

Aid Security and COVID-19

Latest available information on COVID-19 developments impacting the security of aid work and operations.

Access the [data on HDX](#) to see the events referred to in this bulletin.

Bulletin 3
17 April 2020

General Aid Insecurity and COVID-19

Anti-Foreigner Sentiment

Central African Republic

07 April 2020: A Facebook page published several posts alleging that an international health organisation benefited financially from the sick, and that vaccines are being used in order to "destroy" rather than to help patients. These comments may have been triggered by statements by two French doctors on French television on the possibility of testing COVID-19 vaccines in Africa.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

02 April 2020: In Kinshasa city, a bus transporting French nationals came under attack from locals, who targeted the bus with stones and shouted insults at those onboard, claiming the passengers had brought COVID-19 to the DRC.

Kenya

17 March 2020: In Nairobi city and county, an aid worker was verbally harassed by a local civilian. Reportedly, the civilian referred to the aid worker as 'corona' and told him to return to his country.

South Sudan

Around 08 April 2020: Anti-foreigner hate speech emerged on various social media platforms following the first COVID-19 infections detected in the country, among which was a Dutch United Nations staffer.

Tanzania

Around 17 March 2020: In Mwanza city and region, a European national working for an INGO was robbed on the street at knife point. This incident occurred within a background of increasing anti-foreigner sentiment, expressed in throat cut gestures, and "corona, go home" yelling towards foreigners

This information bulletin provides the latest available information on COVID-19 developments impacting the security of aid work and operations to help aid agencies meet duty of care obligations to staff and reach people in need.

It is published by Insecurity Insight using verified security incidents from aid agencies and information available in open sources.

It covers threats and violence against aid organisations, and health providers and general insecurity related to COVID-19.

Visit our [Aid Agency and COVID-19 website](#) for more security related information..

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**Insecurity
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Data on People in Danger

Trends and Insights from Social Media Monitoring

Central African Republic

Misinformation targeting international organisations translates into hostility. Social media monitoring in the CAR shows misinformation deliberately targets the reputation of UN and INGOs: threats, accusations, and statements have increased by 22.6% in the last 7 days alone. [Read more](#)

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Social media monitoring in the DRC has ended. For past documents, please see [Bulletin 1](#) and [Bulletin 2](#).

South Sudan

Report coming soon! Sign up to our [Security Media Trends](#) mailing list.

Anti-Outsider Sentiment

- Aggression towards those who are perceived to be possible carriers of COVID-19 is not limited to foreigners, but also affects nations or locals returning to their communities. In Ghana, for example, four people travelling from Accra were nearly lynched by local community members, while in Burundi two civilians just returning from Tanzania were killed. This behaviour has also been observed in Ukraine and Paraguay. [Access data](#)

Access Constraints

- Use of roadblocks to stop incoming travel or to demonstrate were reported from Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uganda, Ukraine, and Tunisia. [Access data](#)

Risk of Acts of Repression from Security Forces

- Violent enforcements of lockdowns are reported from Angola, Burkina Faso, Chad, Chile, DRC, Ethiopia, Guinea, India, Israel, Kenya, Lesotho, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, South Africa, Syria, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda and Zimbabwe. [Access data](#)

Civil Disorder

- Social unrest, which often includes the use of violence, has been reported from Bangladesh, Bolivia, Cameroon, Costa Rica, DRC, Egypt, El Salvador, Greece, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Kenya, Lebanon, Madagascar, Mexico, Niger, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Ukraine and Yemen. [Access data](#)

Healthcare Insecurity and COVID-19

Health workers are at the forefront of the response on COVID-19 and are affected by community resistance, wider conflict violence and enforcement measures by security forces. Effective COVID-19 intervention measures depend on the active participation and cooperation of communities. Resistance to health measures combined with mistrust towards health workers put health workers at risk and limit the overall effectiveness of the response.

Threats and Violence Against Health Workers

Risks During Health Interventions

- **Conducting COVID-19 testing:** Attacks have been reported from India and Iraq. [Access data](#)
- **Overlooking quarantined civilians:** Attacks have been reported from Afghanistan, India, and Uzbekistan. In Afghanistan, dozens of COVID-19 patients attacked health workers in order to flee quarantine. [Access data](#)

Threats, Violence and Discrimination Due to Fear

Cases of threats and violence towards health workers suspected of spreading COVID-19 by local communities' members have continued to increase dramatically. Local health workers have experienced:

- **Physical assault:** This includes attacks with liquid bleach, chlorine and scalding coffee, beatings, as well as deliberate coughing and spitting.
- **Verbal harassment:** Health workers face repeated accusations of being virus spreaders and are often shouted at or called out in public.
- **Discrimination:** Health workers have been refused transport, evicted from their homes, and turned away from grocery stores.

Reported in many countries, including Australia, Central African Republic, India, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, the Philippines, and the United Kingdom. [Access data](#)

Threats against health workers have been

Security Forces Actions Targeting Health Workers

- **Lockdown enforcement:** In India, a health worker was assaulted by police officials while on his way home from work. [Access data](#)
- **Arrest of protesting health workers:** In Pakistan, at least 50 doctors protesting the lack of protective equipment provided to health workers while working with COVID-19 patients were arrested. [Access data](#)

Threats and Violence Against Health Providers

Action Targeting Health Facilities

- **Opening of isolation centres:** In Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Nigeria, and Trinidad and Tobago, local communities protested against the opening of quarantine centres for possible COVID-19 in their area. [Access data](#)
- **Attacks on health infrastructure:** In Mexico, a hospital currently under construction was set on fire, days after it was announced that it will be used for COVID-19 patients. [Access data](#)
- **Protests and threats directed towards hospitals admitting COVID-19 patients:** In Mexico, residents threatened to burn down the Dr. Ángel Ventura Neri General Hospital, along with its medical staff, should COVID-19 patients be admitted; in the Philippines residents protested plans to transform a local hospital to cater for COVID-19 patients, blocking access to the hospital. [Access data](#)
- **Accusations of profiteering and deliberate virus spreading:** Often expressed on social media, opinions are expressed that health organisations benefit from epidemics, and of using their funding not to eradicate diseases but for their own interests.

Action Targeting Health Transport

- **Violence:** In the Philippines, an ambulance driver was shot for parking the ambulance in a residential area, for fear of contaminating locals with COVID-19. [Access data](#)
- **Reduced access:** In El Salvador, the Philippines, Ukraine, roads leading to hospitals were blocked, limiting access for health transport. [Access data](#)

Administrative

- **Reduced access to medical equipment:** The European Commission issued a new regulation prohibiting the export of personal protective equipment to countries outside the EU. As a result, an unnamed supplier has been unable to supply MSF teams around the globe with face masks. [Access data](#)
- **Reduced access to beneficiaries:** In Yemen, Houthi authorities imposed strict restrictions aimed at halting the spread of COVID-19, forcing the USAID to partially suspend humanitarian assistance to 70% of the population. This suspension is believed to leave Yemen vulnerable to contagion. [Access data](#)

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