

Coronavirus does not discriminate on the basis of nationality or race; so measures that tackle the pandemic and problems caused by it should not either

During this time when we face the threat of the global pandemic that is the coronavirus, one which poses a severe risk on the health of the public, the failure of the administration of the northern part of Cyprus to adopt necessary measures and the statements made around this issue threatens our basic human rights and as such our collective humanity.

In the face of discriminatory measures adopted, issues overlooked and discriminatory statements made by representatives of institutions and organizations, especially those of the prime minister, as organizations that advocate for the respect of human rights, we would like to remind the administration of its fundamental duties and responsibilities.

Human rights and freedoms are designated as fundamental principles in our Constitution. Article 8 lays down the principle of equality and prohibits discrimination against any individual, family, group or class. The Constitution, which also includes human rights responsibilities of the state, underlines under its Article 56 that the State's responsibility to protect the right of everyone living within its borders to be free from hunger. The public policies adopted during this difficult period will serve as a testament of the administration's stance in relation to social justice and the respect for basic human rights.

Besides, the international conventions that have come into force under Article 90 of the constitution, are deemed to have the force of law and their unconstitutionality can not be argued. Discrimination, which is explicitly defined and prohibited under the basic human rights treaties part of our domestic legal framework, such as the European Convention on Human Rights, Article 14; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 2; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 2; and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 2; prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, place of birth, nationality or ethnicity, etc. As such, we feel the need to remind the authorities that the prohibition of discrimination is a principle that has been accepted under international law for a long time and is the basis of human rights.

In the context of the administration's obligations, in addition to denouncing the use of discriminatory discourses and decisions, urgent measures should be taken to guarantee access to basic rights for disadvantaged groups, such as foreigners, who have already had limited access to rights under the existing system. It is crucial that these measures include necessary steps to protect the rights of all, especially the right to housing and the right to health, and to ensure that the disadvantaged groups have full access to relevant services. Article 25 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights), Articles 11 (1) and 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 27(3) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 14 (2) (h) of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, that are part of our domestic legal framework, safeguard the right to health and right to housing. Additionally, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its Article 11, explicitly recognizes the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself/herself and his/her family,

including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions and obliges the state to take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right.

It is with these in mind, as organizations that carry out human rights based advocacy actions discrimination, to uphold human dignity, we underline that the state should respect the human rights of all people within its jurisdiction, not of its own nationals or nationals of a specific country. Accordingly, we demand the following from the decision-makers, especially the Council of Ministers:

- 1- State officials, politicians and representatives of institutions and organizations should refrain from the use of racist and xenophobic discourses which encourage the segregation of society and publicly apologise from those groups which have been targeted by their statements;
- 2- The salary support to be provided for the staff of companies that had to stop their operations due to the pandemic is discriminatory and should immediately be revised to cover all employees in the same situation, regardless of their nationality;
- 3- Within the framework of the above-mentioned human rights obligations, all necessary measures, including economic support, should be planned and implemented with a view to ensure that everyone living in the northern half of our island, irrespective of their immigration status or whether they reside regularly or irregularly, have access to right to adequate housing, nutrition and health.
- 4- Municipalities that continue to operate to protect and maintain public health and that have been striving to provide humanitarian aid to all in need, without discrimination, since the beginning of the crisis should be supported and empowered, instead of weakened by economic cuts.
- 5- Permanent support programs for all marginalised and exploited groups, beyond the persisting crisis, should be formulated.

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