

# COVID-19 AND THE IRANIAN REGIME PART 3

## WHO, China, Iran and the Spread of COVID-19

August 17, 2020

### Summary

- 1** | There has been broad consensus in the West supporting an independent investigation of World Health Organization (WHO) policies and actions during the pandemic. Of particular concern is the WHO's disturbing relationship with China and the impact of that relationship on the global spread of COVID-19.<sup>1</sup>
- 2** | Similar attention must be paid to the WHO's relationship with the Islamic Republic of Iran. As noted by the Wall Street Journal, Iran's strategic partnership with Beijing "created a constellation of potential contacts that helped unleash the illness, called COVID-19."<sup>2</sup>
- 3** | Iran became a global epicentre for the spread of COVID-19 due to the regime's malevolence and malfeasance in its management of the pandemic. But the WHO seems to have given the Iranian regime a pass.
- 4** | The WHO has refrained from using its extensive powers to address Iran's destructive and malevolent COVID-19 policies, which have severely impacted global health. The WHO not only sidestepped its obligations to protect the globe from the unnecessary spread of the virus, but also lavished praise in multiple public statements, on Iran's deficient anti-COVID efforts.
- 5** | Holding the WHO, China and Iran to account is critical to preventing or containing the next pandemic. The global multilateral health system must be returned to political "health" before the next pandemic strikes.<sup>3</sup>

## Recommendations

- 1 | Legal remedies to address the pandemic misconduct of China and Iran are available. They were outlined recently in a report by the Macdonald-Laurier Institute and the Canadian Security Research Group (CSRG), and deserve serious consideration by lawmakers.
- 2 | China has blocked a truly independent inquiry into the COVID-19 crisis. But China has supported the resolution of WHO member states who recently voted to launch an inquiry into the global response to the pandemic. The resolution allows for the inquiry to investigate the WHO's own role. But China's influence within the WHO is likely to delay or compromise, if not derail, this process.<sup>4</sup> Western lawmakers must therefore independently pursue answers regarding the WHO's relationship with the Sino-Iranian alliance, and its destructive impact on the global spread of COVID-19.

### THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

"Iran's strategic partnership with Beijing created a constellation of potential contacts that helped unleash the illness, called COVID-19."<sup>5</sup>

### FOREIGN POLICY (FP)

**Prof. Salvatore Babones (University of Sydney):** "Much of the circumstantial evidence surrounding WHO's coronavirus response points toward complicity.... And that complicity seems to have come from [WHO Director-General] Tedros himself."<sup>6</sup>

### POLICY OPTIONS MAGAZINE

**The Hon. Irwin Cotler and Attorney David Matas:** "One might have hoped that the Chinese government has learned the lessons of its failures from the time of the SARS outbreak. Instead, of China reforming its policies and practices, it is the WHO that has altered its approach, failing to stand up to China.... Therefore, the WHO must be a particular focus of accountability efforts...."<sup>7</sup>

# INTRODUCTION

## COVID-19: Accountability and the Next Pandemic

**The COVID-19 crisis has shed a disquieting light on the highly politicized arena of the globe's multilateral health system manned by its flagship helmsman, the World Health Organization (WHO).** It points to a global spread of the virus that could have been contained if not curtailed had the WHO fulfilled its mandate in addressing the willful and malfasant misconduct of China and Iran during the pandemic. The costs in human suffering resulting from these political machinations are incalculable, and their financial impact is in the multiple trillions of dollars. This is a tab that will only continue to grow for the foreseeable future.



The malevolence of Chinese and Iranian COVID-19 policies is hardly a surprise given the records of these two regimes. But their enablement by a multilateral body like the WHO, which is funded by Canada and other countries, warrants the particular attention of western states. The WHO's actions cannot be explained as a function of policy failures or human error. *They were a policy choice.* Reforms to stop countries like China or Iran from covering up or manipulating epidemics had already been instituted by the WHO in 2005. These reforms provided the WHO with expansive powers more than sufficient to address the misconduct of both China and Iran. Instead the WHO chose to refrain from utilizing these tools, and in doing so betrayed the WHO's mandate to protect the globe from disease.

## Pursuing accountability for the misconduct of the WHO, China and Iran is imperative for four reasons:

- 1 Preventing the Next Pandemic:** Researchers are warning that the next pandemic or pandemics, possibly worse than COVID-19, are likely only a matter of time. That time must be used by Canada and other western countries to take steps to ensure that institutions like the WHO are restored to political "health" before another pandemic strikes. As explained by Georgetown University Prof. Paul Miller: "A global pandemic is not a blind force of nature independent of human agency. It is a failure of governance.... When authorities regulate public health, share information about a pathogen, and cooperate to control its movement, diseases are contained, and pandemics are unlikely.... These are problems of governance, not science...."<sup>8</sup>
- 2 Deterring the Illicit Behaviors of Authoritarian Regimes:** Regimes like China and Iran have a proven track record of abusing international institutions and endangering their own populations and those of other states to pursue their own malign agendas. Holding them to account for their role in the global spread of COVID-19 is a critical step in deterring future abuses. As noted by Prof. Miller: "The [COVID-19] crisis is inherently political because it was caused in part by incompetent, malicious, and corrupt politicians. To ignore the political dimension of the coronavirus pandemic is an excellent way to ensure it happens again. If we do not want another global pandemic, we have to hold accountable the politicians responsible for making it worse...."<sup>9</sup>

### 3 Countering Disinformation Campaigns and Conspiracy Theories:

China and Iran have unleashed a mendacious global campaign of disinformation and conspiracy theories blaming other countries or various minorities for the creation and spread of the virus. In doing so they have opened a Pandora's box of hatred and confusion, further damaging the already unsettled social and political discourse generated by the crisis. While the pandemic may in time be curtailed, the Sino-Iranian disinformation campaigns will not. They will continue to spread unabated in the virtual ether, inflicting harm that cannot be mitigated by any vaccine. Accountability therefore, is both a firewall against the predations of these malicious campaigns, and an essential tool in establishing a publicly recognized fact-based record of truth upon which future policies can be predicated.



**4 Justice for Victims and Preventing Injustices in the Future:** The vast human toll of this pandemic calls out for a justice that will be difficult if not impossible to provide for the millions who have been ravaged by the virus. But as noted by the Hon. Irwin Cotler, former Attorney General of Canada, "there are clear and compelling legal remedies that should be considered to effectively address and redress this matter."<sup>10</sup> Accountability from violators, pursued within the rule of law of democratic states, can provide a modicum of redress for the victims while helping to prevent potentially larger scale injustices in the future.

## OVERVIEW

### The WHO, China, Iran and the Global Spread of COVID-19

**1 China and Iran – Liability for the Global Spread COVID-19:** A major Canadian report, authored by Toronto attorney Sarah Teich, has outlined possible legal remedies to hold China and Iran to account for their misconduct during the COVID-19 crisis. The report, titled "*Not Immune – Exploring liability of authoritarian regimes for the COVID-19 pandemic and its cover-up*" was recently released by the Macdonald-Laurier Institute and the Canadian Security Research Group (CSRG)<sup>11</sup>. Teich explains in her introduction that:



Although this situation is still developing, there is compelling evidence that both Chinese and Iranian regimes buried evidence of the pandemic in its critical early days, choosing to attempt to maintain power and/or stability at the cost of the health and safety of their own citizens and the global population. They are accused of intentionally underreporting data, concealing the extent of the outbreak from the international community and from their own citizenry, and silencing whistleblowers at the expense of protecting public health.<sup>12</sup>

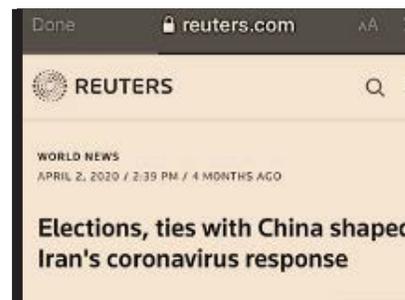
**2 The WHO and China:** The recent focus on accountability for state misconduct in the spread of COVID-19 has also exposed the WHO to significant scrutiny. There has been a broad consensus in the West supporting an independent investigation of the WHO's functioning during the crisis; its disturbing relationship with China; and the impact of that relationship on the global spread of COVID-19. As surmised by Prof. Salvatore Babones (University of Sydney), the WHO "has been accused of acting as China's accomplice<sup>13</sup> in initially suppressing information about



the coronavirus, with [WHO Director-General] Tedros repeatedly lauding<sup>14</sup> China’s “transparency” when Beijing had hid information about the virus’s origins, infectiousness, spread, and deadliness for more than a month.... Much of the circumstantial evidence surrounding WHO’s coronavirus response points toward complicity....<sup>15</sup>

The Hon. Irwin Cotler, former Attorney General of Canada, similarly concluded that: “One might have hoped that the Chinese government has learned the lessons of its failures from the time of the SARS outbreak. Instead, of China reforming its policies and practices, it is the WHO that has altered its approach, failing to stand up to China. ....Therefore, the WHO must be a particular focus of accountability efforts....<sup>16</sup>

**3 The WHO and Iran:** Similar attention must be paid to the WHO’s relationship with the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the impact of that relationship on the global spread of COVID-19. The global unfolding and trajectory of the pandemic has been deeply intertwined with decisions and policies related to the alliance between these two regimes. As noted by the Wall Street Journal, it was “Iran’s strategic partnership with Beijing” that created “a constellation of potential contacts that helped unleash the illness, called COVID-19.”<sup>17</sup> The confluence of the regime’s “cynicism and ideology”<sup>18</sup> and the prioritization of its relationship with China, have resulted in Iran becoming a global epicentre for the spread of COVID-19. Put bluntly and correctly by the Washington Post, “Iran’s reaction to coronavirus has become a danger for the world”.<sup>19</sup>



The regime’s willful and malfeasant mismanagement of the pandemic has exacted a terrible and permanent price from the Iranian people and multiple countries across the globe. As noted by the United States Institute of Peace: “At least 23 countries from the United States and Europe to the Middle East and New Zealand – reported coronavirus cases spread either by Iranian tourists or their own nationals who had recently returned from Iran.”<sup>20</sup>

But despite the plethora of evidence<sup>21</sup> regarding Iran’s misconduct, the WHO seems to have given the Iranian regime a pass. The world health body has refrained from using its extensive powers to address Iran’s destructive policy decisions that significantly impacted the regional and global spread of the virus. The WHO sidestepped its mandated responsibility to protect global health, while concomitantly lavishing praise on Iran’s deficient anti-COVID efforts.

## IRAN’S VIOLATIONS OF ITS INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS IN THE GLOBAL SPREAD OF COVID-19

The public record of Iran’s conduct as reported widely by the international media and as reflected in multiple statements from officials in Iran, amply demonstrates:

- Iran’s culpability in the spread of the virus to other countries
- The regime’s culpability for the widespread carnage and financial devastation visited upon the people of Iran by COVID-19
- The awareness and premeditation of Iran’s leadership in enacting these policies



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The willingness of Iranian MPs and other VIPs to confront the regime for its COVID-19 failures (but to no avail)

The weaponization of the pandemic as a political tool to advance the regime's interests within Iran and across the globe, regardless of the cost in human life and suffering

*For more information regarding Iranian misconduct during the pandemic see: The Spread of COVID-19: Iranian Accountability - Part 2 at C-CATCANADA.ORG*

As explained in Teich's report:

The allegations levied against the Chinese and Iranian regimes are serious. Withholding critical public health information, silencing whistleblowers, delaying containment measures, and sacrificing the health and safety of their citizenry in favour of maintaining power and/or stability – all this is in violation of numerous international and domestic legal obligations. These actions had significant consequences worldwide. There are more than a dozen legal avenues through which our governments (and in some cases, our citizens) can seek accountability from China and Iran for the global spread of COVID-19.

**The possible violations related to the misconduct of the Chinese and Iranian regimes as explicated at length by Teich include:**

Possible breaches of international legal obligations which protect and guarantee the human rights to health as outlined in Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Violations of articles 6,7,44, and 46, of the WHO's International Health Regulations (IHR) regarding notification of the WHO and collaborations with other countries

Possible breaches of Article 7 of the *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court* – the withholding critical health information may fit the definition of a crime against humanity pursuant to these statutes

Possible breaches of the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction*

The coverups perpetuated by these two regimes and the entities that abetted them could also potentially be litigated in Canada's domestic courts, and the Canadian government could legitimately impose various sanctions against these players for their conduct under the provisions of SEMA (Special Economic Measures Act) and the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act (more commonly known as the Magnitsky Law)

## THE WHO HAD THE POWER AND AUTHORITY TO CALL OUT CHINESE AND IRANIAN MISCONDUCT ON COVID-19 BUT REFRAINED FROM DOING SO

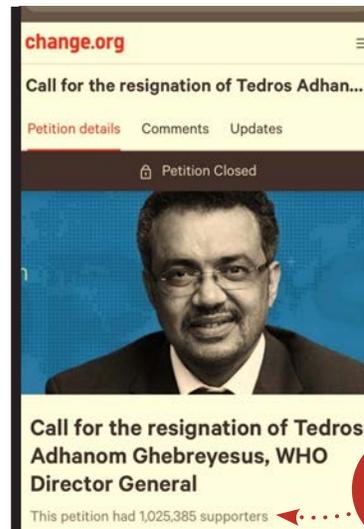
As outlined by Thomas Bollyky and Yanzhong Huang of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), the WHO had been given extensive powers precisely to address the tendency of affected nations “to cover up their outbreaks for political or economic reasons”:

After SARS, the International Health Regulations (IHR) were revised in 2005 to grant extraordinary powers to the World Health Organization. First, the IHR authorizes WHO to act upon nonstate sources of information and to question member states on their decision-making. This authority is meant to allow WHO to respond to potential disease outbreaks in a timelier manner, because affected nations have a tendency to cover up their outbreaks for political or economic reasons.

Second, the IHR empowers the WHO director-general to declare an outbreak a public health emergency of international concern, even over the objections of the state or states most directly affected. The WHO director-general may also issue outbreak-specific guidance to inform and influence how other states use trade and travel restrictions, so as to ensure that those restrictions are science-based and do not interfere unnecessarily with public health responses in other nations. These authorities are rare among international organizations, enabling WHO to act on its own initiative to generate and guide the international diplomatic, economic, and political responses to extraordinary events that threaten states.

Third, WHO has the authority to name and shame those nations that do not comply with the IHR requirements on outbreak detection, trade and travel bans, and enforcement of human rights. According to leading political scientists, WHO’s naming and shaming efforts send credible signals that affect member states’ behavior during a crisis situation.”<sup>22</sup>

But in the course of the current pandemic, the WHO deliberately refrained from using these tools to protect the international community from China and Iran. Instead, the WHO remained deferential and lauditive of the efforts of both regimes thereby providing them legitimacy, cover, and much needed grist for the propaganda mills of both states.



### Thomas Bollyky and Yanzhong Huang (The Council on Foreign Relations - Mar. 2020)

“Like the Ebola virus outbreak, the coronavirus outbreak has exposed the deficiencies of a system built around a member state-driven institution like WHO, which ... defers to the sovereignty and preferences of directly affected nations.”

“Deference to the sovereignty of one member state does not work if it puts other nations and their people at risk.”<sup>23</sup>

## THE WHO'S INVESTIGATION OF ITS OWN MISCONDUCT IS INSUFFICIENT

### 1 The international demand for a truly independent investigation of COVID-19 was rejected by China:

"More than 100 countries had signed onto a resolution calling for an independent probe into the origins of the coronavirus pandemic. While the language in the document was thoroughly diplomatic, and did not call out any particular country, it grew out of a push by Australia to look into China's own failures ... and went against Beijing's stated desire for any investigation to be run by the World Health Organization (WHO) itself."<sup>24</sup>



### 2 But the WHO recently approved a resolution for what it termed an "objective and impartial" inquiry into global coronavirus response which was supported by China:

CNN: "...Objective and impartial" is not the same as independent, and a WHO-led investigation is hardly likely to mollify critics of either China or the organization itself - the chief complaint being that top WHO officials are too close to Beijing. The risk is that the findings of such a body could be rejected by some observers and member states."<sup>25</sup>

### 3 Regrettably, Beijing's influence within the WHO means the results of the inquiry are likely to be delayed, compromised, or derailed. As noted in Foreign Policy magazine (May 20, 2020):

Beijing's influence within the organization means the results of a review into the origins of the coronavirus are likely to be delayed—and compromised.

China's participation in a "comprehensive review" of the origins of the coronavirus led by the World Health Organization (WHO) is unlikely to produce any real results. While WHO agreed to launch an investigation backed by most of its member states, China's influence within the organization means that the results are likely to come late—and to be compromised. An actual investigation would require a level of access and transparency that is now unthinkable as China's party-state system reaches new peaks of paranoia.

Only Chinese officials possess the bureaucratic knowledge and coercive power required to meaningfully investigate the possibilities, such as a covered-up biosafety accident or deliberate delays by the local authorities seeking to protect themselves. That's why *even Russia—an ally of China—backed the call for a WHO investigation: Moscow is confident that the odds of the organization producing a result unfavorable to Beijing are low.*<sup>26</sup>

## APPENDIX

### More on WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

#### Reasons for Concern – Past and Present



“WHO has been accused of acting as China’s accomplice<sup>27</sup> in initially suppressing information about the coronavirus, with Tedros repeatedly lauding<sup>28</sup> China’s “transparency” when Beijing had hid information about the virus’s origins, infectiousness, spread, and deadliness for more than a month.”

*“...Much of the circumstantial evidence surrounding WHO’s coronavirus response points toward complicity. And that complicity seems to have come from Tedros himself.”<sup>29</sup>*

### 1. Tedros and the Tigray People’s Liberation Party

Tedros was an executive member of the Marxist-Leninist Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) political party, which came to power in Ethiopia in 1991 and has been listed in the Global Terrorism Database.<sup>30</sup>

### 2. Human Rights Watch on Tedros

“During his term as Ethiopian Minister of Health from 2002 to 2012, Human Rights Watch, in a report published in 2010, referred to systematic discrimination and human rights abuses, repression and political intolerance by the government, including the withholding of food and fertilizer from local Amhara villagers because of their affiliations with the opposition party and the Tedros ministry of health refusal of emergency healthcare. Tedros was health minister at a time when the regime was accused of covering up epidemics.”<sup>31</sup>

### 3. China’s support of Tedros in WHO election

**THE TIMES OF LONDON** – “Chinese diplomats had campaigned hard for the Ethiopian, using Beijing’s financial clout and opaque aid budget to build support for him among developing countries. China has praised the authoritarian development model of Ethiopia’s regime, which rules under emergency powers and has put down pro-democracy protests.”<sup>32</sup>

**FOREIGN POLICY (FP)** – “Tedros, who previously served as Ethiopia’s health minister and then foreign minister, was elected to head WHO with Chinese behind-the-scenes support, reflecting China’s close relationship with Addis Ababa, which has become China’s bridgehead in Africa....”<sup>33</sup>

#### 4. Tedros affirmed fidelity to Beijing at the expense of the people of Taiwan

**COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS (CFR)** – “China was also an important ally of Tedros in the WHO’s DG election in 2017. China’s support for Tedros paid off immediately. The day after his electoral victory, Tedros confirmed to Chinese state-media that he and the WHO will continue to support the “One China” principle, which recognizes the government in Beijing as the legitimate Chinese government.”<sup>34</sup>

#### 5. Tedros, cholera and accusations of coverups

**NEW YORK TIMES** – “Candidate to Lead the W.H.O. Accused of Covering Up Epidemics”<sup>35</sup>

**GLOBEANDMAIL** – “Questions Surfacing About History of WHO’s Director Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus”:

**“For many years, health experts in Ethiopia noticed a strange phenomenon: The government was refusing to acknowledge cholera outbreaks.** Instead, the authorities labelled the outbreaks as “acute watery diarrhea” – a broader term that includes milder diseases. Research by Human Rights Watch found that the Ethiopian government was pressuring its health workers to avoid any mention of cholera, which could damage the country’s image and deter tourists. Throughout this period, one of the most powerful officials in Ethiopia’s authoritarian government was Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, first as health minister and then foreign minister. In 2017, he was elected to a new post: director-general of the [WHO].” Tedros has denied that he helped to cover up cholera outbreaks in Ethiopia during his term as health minister from 2005 to 2012, calling it a “smear campaign.” In an interview with Foreign Affairs in 2017, he said: “It doesn’t even make any difference whether you call it ‘cholera’ because the management is the same.”<sup>36</sup>

**“Critics say the cholera saga in Ethiopia is a sign that Dr. Tedros is comfortable with the secrecy of autocratic states** – a tendency that may have led him to accept China’s earliest reports on the novel coronavirus outbreak in December and January without challenging its officials with tough questions. “Dr. Tedros is the product of a deeply authoritarian regime,” said Jeffrey Smith, director of Vanguard Africa, a U.S.-based consultancy that lobbies for democracy in Africa. “Dictatorships are bad for public health, both inside their borders and globally.” Ethiopia has become more democratic under its new prime minister, Abiy Ahmed, who took power in 2018. But before that, Mr. Smith said, it was a “highly repressive surveillance state in which a lack of government transparency was a hallmark.” And Dr. Tedros played a role in helping construct and maintain that state.”<sup>37</sup>

**“Ethiopia also had close relations with China,** obtaining much of its surveillance technology from Chinese state suppliers, which allows it to monitor and punish dissidents. With the WHO facing growing criticism for praising China’s pandemic response, there is fresh scrutiny of Dr. Tedros and his role at that organization and in Ethiopia.”<sup>38</sup>

## 6. Tedros appoints former Zimbabwe dictator Robert Mugabe as WHO goodwill ambassador – “A political payoff to China”

“After taking over at the WHO, Tedros tapped former Zimbabwe dictator Robert Mugabe, a notorious human rights violator, to be a UN Goodwill ambassador and only backed down after an international outcry. “Diplomats said [Mugabe’s] appointment was a political payoff from Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus – the WHO’s first African director-general – to China, a long-time ally of Mugabe, and the 50 or so African states that helped to secure Tedros’s election earlier this year...”<sup>39</sup>

## 7. The WHO through the lens of the IHRA definition of Antisemitism

**Canada and IHRA definition of antisemitism:** On June 25, 2019 the government of Canada announced it will formally adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism as part of its anti-racism strategy. **The definition states clearly that Jew hatred includes applying antisemitic slurs to Israel, ... and accusing Israelis of blood libels, and holding Israel to double standards.** “... (The IHRA definition also recognizes that, like any democracy, criticism of Israeli policy is not antisemitic. But calling into question the right of the Jewish people to self-determination is.) The IHRA’s definition now constitutes the most widely accepted definition of antisemitism in the world, having been endorsed or adopted by dozens of countries and organizations....<sup>40</sup>

**The WHO – a double standard in targeting the Jewish State:** The COVID-19 pandemic has been accompanied by an extraordinary surge in antisemitism across the globe blaming Jews and Israel for the crisis. But the WHO itself is not unfamiliar with falsely accusing the Jews of the Jewish State of nefarious crimes against global health, which in fact constitutes a blatant example of antisemitism as defined in the IHRA definition adopted by Canada and dozens of other countries and organizations. The agency has singled out Israel for such “crimes” on several occasions under the tutelage of regimes that are amongst the world’s worst purveyors of state-sponsored Jew-hatred:

**May 2016 – “The WHO singles Israel out for condemnation, passing a resolution at the UN organization’s annual assembly in Geneva Wednesday against its operations in the area of Palestinian hospitals, and claiming Israel violates health rights on the Golan Heights”<sup>41</sup>.** *The decision targeting only Israel came after 30 health and humanitarian organizations released a report this week citing 19 countries in which attacks destroyed health facilities, killing medical workers and patients, including Colombia, Pakistan, Myanmar, Nigeria, Afghanistan and Thailand.*<sup>42</sup>

“The UN reached new heights of absurdity today,” said UN Watch executive director Hillel Neuer, “by enacting a resolution which accuses Israel of violating the health rights of Syrians in the Golan, even as in reality Israeli hospitals continue their life-saving treatment for Syrians fleeing to the Golan from the Assad regime’s barbaric attacks.” The assembly did not address other alleged abuses in other Middle Eastern countries such as Syria, Saudi Arabia or Yemen. “By scapegoating the Jewish state for all the world’s health problems, just as medieval Europe once accused the Jews of poisoning the wells, the EU aids and abets the UN and its World Health Organization to betray the cause of humanity and the very principles upon which they were founded....” Neuer also pointed out that by focusing on Israel, “*the beacon of the entire region on promoting and respecting the health rights of all people,*” *the WHO robbed itself of limited time and resources to focus on actual health problems around the world.*<sup>43</sup>

**May 2017 – Great Britain and the US joined four other nations in voting against a WHO resolution that they said singles out Israel for criticism:**

The resolution, which passed by an overwhelming majority on Friday during the 70th World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland, mostly speaks of the need to improve services provided to Palestinians and residents of the Golan Heights. It also mentions the health needs of “prisoners and detainees” in Israel. Syria, the Palestinian Authority, Venezuela, Cuba, Ecuador, Pakistan, South Africa and five other Arab countries proposed the draft resolution this year. Critics like the UN Watch NGO suggested that it was hypocritical of the WHO to support a resolution on Israel that was co-authored by Syria, where hundreds of thousands of people have died in a brutal civil war that erupted in 2011. “In the real world, Syria drops barrel bombs on its own hospitals. In the UN world, Syria co-sponsors @WHO resolution today targeting Israel,” UN Watch Executive Director Hillel Neuer wrote on Twitter....*The resolution, which is a standing item at World Health Assembly meetings. Israel is the only country for which WHO has a standing item, according to UN Watch, which claims this is discriminatory....*<sup>44</sup>

**May 2019 – “The annual assembly of the UN’s World Health Organization yesterday voted 96 to 11 for a Palestinian-drafted resolution, co-sponsored by Syria, Sudan, and Venezuela, that singled out Israel** over “Health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan.” Out of 21 items on the meeting’s Agenda, only one – Item No. 14 against Israel – focused on a specific country. There was no agenda item or resolution on any other country, including Syria, where hospitals and medical infrastructure have suffered devastating bombings by Syrian and Russian forces; Yemen, where 19.7 million people lack access to health care service due to the current crisis; or Venezuela, where the health system has collapsed, causing millions to flee the country. The resolution is a fantastic lie, an obscene and Orwellian canard. The UN reached new heights of absurdity by enacting a resolution which accuses Israel of violating the health rights of Syrians in the Golan, even as in reality Israeli hospitals provide life-saving treatment to Syrians fleeing to the Golan from the Assad regime....<sup>45</sup>



## The WHO's Public Statements Lauding Iran's Efforts in Fighting COVID-19

The WHO appears to have lavished considerable praise on Iran's robustly deficient anti-COVID efforts. These statements have been utilized aggressively by the Iranian regime's propagandists and state-controlled news outlets to justify the regime's actions.

The WHO's laudative statements as reported in the press, seems to display little correlation to the damning information reported<sup>46</sup> widely in the international media regarding Iran's severe mismanagement of the COVID-19 pandemic.



patrice6000 / shutterstock.com

**Some examples of the WHO's public statements as reported in the press are listed below:**

Mar. 2, 2020

Dr. Michael Ryan (WHO):

***"Certainly, the health system in Iran needs to be supported. It is a very strong health system. Historically very strong..."***<sup>47</sup>

Mar. 3, 2020

WHO Director-General quoted in Tehran Times:

***"No problem with Iran's statistics on coronavirus"***

*"The World Health Organization's director-general, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said on Sunday that the organization has not noticed any problem with Iran's statistics on coronavirus outbreak. Some media have doubted the official statistics provided by the Iranian health ministry, citing the COVID-19 death toll in Iran is far exceeding that of official statistics.*

*There are "specific mechanisms" for investigating the facts, the WHO official told CNBC. "There are reports in the media, but here is the World Health Organization which is a technical organization and needs to investigate the facts; We don't repeat what the reporters say, we have our own mechanism, and we haven't seen faults in the statistics."*<sup>48</sup>

Mar. 4, 2020

IRAN Press:

***WHO Representative : "Iran is fully prepared to stop the spread of the new Coronavirus"***

*"Iran is fully prepared to stop the spread of the new Coronavirus and we are confident that it will be controlled in not too distant a future."*

*"Iran has considerable strength and capability in controlling diseases, especially communicable diseases, and it is capable of doing well in crises and disasters, including floods early this year."*<sup>49</sup>

Mar. 4, 2020

WHO Quoted in "Iran Front Page":

**"World Will Learn from Iran's Fight against COVID-19"**

*"After visiting the medical centres, laboratories and getting to know the activities and capabilities of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the areas of urgent diagnosis, quarantine and rapid treatment, the WHO officials have offered their assessment of the Islamic Republic of Iran's efforts to combat and control the coronavirus in a meeting with foreign ambassadors to Tehran at the foreign ministry building.*

*During the meeting, Rick Brennan, Regional Emergency Director for the World Health Organization's (WHO) Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office, and his colleagues ... noted that "Iran's 16-day experience in the fight against the disease indicates that the Iranian government's approach to mobilizing all government facilities under the guidance of the Health Ministry, as well as mobilising all community and civil society facilities, is a fair and rational approach."*

*Brennan further criticized countries that have imposed unprecedented restrictions on air and land travel and trade under the pretext of Corona outbreak, saying that international health regulations to which all UN member states and the World Organization have joined do not recommend such measures. "Rather, they believe the business and the movement of people should continue while observing hygiene considerations, as the consequences of disruption in these matters make the fight against Corona more difficult and complex." He urged the ambassadors to advise their governments to stop imposing unnecessary restrictions. The head of WHO delegation .... added that he is confident the world would learn from Iran's experiences in the fight against corona."<sup>50</sup>*

Mar. 5, 2020

WHO Quoted in ILKHA:

**"The core strength of the Iranian health sector is the primary health care. ... It can be mobilized to timely interrupt the COVID-19 transmission chain. Iran has the resilience to manage the epidemic."<sup>51</sup>**

Mar. 8, 2020

WHO quoted in Tasnim News:

**"The Iranian government is fighting against coronavirus in a responsible manner"**

*"Richard Brennan, who is heading a WHO delegation in a visit to Iran, held a meeting with the governor of the province of Qom .... In the meeting ... Brennan praised the Iranian province's "serious efforts" to contain the disease. He said the first case of coronavirus infection in Iran was reported on February 19, noting that Iran launched efforts to control the virus immediately afterwards. The Iranian government is fighting against coronavirus in a responsible manner, the WHO representative added ...."<sup>52</sup>*

Mar. 12, 2020

WHO quoted in ParsToday:

**“Iran doing its best in COVID-19 battle despite lack of equipment”**

Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) says the Islamic Republic of Iran is doing its best in fight against the novel coronavirus.<sup>53</sup>

Mar. 12, 2020

WHO quoted on Reliefweb:

**“Iran’s strategies and priorities to control COVID-19 are evolving in the right direction”**

*“A team of experts from the World Health Organization (WHO), GOARN partners, Robert Koch Institute in Berlin and the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention concluded a technical support mission on COVID-19 to Iran on 10 March 2020. “After five days of extensive meetings and field visits, we see that Iran’s strategies and priorities to control COVID-19 are evolving in the right direction, a comprehensive coordinated approach is being applied, and solid work is being done especially in the areas of case management, laboratories, and risk communications. We are also impressed by the engagement from other sectors of the community. ...The government is leveraging the strong national health system and disaster management capacities to respond to the outbreak,” says Dr Richard Brennan, WHO Regional Emergency Director for the Eastern Mediterranean Region and mission team lead. “But more needs to be done...”<sup>54</sup>*

Mar. 14, 2020

WHO quoted in Xinhuanet:

**Praises Iran’s “comprehensive and coordinated approach”**

*The WHO “hailed Iranian government’s efforts to combat the novel coronavirus, or COVID-19, which has claimed the lives of 611 people in the Islamic republic. During a visit to Iran, the worst-hit country by the epidemic in the Middle East, WHO Emergency Director for the Regional Office Richard Brennan praised the “comprehensive and coordinated approach” implemented by the Iranian government, especially in the areas of patient management, laboratories, and risk communication.”<sup>55</sup>*

WHO Quoted in TIME:

**“Our sense is that [Iran’s leadership] are prioritizing the right things”**

*While the WHO’s report makes it clear there is room for improvements, “our sense is that [Iran’s leadership] are prioritizing the right things,” Brennan tells TIME. “They’re in a tough spot but we think their willingness to be adaptive is good, is appropriate. “According to the WHO, Iran has scaled up all elements of its response to the crisis and improved coordination between government agencies and municipal bodies. ...”Like every health system on the planet, the Iranian health system is being overstretched,” says Brennan, “and like every other health system, I think they’re playing catch up.”<sup>56</sup>*

Mar. 18, 2020

RADIO FARDA:

**“Iran’s COVID-19 death toll was underreported due to testing being restricted to severe cases. The toll could be potentially five times higher.”<sup>57</sup>**

Mar. 30, 2020

KAYHAN LIFE:

**WHO is petitioned to intervene in Iran’s grossly mismanaged efforts against COVID-19 charging Iranian officials with deceit and corruption**

On March 30, hundreds of Iranians living inside and outside the country petitioned the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus to join the fight against the COVID-19 Coronavirus epidemic in Iran. The signatories to the letter alleged that the Iranian authorities deliberately concealed the extent and scale of the epidemic in the country from the public.

**Excerpts from the letter to the WHO:**

*“... Some supplies sent to Iran by international aid organizations, including the WHO, have been misappropriated by well-connected powerful groups who have been selling them on the black market. Foreign aid will not reach its intended recipients without the WHO’s supervision and the help of non-governmental organizations inside Iran.*

*We must point out that the Iranian authorities had carefully selected and prepared the few hospitals that the representatives from the WHO visited. That was a publicity stunt to deceive the public and hide the awful truth. Those hospitals were not the true representatives of what is happening in the country. As a result, Iranians have been disappointed by WHO’s report.*

*.... Iranian authorities are guilty of gross negligence. Their failure to contain the epidemic, manage the crisis, and be transparent is threatening global health, peace, and stability.*

*We, the signatories, call for greater transparency and ask the international community and the WHO to help Iranian people. Under resolutions WHA 54.14, WHA 55.16, and WHA 56.29, stipulated in the WHO’s charter, the organization can intervene and lead the fight against the coronavirus epidemic in Iran.”*

*.... We, the signatories, call on the WHO to deploy teams of experts to Iran, under UN supervision, to lead the fight against the spread of coronavirus and prevent an impending humanitarian disaster....”<sup>58</sup>*

Apr. 7, 2020

RADIO FARDA:

**Dr. Richard Brennan, the WHO Regional Emergency Director: “impressive upscaling” of Iranian control measures**

*“Due to an impressive scaling up of many of the control measures, we have seen a flattening off of the number of cases in Iran and in fact, some suggestion, in recent days of perhaps a decline in the number of new cases,” Brennan said.<sup>59</sup>*

May 26, 2020

The WHO’s Dr. Christoph Hamelmann in the Tehran Times

**Lauds Iran’s achievements and management in battle against COVID-19**

*“Most likely we will never be 100 percent sure about the exact origin of the COVID-19 although many research centers are working on it and might publish their theories.”<sup>60</sup>*

## ENDNOTES

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