

Intensifying Legal Protection against Human Rights Violations in the Covid-19 Era: A Case Study of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania

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Abstract

The coronavirus pandemic has, since its outbreak in late 2019, not only caused a global health care crisis but has also had a negative impact on the exercise of social, economic, cultural and political rights. Vulnerable and marginalised groups in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania are among the worst affected. To respond to the crisis, the three East African countries imposed several measures aimed at curtailing the spread of the disease, which included a mandatory 14 days of self-quarantine for persons arriving from abroad; the closure of borders, religious and educational institutions; the suspension of international and domestic flights; the suspension of public court proceedings and gatherings; the imposition of a dusk to dawn curfew; and the restriction of people's movement in certain areas. All these measures in one way or another affect the exercise of fundamental human rights. In the past few months, the number of reported cases of human rights violations has been escalating. This article seeks to highlight the three states' practice of avoiding the 'naming, shaming and prosecuting' of perpetrators of human rights violations during the coronavirus pandemic. It also exposes instances of human rights violations in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania during the pandemic. In addition, the paper proposes measures to be undertaken to intensify legal protection against human rights violations during the coronavirus pandemic. Finally, the paper explores the elusive option of making the top state officials legally accountable for individual human rights violations.

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