

## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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# G20: AFTER VIRTUAL SUMMIT, ACTION PLANS MUST BE HUMAN RIGHTS COMPLIANT

The virtual G20 summit on 26 March 2020, which addressed the COVID-19 pandemic, must be followed by concrete and specific human rights-compliant action plans.

While there are some positive aspects of the Leaders' Communique<sup>1</sup>, Amnesty International, is disappointed that the Leaders' Communique makes no mention of the need to ensure that the urgent action plans envisaged are consistent with states' international human rights obligations nor of the necessity of a gender perspective.

Although the Communique commits G20 states to share timely and transparent information amongst themselves and recognizes the need for responsible communication to the public, it makes no reference to respecting the right to information, nor the need to counter stigmatization and abuse, of particular communities or marginalized individuals.

Furthermore, G20 states have not shown uniform global leadership by ordering the release of individuals held in detention solely for migration-related reasons, which Amnesty International considers cannot generally be justified during a global public health crisis such as COVID-19. Likewise, they have not uniformly ordered the release of pre-trial detainees where no exceptional reasons exists to retain them, or the comprehensive review of other detainees for conditional release who appear to be especially at-risk of severe complications from the disease - such as older people or those with pre-existing medical conditions, including those with a weakened immune system.

Also worrying is the potential for corruption given the level of increased spending envisioned. There is no mention of the need to boost anti-corruption measures to make sure that allocated funds are used to safeguard public health.

We are also concerned that there is no mention of the need to ensure that economic support, or recovery plans, must be in line with the urgent need for a rapid reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and the imperative of a just transition to a zero-carbon economy.

Amnesty International urges all states involved in the 2020 G20 process to put human rights at the heart of policy making as the Urgent Action Plans are developed in the coming weeks. In summary, the G20 should demonstrate global leadership by:

- Publicly committing to ensuring all plans are fully in line with all relevant international human rights law and standards;
- Ensuring all plans are drawn up with a fully integrated gender perspective and gender budgeting, including measures to mitigate the increased risk of gender-based violence through the provision of services offering support and protection to people at risk and ensure access to sexual and reproductive health services. This is particularly important for those measures which are time-sensitive such as access to contraception including emergency contraception, abortion, miscarriage treatment and post-abortion care, and safeguards to ensure that maternal health services continue under safe circumstances;
- Realizing, as a matter of urgency and by considering all financial measures at their disposal, the financial commitments made to supporting international pandemic response plans as well as financial assistance to less wealthy countries. Such assistance should be directed towards ensuring health protection for all, especially the

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<sup>1</sup> Positive aspects include the G20's commitment to find funding for the World Health Organization's Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan, and voluntary commitments to provide finance to other international funds to fight the pandemic, although how this will be done is not explicit, as well as the recognition that the most vulnerable need health and social protections. Also welcome is recognition of the particular risks posed to "developing and least developed countries, notably in Africa and small island states", where health systems and economies may be less able to cope with the challenge, as well as the particular risk faced by refugees and displaced persons and the reference to the need for transparency in several places. It is also positive that the communique stated that "[e]mergency measures aimed at protecting health will be targeted, proportionate, transparent and temporary".

most marginalized, while at the same time strengthening measures against corruption that can lead to human rights abuses;

- Ensuring that all plans, particularly economic recovery plans, are in line with the urgent need to move towards a zero-carbon economy through a just and human rights-centred transition and do not exacerbate the climate crisis;
- Guaranteeing the right to health for all, including access to preventive care as well as quality and affordable treatment, including for those most at risk or less able to carry out preventive measures due to poverty, homelessness, or living and working in environments where they are more at risk of contracting the virus. This includes ensuring for those remaining in prison and other forms of detention the same standards of prompt access to medical attention and health care as must be available in the community, including when it comes to prevention and treatment of COVID-19 and, with their consent, access to free screening tests.
- Providing social security – including sick pay, health care and parental leave – and targeted economic support to all members of society, including non-citizens and migrants, those in insecure forms of labour and in the informal sector, who are suffering the brunt of many of the control measures introduced so far;
- Urgently providing sufficient facilities for homeless people and those in inadequate housing, including in crowded refugee camps, to isolate themselves if needed, as well as providing them with clean water and sanitation facilities, and ensuring that no one is evicted and left especially at risk of being infected with the disease;
- Ensuring that all additional restrictions on human rights as part of the COVID-19 response, whether or not imposed under states of emergency, are within the limits set by international human rights law and standards, including being prescribed by and applied in accordance with the law, necessary and proportionate, and time bound, and are not used to crack down on human rights defenders or other elements of civil society;
- Guaranteeing access to information, including for people living in rural areas, where literacy rates are often low and access to health care severely limited, and taking measures to counter misinformation about the virus that could harm people, and to protect marginalized communities from stigmatization;
- Releasing all prisoners of conscience immediately and unconditionally, as they should not be in prison anyway and their continued detention is a further violation of their rights, such as human rights defenders and women's rights activists including all such individuals imprisoned in Saudi Arabia, which holds the 2020 G20 Presidency, such as Waleed Abu al-Khair, Loujain al-Hathloul, Raif Badawi, Samar Badawi and Naseema al-Sada;
- Releasing, where possible, pre-trial detainees and detainees who are especially vulnerable to contracting COVID-19, including those with underlying medical conditions and older people, and applying, where possible, non-custodial measures for children and people accused or convicted of non-violent offences, as a means to reduce the prison population and prevent harm.

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