

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

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- Killings and violence targeting ethnic group in DR Congo 'may amount to crimes against humanity'
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/01/1055141>
- Combatting antisemitism requires 'solidarity in the face of hatred', says UN chief
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/01/1055991>
- End discrimination against women and children affected by leprosy
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/01/1056011>
- 'We must all do more' to protect children in armed conflict: UN chief
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/02/1057251>
- On World Social Justice Day, the UN labour agency says 'put people and planet first'
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/02/1057811>
- With human rights under attack, UN chief unveils blueprint for positive change
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/02/1057961>
- UN human rights chief warns of women's rights complacency
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/02/1058021>
- Smoking and drinking link to recreational drug use by young people: UN-backed report
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/02/1058151>
- No country is free from child sexual abuse, exploitation, UN's top rights forum hears
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1058501>
- World remains a 'violent, highly discriminatory place' for girls
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1058531>
- Human rights defenders, too often left defenceless themselves – UN expert
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1058641>
- Violent extremism prevention 'only effective' if human rights are enshrined
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1058681>
- COVID-19: countries, businesses must safeguard human rights as virus spreads: Bachelet
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1058891>
- Rising number of young people excluded from jobs, education and training
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1059031>

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Burundi election countdown amid ‘deteriorating’ human rights situation
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1059131>
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UN human rights chief: racism and xenophobia are ‘contagious killers’ too
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1059361>
 - 18 March 2020
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Treat migrants with dignity and respect during pandemic: UN migration agency
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1059682>
 - 19 March 2020
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Preventing discrimination against people with disabilities in COVID-19 response
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1059762>
 - 26 March 2020
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Human rights must be maintained in beating back the COVID-19 pandemic, ‘without exception’ – UN experts
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1060372>
 - 30 March 2020
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COVID-19 stoking xenophobia, hate and exclusion, minority rights expert warns
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1060602>
 - 6 April 2020
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Rights experts warn against discrimination in COVID-19 response
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1061122>
 - 14 April 2020
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Hatred going viral in ‘dangerous epidemic of misinformation’ during COVID-19 pandemic
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1061682>
 - 15 April 2020
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Migrants among most vulnerable, as IOM ramps up coronavirus response worldwide
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1061842>
 - 1 May 2020
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‘Rights and dignity’ of older people must be respected during COVID-19 and beyond
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1063052>
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Sudan bans female genital mutilation, UNICEF vows to help support new law
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1063122>
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UN rights expert urges States to step-up anti-slavery efforts to protect most vulnerable during COVID-19
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1063222>
 - 5 May 2020
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Food insecurity in West Africa could leave 43 million at risk as coronavirus hits
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1063232>
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COVID-19: UN teams step up efforts to protect rights in prisons, as revolts intensify worldwide
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1063292>

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- Coronavirus and human rights: New UN report calls for disability-inclusive recovery
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1063242>
- 7 May 2020
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- Migrants stranded 'all over the world' and at risk from coronavirus
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1063482>
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- Coronavirus: Health system overload threatens pregnant women and newborns
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1063422>
- 12 May 2020
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- COVID-19 pandemic 'quickly becoming a child rights crisis': Daily death rate could spike by 6,000 for under-fives
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1063822>
- 14 May 2020
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- UN leads call to protect most vulnerable from mental health crisis during and after COVID-19
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1063882>
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- UN human rights office welcomes moves to curtail spread of hatred and violence online
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1065092>
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- Address 'appalling impact' of COVID-19 on minorities, UN rights chief urges
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/06/1065272>
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- Asian countries urged to honour right to freedom of expression, over pandemic fear
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/06/1065532>
- 15 June 2020
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- Human Rights Council picks up again after COVID suspension, to hold racism debate
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/06/1066312>
- 19 June 2020
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- Human Rights Council calls on top UN rights official to take action on racist violence
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/06/1066722>
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- Digital tools being used to track people as never before, warns UN rights chief
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/06/1067112>
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- Yemen: millions of children facing deadly hunger, amidst aid shortages and COVID-19
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/06/1067082>
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- Speak out against torture, an 'abhorrent denial of human dignity', urges UN chief
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/06/1067072>

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Independent UN rights experts call for decisive measures to protect 'fundamental freedoms' in China
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/06/1067312>
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Harmful practices rob women and girls of 'right to reach their full potential'
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/06/1067382>
 - 7 July 2020**
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Independent rights expert speaks of 'anguish, stress and disempowerment' of poverty
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/07/1067781>
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How do you define lawful peaceful protest? The UN Human Rights Committee has a clear answer
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/07/1069211>
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Keep Turkey's Hagia Sophia 'a space for meeting of cultures', UN rights experts urge
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/07/1069362>
 - 2 August 2020**
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Leaving No Roma behind during a pandemic, and beyond: a UN Resident Coordinator blog
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/08/1069331>
 - 11 August 2020**
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Pandemic 'inflicting multiple shocks' on the young, threatens entire generation
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/08/1070032>
 - 25 August 2020**
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Three years after exodus, Rohingya refugees 'more vulnerable than ever'
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/08/1070962>
 - 28 August 2020**
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New guidelines aim to dismantle barriers blocking people with disabilities from access to justice
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/08/1071252>
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Rise to the occasion to tackle injustice, Bachelet urges Human Rights Council
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/09/1072282>
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Governments urged to protect poor against modern slavery, step up development financing
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/09/1072492>
 - 17 September 2020**
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COVID pushes millions more children deeper into poverty, new study finds
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/09/1072602>
 - 12 October 2020**
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Greater equality a 'prerequisite' for overcoming global crises: Bachelet
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/10/1075212>

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Rape is wrong but death penalty, castration, not the answer: UN rights chief
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/10/1075452>
 - 10 November 2020
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Oppose hatred in all its forms, UN chief urges
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/11/1077282>
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Rising hunger, 'an outrage in a world of plenty': Guterres
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/11/1077792>
 - 30 November 2020
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The pandemic is fuelling slavery and sexual exploitation, UN experts warn
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/11/1078792>
 - 30 November 2020
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COVID-19 worsening gender-based violence, trafficking risk, for women and girls
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/11/1078812>
 - 2 December 2020
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World must not accept slavery in 21st century: Guterres
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/12/1079002>
 - 3 December 2020
POVERTY

COVID-19 could see over 200 million more pushed into extreme poverty, new UN development report finds
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/12/1079152>
 - 10 December 2020
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Human rights must be 'front and centre' of COVID-19 response: Secretary-General
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/12/1079632>
 - 16 December 2020
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China undermining human rights by locking up rights lawyers, UN independent expert says
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/12/1080242>
 - 21 December 2020
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Fruits and vegetables crucial for healthy lives, sustainable world: Guterres
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/12/1080492>
 - 23 December 2020
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Press freedom more important than ever, as UN condemns killing of 59 media workers
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/12/1080802>
 - 23 December 2020
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Hate speech on Facebook poses 'acute challenges to human dignity' – UN expert
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/12/1080832>
 - 29 December 2020
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The virus that shut down the world: The plight of refugees and migrants
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/12/1080742>

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

<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UN-DOC/GEN/G20/045/67/PDF/G2004567.pdf?OpenElement>

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

UNHCR Global Trends Forced Displacement

www.unhcr.org/5ee200e37.pdf

UNHRC Report - Racial discrimination and emerging digital technologies

www.undocs.org/en/A/HRC/44/57

UN-IANYD World Youth Reports 2020

www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2020/07/2020-World-Youth-Report-FULL-FINAL.pdf

UN/ILO World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2020

www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_734455.pdf

UNICEF Lives Upended - How COVID-19 threatens the futures of 600 million South Asian children

www.unicef.org/rosa/reports/lives-upended

UNDESA World Social Report 2020

www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2020/02/World-Social-Report2020-FullReport.pdf

COVID-19: Working with & for young people

www.youthcompact.org/s/COMPACT-COVID19-05.pdf

UN-WOMEN STRATEGIC PLAN 2018–2021

www.undocs.org/en/UNW/2017/6/Rev.1

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