2020 in REVIEW
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We live in a divided world where we encounter violence, persecution, poverty, racial hatred, corruption, and yet, at the same time, we see efforts for peace and involvement in upholding human dignity and fundamental freedoms.

This duality helps us to better observe the struggle between good and evil, between truth and falsehood, between despair and hope. If we would not have a biblical and prophetic perspective during the times in which we live, it would be easy to slip into discouragement. It would be just as easy to go in the wrong direction with expectations that cannot be achieved in this constantly changing world.

**2020 in Review** presents a selection of news headlines, and reports on the general direction which nations follow when relating to human rights, the humanitarian area, and international relations as they are seen by the United Nations.

The most crucial issues the world faced in 2020 were actively discussed at the United Nations. The issues in question being the Covid-19 pandemic, violations of human rights, privacy infringements, the limitation of religious freedom, racism, discrimination, the challenges of the world economy, food insecurity, and many others. According to the World Bank, the pandemic has harmed the poor and vulnerable the most, and it is threatening to push millions more into poverty. At the height of the COVID lockdown, more than 160 countries had mandated some form of school closures for at least 1.5 billion children and youth. The pandemic may add between 83 and 132 million people to the total number of undernourished in the world in 2020, according to a preliminary assessment by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Despite all the negative news, we can still place in a positive context many things that happened in 2020. Plenty of positive reactions can be seen as an answer to certain negative situations that have occurred this past year. This type of positive attitude has been a helpful ally for many people that went through these difficult experiences. Although a long list of accomplishments can be created on the topic of human innovation as a response to adversity, I will limit this description to a few of them that can be considered relevant from the human rights perspective. It has been considered that violent conflicts have declined and humanity has become more tolerant. Innovations in certain fields such as medicine have increased in a very short time. Socially speaking, people have shown their good side more than before by engaging in voluntary activities, co-operating, and providing humanitarian, spiritual, and emotional support to those that need it more than they do. Although public religious manifestations have been restricted in most countries, the strong belief that God is still in control and will not abandon mankind must overcome any feelings of fear or insecurity.

“Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; He lifts His voice, the earth melts.
   The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.”
   Psalm 46:6-7 - NIV

Pastor Nelu Burcea, PhD, GC PARL Associate Director
Seventh-day Adventist Liaison to the United Nations
10 January 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS
Killings and violence targeting ethnic group in DR Congo ‘may amount to crimes against humanity’

25 January 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS
Combating antisemitism requires ‘solidarity in the face of hatred’, says UN chief

26 January 2020
HEALTH
End discrimination against women and children affected by leprosy

12 February 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS
‘We must all do more’ to protect children in armed conflict: UN chief

20 February 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS
On World Social Justice Day, the UN labour agency says ‘put people and planet first’

24 February 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS
With human rights under attack, UN chief unveils blueprint for positive change

25 February 2020
WOMEN
UN human rights chief warns of women’s rights complacency

27 February 2020
HEALTH
Smoking and drinking link to recreational drug use by young people: UN-backed report

3 March 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS
No country is free from child sexual abuse, exploitation, UN’s top rights forum hears

3 March 2020
WOMEN
World remains a ‘violent, highly discriminatory place’ for girls

4 March 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS
Human rights defenders, too often left defenceless themselves – UN expert

6 March 2020
HEALTH/HUMAN RIGHTS
Violent extremism prevention ‘only effective’ if human rights are enshrined

9 March 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS
COVID-19: countries, businesses must safeguard human rights as virus spreads: Bachelet

Rising number of young people excluded from jobs, education and training
10 March 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS

Burundi election countdown amid ‘deteriorating’ human rights situation

13 March 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS

UN human rights chief: racism and xenophobia are ‘contagious killers’ too

18 March 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS/HEALTH

Treat migrants with dignity and respect during pandemic: UN migration agency

19 March 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS

Preventing discrimination against people with disabilities in COVID-19 response

26 March 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights must be maintained in beating back the COVID-19 pandemic, ‘without exception’ – UN experts

30 March 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS

COVID-19 stoking xenophobia, hate and exclusion, minority rights expert warns

6 April 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS

Rights experts warn against discrimination in COVID-19 response

14 April 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS

Hatred going viral in ‘dangerous epidemic of misinformation’ during COVID-19 pandemic

15 April 2020
MIGRANTS

Rights and dignity’ of older people must be respected during COVID-19 and beyond

2 May 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS

Sudan bans female genital mutilation, UNICEF vows to help support new law

5 May 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS

UN rights expert urges States to step-up anti-slavery efforts to protect most vulnerable during COVID-19

5 May 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS/HEALTH

Food insecurity in West Africa could leave 43 million at risk as coronavirus hits

5 May 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS

COVID-19: UN teams step up efforts to protect rights in prisons, as revolts intensify worldwide
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Independent UN rights experts call for decisive measures to protect ‘fundamental freedoms’ in China

Harmful practices rob women and girls of ‘right to reach their full potential’

Independent rights expert speaks of ‘anguish, stress and disempowerment’ of poverty

How do you define lawful peaceful protest? The UN Human Rights Committee has a clear answer

Keep Turkey’s Hagia Sophia ‘a space for meeting of cultures’, UN rights experts urge

Leaving No Roma behind during a pandemic, and beyond: a UN Resident Coordinator blog

Pandemic ‘inflicting multiple shocks’ on the young, threatens entire generation

Three years after exodus, Rohingya refugees ‘more vulnerable than ever’

New guidelines aim to dismantle barriers blocking people with disabilities from access to justice

Rise to the occasion to tackle injustice, Bachelet urges Human Rights Council

Governments urged to protect poor against modern slavery, step up development financing

COVID pushes millions more children deeper into poverty, new study finds

Greater equality a ‘prerequisite’ for overcoming global crises: Bachelet
15 October 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS
Rape is wrong but death penalty, castration, not the answer: UN rights chief

10 November 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS
Oppose hatred in all its forms, UN chief urges

16 November 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS
Rising hunger, ‘an outrage in a world of plenty’: Guterres

30 November 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS
The pandemic is fuelling slavery and sexual exploitation, UN experts warn

30 November 2020
WOMEN
COVID-19 worsening gender-based violence, trafficking risk, for women and girls

2 December 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS
World must not accept slavery in 21st century: Guterres

3 December 2020
POVERTY
COVID-19 could see over 200 million more pushed into extreme poverty, new UN development report finds

10 December 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS
Human rights must be ‘front and centre’ of COVID-19 response: Secretary-General

16 December 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS
China undermining human rights by locking up rights lawyers, UN independent expert says

21 December 2020
HEALTH
Fruits and vegetables crucial for healthy lives, sustainable world: Guterres

23 December 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS
Press freedom more important than ever, as UN condemns killing of 59 media workers

23 December 2020
HUMAN RIGHTS
Hate speech on Facebook poses ‘acute challenges to human dignity’ – UN expert

29 December 2020
MIGRANTS/ REFUGEES
The virus that shut down the world: The plight of refugees and migrants
UNHRC Annual reports of the Human Rights Council - 2020
http://www.undocs.org/A/75/53

UNHRC Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief
www.undocs.org/A/HRC/43/48

UNHRC Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy
www.undocs.org/A/75/147

UNHRC Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism

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UN/UNHCR Global Trends Forced Displacement
www.unhcr.org/5ee200e37.pdf

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