

## Who is responsible for the outbreak of the COVID-19?



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No one knows when the coronavirus will be controlled, which spreaded out in china in October of 2019, nor can predict when we will have the right vaccine or antibiotic to fight it. Global research centers talk about at least one year until access to vaccine or antibiotic is reached, unless, coincidentally, some off label drugs being used for other diseases, such as malaria, may be successful as a partial cure for this malignant virus.

Until one of the solutions above, is reached can we imagine the human, social and economic losses of this crisis, which we did not seen anything like or even close to it since the great depression of 1928-1929!

Definitely, the global economy will suffer for a long period of time to come, national budgets will increase their deficit beyond the issue of increasing debt, i.e. there may be few countries whic are willing to lend and if they do it, may be for humanitarian purposes only. The forseen economic recession will trigger increase in number of unemployment to unprecedented proportions, and many international companies will declare bankruptcy such as airlines, tourist companies, hotels, restaurants and small and medium enterprises, whose owners will not be able to pay salaries for their employees for long periods. Foreign investments under PPP models in developing countries will be riskier, either for projects in the pipeline or in operation phase, and foreign firms will find difficulty maintaining interest in long term investments.

With the exception of the G-20 countries, which account for 90% of global economic activities, the rest of the world will not be able to bear the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, and these countries will suffer a lot from this crisis and will not be able to return to their previous status before the crisis. No economic adjustment or restructuring programs will be able to continue, and most probably governments will be forced to submit new programs that carry with them more economic burdens on the citizens of those countries.

Economic stimulus programs initiated many years ago, will come to an end and will not be able to achieve the set goals then. Countries such as Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, and African states, as well as other countries worldwide, will not be able to allocate financial resources to support their economies. These countries and many similar ones, have fragile fiscal budgets and cannot bear additional disbursements or deficits. Therefore, there must be ways and means to support these countries which their economic

restructuring plans were ruined by the outbreak of COVID-19. Also, we have to consider the fact that Gulf Cooperation Council countries, may not be able to do so in the short term, as the price of oil falls to unprecedented levels.

The above-mentioned facts are known to many experts and officials. However, remains within this context a very important question; who bears the suffering of the peoples of the low-income countries as a result of the outbreak?

I think there are two sides responsible for the world suffering from the COVID-19 crisis: China and the World Health Organization (WHO). China is responsible because it did not alert the world about the epidemic in a timely manner, and did partially only months after its outbreak. The spread of the virus became out of control in the absence of transparency and the slow actions and measures to combat it.

The WHO, with its bureaucracy and slow pace of its motion and actions, have been declaring day and night that the disease has not reached the stage of the global pandemic. The WHO did announce the pandemic only 13 days ago, an announcement which was too late, and came after things went out of the control of states and governments?

In addition, the populist policies of the U.S. administration in dealing with the issue at the beginning of the crisis are to be blamed. The European inaction and slow motion for weeks long without taking appropriate protective measures, and the reluctance to help Italy, were also crucial elements contributed to the tragic situation we are witnessing today.

Having stated all of the above mentioned facts, a legitimate question arise: why low-income countries shall bear the mistakes and inefficiencies of the other?. The poor countries affected by the irresponsible actions and practices of the others have to coordinate with each other to adopt a specific strategy to demand compensation for damages from the responsible parties which caused this disaster. This should include going to the International Court of Justice, which deals with the international disputes and cases in accordance with the principles of justice and law.

The G-20 countries should also help the affected countries rebuild their economies. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and its technical and financial arm, the World Bank, should act immediately and urgently to prepare interest-free packages to help affected countries revive their economic activities in order to save what can be saved and before it is too late.

The failure of the world order, dominated by the West for the past seven decades, to deal with such a pandemic logistically and medically is primarily responsible for our crisis today, a crisis that low income and developing countries will pay a heavy price for it.

The question that remains is: what if a new virus emerges after a year or two? will we deal with it in the same way, and will countries like ours bear the consequences again?