

Sexual Rights in the context of the global COVID-19 crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic has demanded extraordinary confinement and physical distancing measures that are affecting the lives of millions. In addition to increased stress and tensions, we are witnessing increases in violence, abuse, oppression, and discrimination. Sexual rights and sexual health services are in jeopardy and need to be protected and preserved.

Human rights organizations around the world have cautioned that sexual rights are in particular risk during this pandemic.

Available information shows that domestic and sexual violence increased during the first weeks of social confinement policies. Violence may be connected to stress, substance abuse, relationship conflicts, financial problems and unemployment, and difficulties accessing services and safe accommodation. As schools are closed in many countries, everyday life is disrupted at many levels. Children also suffer from the isolation from education, lack of opportunities to socialize with peers, and a heightened risk of domestic violence and sexual abuse in their families.

In addition, domestic and sexual violence may target girls and women as they may be trapped at home with their abusers. Senior individuals are exposed to risks related to their type of living arrangements. Those living independently may experience isolation and lack of daily care; those living in institutions are at heightened infection risk and finally, those living with their families may not be properly cared for or may even be abused. Their relationships, emotional security and mental health may be severely compromised.

The crisis also severely impacts sexual and gender diverse individuals. LGBT organizations report that violence against minorities has increased in many cases. The situation is especially threatening for diverse gender youth living with abusive parents or caregivers.

Reproductive health services and access to abortion and contraceptives are limited while health and social services are overburdened and resources are directed to manage the pandemic. This situation is blatantly abused and aggravated by groups, organizations, and parties that have attacked access to sexual and reproductive health services in the past.



The World Association for Sexual Health urges all states and nations to ensure that everyone's human and sexual rights are recognized and respected, and that the rights and access to sexual and reproductive health services are not violated by new policies or measures to manage the pandemic. Human, sexual, and reproductive rights, equality, and a free and just society should not be sacrificed in the process.

The World Association for Sexual health (WAS) is a global organization with more than one hundred member organizations across the globe that promotes and advocates for sexual health and sexual rights throughout the lifespan and across the world by advancing the field of sexology, sexuality research, comprehensive sexuality education, and clinical care and services, all of these informed by evidence and scientific enquiry.

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