



Il 10 dicembre si celebra la Giornata Mondiale dei Diritti Umani, con l'obiettivo di diffondere in tutto il mondo i valori di democrazia, diversità e tolleranza, ricorrenza stabilita in memoria della proclamazione della Dichiarazione Universale dei Diritti Umani, avvenuta presso l'Assemblea delle Nazioni Unite a Parigi il 10 dicembre 1948. I 58 paesi allora membri dell'ONU, in cerca di riscatto dopo gli orrori del conflitto della Seconda Guerra Mondiale, fecero confluire nella Carta un'elaborazione secolare di principi umanitari e civili, condensata in un elenco di 30 articoli, che prendevano a spunto i grandi documenti costitutivi della storia dell'umanità, come ad esempio la Dichiarazione d'Indipendenza Americana del 1776 o la Dichiarazione Universale dei Diritti dell'Uomo e del Cittadino nata dalla Rivoluzione Francese. L'obiettivo dichiarato era quello di diffondere in tutto il mondo i valori di democrazia, diversità e tolleranza.

Il documento parte dal presupposto che *"il riconoscimento della dignità inerente a tutti i membri della famiglia umana e dei loro diritti, uguali ed inalienabili, costituisce il fondamento della libertà, della giustizia e della pace nel mondo"*.

L'istituzione formale della Giornata è avvenuta durante il 317° meeting globale dell'Assemblea generale delle Nazioni Unite il 4 dicembre 1950, quando è stata promulgata la risoluzione 423(V) che invitava tutti gli stati membri e tutte le organizzazioni concernenti ed interessate a celebrare la giornata nella maniera a loro più consona.

Da allora, ogni 10 dicembre, ricorre la Giornata mondiale dei diritti umani, che ha lo scopo di promuovere l'attuazione dei trenta articoli di cui è composta la Dichiarazione, e di accendere i riflettori sulle zone del mondo in cui questi principi inalienabili non vengono rispettati.

La Giornata Mondiale dei Diritti Umani conserva la sua attualità considerato che la storia della Dichiarazione dei Diritti Umani è ancora lunga dall'esaurirsi trovando il rispetto per la dignità umana, nel corso della storia dell'ultimo secolo, fortissimi ostacoli per l'applicazione dei principi promulgati dall'ONU, nonostante il progressivo ingresso nell'organizzazione da parte della quasi totalità degli stati mondiali.

Il tema dell'edizione 2020

Lo slogan scelto per l'edizione 2020 della Giornata mondiale per i diritti umani è *"Recover Better - Stand up for Human Rights"* (Riprendersi meglio - Battersi per i diritti umani). Il focus è inevitabilmente incentrato sulla pandemia e sulla necessità di assicurarsi che i diritti umani siano al centro degli sforzi di ripresa. *"Le persone e i loro diritti - ha scritto il Segretario generale delle Nazioni Unite António Guterres - devono essere al centro delle risposte e della ripresa. Occorrono quadri di riferimento universali come la copertura sanitaria per tutti per sconfiggere questa pandemia e tutelarci per il futuro"*. Il 10 dicembre è l'occasione - ribadisce l'Onu - *"per riaffermare l'importanza dei diritti umani nella ricostruzione del mondo che vogliamo, la necessità di solidarietà globale, nonché la nostra interconnessione e umanità condivisa"*.

La crisi determinata dalla pandemia da Coronavirus ha incrementato la povertà, aumentato disuguaglianze e discriminazioni, evidenziando lacune nella protezione dei diritti umani. Ecco perché, in occasione di questa

Giornata, le Nazioni Unite hanno voluto pubblicare un manifesto programmatico per affrontare le principali criticità emerse con forza in questo 2020:

- mettere fine a discriminazioni di ogni tipo: la discriminazione strutturale e il razzismo hanno alimentato la crisi. L'uguaglianza e la non discriminazione sono requisiti fondamentali per un mondo post-Covid
- affrontare le disuguaglianze: è necessario promuovere e proteggere i diritti economici, sociali e culturali per un nuovo contratto sociale
- incoraggiare la partecipazione e la solidarietà: dagli individui ai governi, dalla società civile e dalle comunità di base al settore privato, tutti hanno un ruolo nella costruzione di un mondo post-Covid migliore per le generazioni presenti e future
- promuovere lo sviluppo sostenibile: i diritti umani, l'Agenda 2030 e l'accordo di Parigi sono le pietre angolari di una ripresa che non lasci indietro nessuno.

Si riporta di dichiarazione di apertura della conferenza stampa dell'Alto Commissario per i diritti umani Michelle Bachelet

"2020 is a year none of us will ever forget. A terrible, devastating year that has scarred so many of us, in so many ways.

At least 67 million people infected, and 1.6 million dead, in a pandemic that is far from over.

A devastating impact on countries' economies and on employment, income, education, health and food supply for hundreds of millions of people.

A massive setback to development, to efforts to alleviate poverty and to raise the status of women and girls. 2020 has taken its toll not only across all regions and virtually all countries, but also on the full range of our human rights, be they economic, social, cultural, civil or political. COVID-19 has zeroed in on the fissures and fragilities in our societies, exposing all our failures to invest in building fair and equitable societies. It has shown the weakness of systems that have failed to place a central focus on upholding human rights.

Recent weeks have seen extraordinary progress in vaccine development. This is testimony to the ingenuity and determination of humans in a time of crisis. But vaccines alone cannot resolve the pandemic, or heal the damage it has caused.

States need not only to distribute these vaccines equitably all over the world – they need to rebuild economies, repair the damage done by the pandemic, and address the gaps that it has exposed.

We face three very different possible futures:

We can emerge from this crisis in an even worse state than when it began – and be even less well prepared for the next shock to our systems.

We can struggle mightily to get back to normal – but normal is what brought us to where we are today.

Or we can recover better.

The medical vaccines that are being developed will hopefully eventually deliver us from COVID-19, albeit not for many months yet. But they will not prevent or cure the socio-economic ravages that have resulted from the pandemic, and aided its spread.

But there is a vaccine to hunger, poverty, inequality, and possibly – if it is taken seriously – to climate change, as well as to many of the other ills that face humanity.

It is a vaccine we developed in the wake of previous massive global shocks, including pandemics, financial crises and two World Wars.

The name of that vaccine is human rights. Its core ingredients are embedded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose 72nd anniversary we celebrate tomorrow, on Human Rights Day. The Universal Declaration is made actionable through the obligations that almost all States have undertaken by ratifying one or both of the International Covenants spanning all five areas of human rights.

The Universal Declaration also gave birth to other important international treaties to better protect the rights of specific groups such as children, women, people with disabilities and migrant workers; and ones aiming to tackle forms of discrimination which lead to the greater inequalities, poverty and lack of development that have fed and fertilized the socio-economic devastation caused by COVID-19.

COVID-19 has shone a stark spotlight on our failure to uphold those rights to the best of our ability, not just because we couldn't, but because we neglected to – or chose not to.

The failure of many countries to invest sufficiently in universal and primary healthcare, in accordance with the right to health, has been exposed as extremely short-sighted. These vital preventive measures are costly, but nothing like as costly as failing to invest in them has proved to be.

Many governments failed to act quickly or decisively enough to halt the spread of COVID-19. Others refused to take it seriously, or were not fully transparent about its spread.

Astoundingly, even to this day, some political leaders are still playing down its impact, disparaging the use of simple measures such as wearing masks and avoiding large gatherings. A few political figures are even still talking casually of "herd immunity," as if the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives is a cost that can be easily borne for the sake of the greater good. Politicizing a pandemic in this way is beyond irresponsible – it is utterly reprehensible.

Worse still, rather than bringing us together, the response to the pandemic has in some places led to further division. Scientific evidence and processes have been discounted, and conspiracy theories and disinformation have been sown and allowed – or encouraged – to thrive.

These actions have plunged a knife into the heart of that most precious commodity, trust. Trust between nations, and trust within nations. Trust in government, trust in scientific facts, trust in vaccines, trust in the future. If we are to bring about a better world in the wake of this calamity, as our ancestors undoubtedly did in the wake of World War II, we have to rebuild that trust in each other.

It has been shocking, but sadly not at all surprising, to see the disproportionate toll of COVID-19 on individuals and groups who are marginalized and suffer discrimination – in particular people of African descent, those from ethnic, national or religious minorities, and indigenous peoples. This has been the case in some of the world's richest countries, where the mortality rate of some racial and ethnic minorities has been up to three times that of the overall population.

When COVID-19 hit, members of discriminated groups and indigenous peoples were over-exposed to contagion because of their low-paid and precarious work in specific industries. Many of the people we suddenly started to recognize and refer to as essential – health care workers, cleaners, transport workers, shop employees – come from such minorities.

They were also under-protected because of limited access to health-care and social protections, such as sick leave and unemployment or furlough pay. They were less able to isolate themselves once infected – due to inadequate living conditions, limited access to sanitation, the inability to work from home. This meant the virus could spread much more easily within their communities, and from those communities back into wider society.

Over the past 11 months, the poor have become poorer, and those suffering systemic discrimination have fared worst of all.

Children in homes with limited or no Internet access or computer equipment have fallen behind in their education, or dropped out of it altogether, with girls especially badly affected. In terms of basic economic security, employment, education, housing and food, the pandemic is having a negative impact that is so vast and so wide-ranging it is almost impossible for us to grasp its enormity.

Had adequate social and economic protections been in place for a much higher proportion of the world's population, in poor countries and in rich ones – had we applied the human rights vaccine – we would not be in such a bad state as we are today. COVID-19 has very clearly demonstrated that inequalities and discrimination not only harm the individuals who are directly affected, and unfairly impacted – they create shock waves that ripple across the whole of society.

This was shown most graphically when the coronavirus ripped its way through shockingly ill-prepared and underequipped institutions such as care homes for older people and people with disabilities, orphanages, migrant dormitories and prisons. A compelling case, if ever there was one, for better regulated institutions and increased alternatives to incarceration.

Those who were most critical to saving lives were themselves inexcusably put at risk, with shortages of masks and protective clothing as the pandemic surged through the wards. Health workers are only some 2-3 percent of national populations, yet they comprise around 14 percent of COVID cases reported to the WHO.

The impact on women has been particularly devastating. Because of the horrendous increase in domestic violence all across the world, and because a large proportion of women work in the informal sector and in health care. And because many were left with no choice but to withdraw from the labour market in order to

care for children no longer able to go to school, and for older people and the sick. In some areas, women's rights risk being set back decades, including through more limited access to sexual and reproductive rights. If we are to recover better, women will need to play a much greater role in decision-making and priority-setting. It is no coincidence that in a world where so few countries have women leaders, several of the countries viewed as having handled the pandemic most effectively were in fact led by women.

Discrimination also lies at the heart of another of 2020's defining features, when racial injustice and police brutality were brought sharply into focus by the killing of George Floyd and the worldwide protests that followed. In many countries, we saw a burgeoning realization of persistent racial injustice and systemic racism, raising unresolved histories of racist oppression, and demanding far-reaching structural changes.

In countries in conflict, COVID has added an additional layer to already multi-faceted human rights calamities. In Yemen, a perfect storm of five years of conflict and violations, disease, blockades, and shortage of humanitarian funding, set against an existing backdrop of poverty, poor governance and lack of development, is pushing the country remorselessly towards full-scale famine. There has been no shortage of warnings about what will happen in Yemen in the coming months, but a distracted world is doing little to prevent this very preventable disaster.

Rights to free expression, to assemble and to participate in public life have been battered during the pandemic. Not because of warranted restrictions on movement to constrain the spread of COVID, but by the actions of some governments taking advantage of the situation to shut down political dissent and criticism, including by arresting civil society actors and journalists. Some appear to have also been using COVID fears and restrictions as a way to tilt elections in favour of the ruling party.

The contribution of civil society to surviving the pandemic and recovering better once it is over, will be absolutely vital, and the curtailing of civil society's contributions is one of the surest ways of undermining that recovery, by removing one of the key remedies.

The pandemic has left us exposed, vulnerable, and weakened. Yet, in its devastation, it has also provided clear insights on how we can turn disaster into an opportunity to reset our priorities and improve our prospects for a better future.

Even with stretched resources, the main ingredient that we need to build that future is political will. The will to put our money where it is most needed – not wanted, needed. The will to fight corruption, because in many countries, even very poor countries, there is more money available, but much is lost when it goes straight into the pockets of a few. We need to address inequality, including with tax reforms that could help fund major socio-economic improvements.

Similarly, richer countries need to help poorer countries survive this crisis and recover better. Repairing the frayed system of multilateralism will be essential to manage the recovery. The work must begin at home, but leaders in powerful countries need to once again recognize that, more than ever, our world can only meet global challenges through global cooperation.

Narrow nationalistic responses will simply undermine collective recovery. The first test of this will be our ability to ensure that new COVID vaccines and tools reach everyone who needs them. The pandemic has highlighted over and over again that no one is safe until everyone is safe.

Will we seize this moment to devise ways to recover better? Will we properly apply the human rights vaccine that can help us build more resilient, prosperous and inclusive societies? Will we take the immediate necessary steps to combat the biggest existential threat of all, climate change?

Let's hope so. Because if we do not, especially with regard to climate change, 2020 will simply be the first step on the road to further calamity".