



# Human Rights Now

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Item 3: Interactive Dialog with the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression

Speaker: Kexin Cathy Sun

### **Oral Statement on COVID-19 and Human Rights**

Human Rights Now expresses deep concern for the rights of everyone affected by COVID-19. Governments must take effective measures to control the spread of the virus and to protect people from its adverse impacts, such as through public assistance policies, job protection schemes, and relief for utility costs. Companies must cooperate with the government to guarantee employees' job security as well as to investigate and address any human rights impacts of their business. The government of Japan should also provide greater information and access to testing for COVID-19.

Special protections must also be provided to vulnerable populations. Women vulnerable to domestic violence during lockdowns should be protected by measures such as safe, accessible, and multilingual reporting systems. Support for online education should be given for all children. And special consideration should also be given to protect foreign workers, the homeless, people detained by immigration bureaus or in prisons, and other marginalized groups disproportionately impacted by the virus.

Finally, governments must ensure that measures to address the illness do not discriminate or unnecessarily restrict people's rights, including the freedom of expression. Authorities must be monitored and subject to appropriate checks when necessary. Governments must place the highest priority on transparency and the disclosure of information, and they must respect the role of the media.

Thank you.