

# COVID-19 and Torture

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Over the past few weeks, and with the Editorial already at completion, the COVID-19 pandemic has invaded our lives. Its systemic impact has affected, and continues to affect in equal measure the provision of rehabilitation to victims of torture.

Amongst the many areas in which COVID-19 has impacted the field of prevention and rehabilitation of torture survivors, at least 8 areas of concern can be highlighted.

1. Attacks on basic fundamental rights and unnecessary increase in social control measures (Human Rights Watch, 2020a)
2. Increases in cases of ill-treatment or torture linked to the pandemic itself. For instance, various media sources have reported cases related to the dissemination of information in countries where this was considered to be against the interest of the state (Wang, 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2020b; Amnesty International, 2020a)
3. Respect for the rights of detainees and COVID preventive measures in detention settings that are compliant with human rights (Council of Europe, 2020; OHCHR, 2020; Council of Europe, 2010) and especially amnesty processes for political prisoners or the use non-custodial measures (Comninos, 2020; Amnesty International, 2020b).
4. Increases in cases of gender-based violence (Ford, 2020; UNFPA, 2020; UN Women, 2020) and assaults on homeless popula-

tions (Phasuk, 2020; Hartley, 2019), both related to fear and isolation.

5. Relapse of symptoms, especially nightmares, flashbacks and somatic symptoms, in survivors that were ill-treated or tortured while in custody, due to COVID-related self-confinement or measures of medical isolation.
6. The reshaping of society: Will there be a change in values towards more egalitarian, empathetic and supportive societies? Or an evolution towards a more fearful society with an increasing lack of solidarity as fear instils?
7. The use of warlike metaphors (the “war” on the Coronavirus) as a prelude to restrictions in freedoms, censorship or authoritarianism in the name of the collective good (Human Rights Watch, 2020a).
8. Cutting budget allocations for the most disadvantaged, vulnerable groups in general and survivors of torture specifically, in favour of security policies or market-based post-COVID decisions (UNDP, 2020; European Council, 2020).

These are some of the many areas of reflection on COVID-19 as a global crisis in the field of human rights and the prevention of torture and rehabilitation of torture victims.

Torture Journal invites our readers to share your experiences, reflections, research and data in the form of a Letter to the Editor, News or Research Report for inclusion in future issues of the Journal. This is a global crisis which may, in turn, foster a shared learning opportunity for all.

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