

The Protecting Human Rights During Pandemic Act: Fact Sheet

WHAT is the Protecting Human Rights During Pandemic Act?

The Protecting Human Rights During Pandemic Act (PHRDPA) is a piece of bipartisan bicameral legislation that would oblige the U.S. government to take action to document, assess, and respond to human rights violations and abuses taking place globally in the wake of COVID-19.

The PHRDPA was introduced in the Senate as [S.3819](#) on May 21, 2020 and in the House as [H.R.6986](#) on May 22, 2020. The current text of the bill is available [here](#).

WHAT does the PHRDPA do?

If passed, the PHRDPA would:

- Underscore that **the policy of the United States** is “the protection and promotion of internationally recognized human rights at home and abroad at all times and especially during the novel coronavirus pandemic.”
- Require the U.S. State Department and USAID **to develop a five-year strategy** to address “the persistent issues related to internationally recognized human rights” in the aftermath of COVID-19 through, among other things, programming to support democratic institutions, freedom of the press, civil society, and human rights defenders. It would also **authorize funding** to implement the strategy.
- Establish State Department reporting requirements on how countries are meeting or violating their human rights obligations during and in the aftermath of COVID-19.
- Clarify that, for the purposes of **conditioning the delivery of security sector assistance** to foreign governments under Section 502B of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, assessing whether countries have engaged in a “consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights” should include violations brought about through the “use of emergency laws, policies, or administrative procedures.”

WHY is the PHRDPA important?

Governments around the world have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by enacting **emergency measures**. Some of these laws and policies are necessary, proportionate, and justified, while others are grounded in using the pandemic as cover to erode checks and balances, silence independent reporting, impede the work of civil society, discriminate against marginalized populations, and undermine the rule of law.

From hospitals to detention facilities to online, how countries respect or violate their human rights obligations while responding to this time of pandemic will bear reverberating implications.

In this critical moment, through the tools established by the PHRDPA, the United States can respond to the rollback of human rights protections exacerbated by COVID-19 and play a determinative role in bolstering the freedoms that serve long-term U.S. and global interests.



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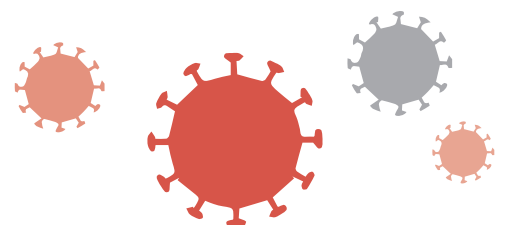
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 **human rights first**

American ideals. Universal values.



The Tahrir Institute
for Middle East Policy

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