

## Project Article 26

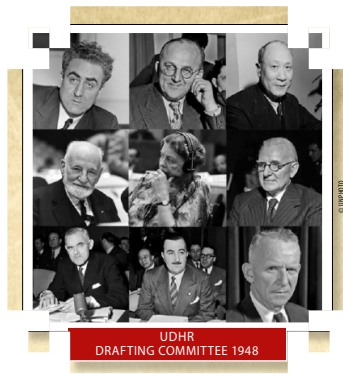
# Statement on the SARS-COV2 (Covid19) pandemic

We, the collective of academics, social workers, education unions associations of students and civil society organizations who are coordinated by PoliTeknik Newspaper, the Association for All-Round Education and the Interdisciplinary Research Center on Childhood of the University of Wuppertal, issue the following statement that deeply concerns the epidemic caused by the SARS-CoV2 virus (Covid19):

This epidemic has placed the world at a critical crossroad, not only because of the serious consequences already faced by many countries, including the fact that 9 out of 10 students can no longer receive classes, but also because of the health, social and economic impact it has globally.

**The emergency is a worldwide challenge and must have worldwide responses.** This means that the United Nations must play a major role in ensuring that developing countries, and especially the countries with the lowest incomes, should have the support of the international community in order to protect their populations. It is time for the international community to take decisions in order to ease the debt of these countries, so that they can reallocate their resources to their debilitated health and education systems.

The first point may be seen in the necessity is to establish a stable data-basis of the ongoing situation. There is too much sensational oriented media politics instead of clear information. We all feel depressed by the death-toll in many countries of the world. But we are in need of the statistics based on the representative data-collecting to understand the real extend of the crises. We need the data to act on serious and stabile assumptions. That is, by the way, a fundamental question of education not only of experts but of the whole population worldwide. We do not only need a proper medical treatment and an antidot against the virus, but also an antidot against false and disturbing news which have a big possibility to be fake news.



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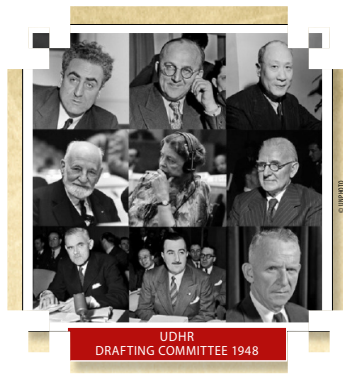
There is at least one important ethical reason for this plea: We are concerned about political and medical strategies worldwide warning that so-called risk-groups may be in danger. Yes, we have to shelter people; yet, the real danger is that specific groups or societies will be declared more and more as groups endangering societies. Their position has shifted from a group in a risky situation to a group which will be seen as a danger for the society. Elderly people will be attacked, along with the people who live in a precarious state such as the poor.. We shall not allow that anysocial group might be declared as risks for others and therefore might be excluded in societies.

It is a matter of urgency for the UN to place a serious call to the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the OECD, among others, to declare an emergency state, along with the call to the Official Development Assistance to actually meet the standards suggested by international policy frameworks that provide for at least 0.7 of gross national income to be spent on development assistance. Today more than ever, that obligation can make the difference between life and mass tragedy.

The sanitary crisis certainly impacts the self-employed and the informal sector workers with women workers experiencing the worst who have to earn their income day by day. Each state must search for the most expeditious and appropriate mechanisms to address the precarious conditions in which these workers live to protect them from infection or to provide them with medical care free of charge. We believe that the impact of the privatization of health services could cause countless victims, if they are not protected.

There is even a greater danger not just during the crisis but in the following times as well. The gap between the people who can and cannot afford digital equipment and sources for education may widen and those who cannot might be excluded. We know that privatization and the loss of state responsibility for the whole educational system is one of the greatest dangers all over the world. What will happen is that those who can afford computers, software and digital content will be successful. But what will happen to the large majority worldwide who do not have access to any kind of digital equipment in education? Furthermore: The crisis does lead to more power for private investors in education by establishing so-called digital

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structures all over the world. But education has not only a fundamental basis in personal relations; in any dimension of upbringing, teaching, and training. Any kind of education works on a process of learning in a social situation of collective solidarity. Digital means may support education and do that as addition to personal teaching work. But they can not compensate the personal relation between teachers and pupils.

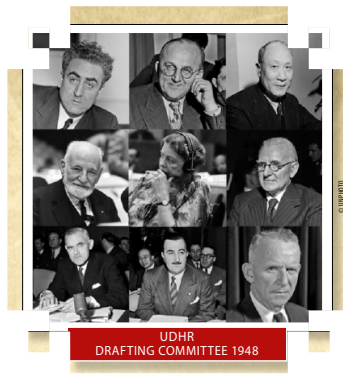
The role that we believe corresponds to the UN also includes asking governments that do not respond to the recommendations communicated by the World Health Organization **to account for their failure**, since not responding means , putting the lives of their citizens at risk. It is urgent that the Secretary-General, as well as the various relevant bodies of the system, consider expressing their disapproval of such conducts, since if a state fails to take appropriate health measures, that state also puts its neighbours at risk.

We wish to call the attention to the sensitive situation in which **education systems** find themselves. Millions of children have been confined to their houses with no possibility of continuing their education and and without any pedagogical alternatives This situation violates their human right to education, which must always be guaranteed, even in emergency contexts. In order to do this, teachers must have the resources to provide distance education and their wages must be paid on time and completely. By ensuring the provision of education, students can have life-saving information and knowledge, thus, during the humanitarian response to the pandemic, the **protection of the right to education** must be a priority.

We would also like to express our concern that after the health crisis, an **economic and social crisis** will be developing that is completely unprecedented in contemporary history. The short-term, medium-term and long-term effects include recession, increased unemployment and exploitation of employees who would be hired under unacceptable conditions after the emergency.

Furthermore, there is a danger of the establishment of **authoritarian regimes** with intensified and unjustifiable surveillance and control of citizens, which will inevitably affect the most vulnerable groups of communities, the migrant population and refugees.

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Last but not least: we have to remember and to take in account that measures that were taken until now by most of the reacting governments are directed to enforce the processes of individualisation and singularization, which have been working throughout modern societies since establishing the new market-oriented capitalism, sometimes called neoliberalism. It seems for many that social distancing and isolation would be appropriate means against the spreading of the virus or to help the health systems to prepare themselves for an increasing number of infected people. Although these measures might be useful we have to look carefully at the side effects of this strategy: The process of individualization will be driven to a dramatic extend. Therefore, one clear effect is that real and personal solidarity will be affected and weakened more than ever. Another effect might be that ruling by creating a climate of fear and anxiety will work much better than it did before. Ruling by creating fear is a basic mechanism in the power structure of modern societies as – for example - the German psychologist Rainer Mausfeld has shown that power fear and anxieties are connected. It is necessary in this situation to work on general education as a kind of enlightenment not only to proof information and data but to come to clear insights in the real given situation but to keep people empowered and active. We should not close our eyes in fear of illness or death but work on democracy for all.

All countries, the international community and the UN should take immediate preventive measures and ensure the rule of **international human rights law**, protecting the life and the dignity of all people.

## Project Article 26 Team