experienced before, the suspension of the WHO dues by the U.S. government was an act that lacked morality and disrupted the international order, and was a horrible betrayal to global solidarity. German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said on April 16 that the WHO was the mainstay of the global fight against the pandemic, and the suspension of the WHO dues by the United States at this time “would be nothing other than throwing the pilot out of the plane in mid-flight”. Under such circumstances, the U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo once again attacked the WHO on April 22, threatening to permanently suspend the payment of dues. On May 29, the president of the United States announced the suspension of relations with the WHO.

**Unilateral Sanctions Violating the Spirit of Humanitarianism and the Principle of International Cooperation.** International cooperation is the cornerstone of the existence and operation of the international community. It is an important principle for

ensuring the implementation of human rights and fundamental freedoms across the globe. It is also a national obligation stipulated by international instruments, such as the Charter of the United Nations. At this critical moment when the deadly pandemic spreads globally and threatens human life, health, and well-being, all countries should work together to respond to the pandemic and maintain global public health security. Nevertheless, during this pandemic, the U.S. government has still imposed sanctions on countries such as Iran, Cuba, and Venezuela, which made it difficult for the sanctioned countries to obtain needed anti-pandemic medical supplies in a timely manner, and posed threats to the people's rights to life and health in the sanctioned countries. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, expressed on March 24, 2020, that in the case of a global pandemic, sanctions would hinder medical work and increase risks for everyone. She argued that to maintain global public health security and protect the rights and lives of millions of people in sanctioned countries, sanctions should be relaxed or suspended in certain sectors. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and

human rights, the Special Rapporteur on human rights for safe drinking water and sanitation, and the Special Rapporteur on the right to education issued a joint statement on May 6 stating that the U.S. sanctions on Venezuela were seriously harming the human rights of the people in the country. They urged the United States to immediately lift sanctions that exacerbated the suffering of the people when the pandemic raged in the country.