THE JORDAN TIMES

WEATHER, AMMAN

Today, July 13, 2022

24 c° / clear sky

Home » Opinion » Project Syndicate » COVID-19's lessons for democracies

COVID-19's lessons for democracies

Apr 11,2022 - Last updated at Apr 11,2022
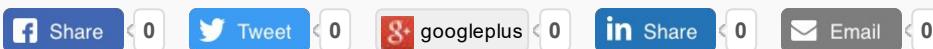
BRUSSELS — For more than two years, COVID-19 has taken lives, destroyed livelihoods, disrupted daily routines and dominated political discussion around the world. As the acute phase of the pandemic comes to an end, we must evaluate what COVID-19 has revealed about the ability of democratic systems to respond to such emergencies.

There are several lessons to be learned from a crisis that has caused the death of over six million people and produced the deepest recession since World War II. Over the past year, Club de Madrid's Global Commission on Democracy and Emergencies brought together former heads of state and government, eminent experts, and civil-society leaders from around the world to discuss what COVID-19 has taught us, and how our countries can plan for future crises.

Just as no one ever steps into the same river twice, for it is not the same river and they are not the same person, no country ever experiences the same disaster twice. But learning from one emergency is essential to preparing for the next. Although pandemics are rare, epidemics, natural disasters, financial crises, and industrial accidents are regular occurrences. Governments, legislative bodies, judicial institutions, civil society, and international organisations must be

Project Syndicate

Archives

Private equity's ESG generation

Jul 12,2022

Europe, we have a problem

Jun 30,2022

equipped to promote resilience in the face of crisis.

For starters, governments must elevate the status of emergency preparedness and work with their peers to embrace radical transparency, support responsible journalism and media, promote digital literacy, and work with civil-society organisations to debunk disinformation, especially online. They should engage with technology companies to solve problems arising from the digital environment and increase access to digital resources. And, with COVID-19 having revealed serious gaps in social security systems, they also must advocate for better protections for vulnerable minorities, women and young people.

In fact, government leaders should mobilise all available tools of fiscal policy to strengthen democratic resilience and improve equity. This includes not only broadening the tax base combating tax evasion, but also redoubling efforts to fight corruption.

At the same time, legislatures should evaluate their governments' COVID-19 response and recommend measures to improve performance in future emergencies. They should review their country's legal framework to ensure that how emergencies are defined adequately reflects current risks, and that constitutional provisions for declaring a state of emergency provide sufficient safeguards to mitigate the risk of abuse of power.

Legislatures also must ensure that their plans for emergency preparedness are robust enough to allow for effective oversight during future crises. These plans should include flexible rules of legislative procedure and embrace digital technologies to promote resilience and encourage citizen participation.

Judicial institutions, for their part, must ensure that the rule of law guides democracies' response to future emergencies. When the pandemic ends, courts will be called upon, as some already have, to scrutinise governments' actions against the criteria of necessity, proportionality, procedural fairness and respect for fundamental rights. Courts must make sure that their emergency-preparedness plans allow for swift judicial oversight during times of crisis.

Civil society and the media bear most of the responsibility in a democracy for preventing the spread of disinformation. They also have the power to bring issues into the spotlight and act as a catalyst for emergency policies that better engage and meet the needs of underrepresented groups. In preparing for future emergencies, civil-society organisations should advocate for more public dialogue about critical risks and preventive action.

Lastly, multilateral organisations have a critical role to play, by coordinating lessons learned from member countries and strengthening shared values. International human-rights monitoring mechanisms

can serve as a framework for upholding fundamental rights in countries' emergency response. Regional bodies that have instruments in place to protect democracy and the rule of law among their member states should reflect on how these tools might be used for regional oversight in emergencies. And global institutions like the International Labor Organisation, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, and regional development banks should continue to aid efforts to build resilience through social inclusion.

Every democracy is different, and every emergency is different. But the most important lesson to be learned from the COVID-19 pandemic is that all democratic states have a responsibility, as they prepare for the next crisis, to safeguard their core values.

Yves Leterme, a former prime minister of Belgium, is chair of the Global Commission on Democracy and Emergencies and a member of Club de Madrid. Copyright: Project Syndicate, 2022.

www.project-syndicate.org

Rate

👍

21 users have voted.
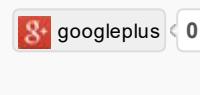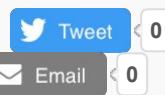
Add new comment

Your name

Comment *

CAPTCHA
This question is for testing whether or not you are a human visitor and to prevent automated spam submissions.

Math question *

$2 + 0 =$

Solve this simple math problem and enter the result. E.g. for 1+3, enter 4.

Save

Will the US ensure equal protection for Arab Americans?

Jul 12, 2022

Private equity's ESG generation

Jul 12, 2022

Worsening Chaos: Israel's political instability is now the norm

Jul 12, 2022

Boris Johnson leaves behind a sterling mess

Jul 12, 2022

VIDEOS

100 Glorious Years

The Royal Guards

Royal highlights of 2020

Royal Visit

Surprise visit

His Majesty King Abdullah visits Baqura

THE JORDAN TIMES

The Jordan Times is an independent English-language daily published by the Jordan Press Foundationsince October 26, 1975. The Jordan Press Foundation is a shareholding company listed on the Amman Stock Exchange.

PAGES

About us
Contact Us
Advertise
What's On

SECTIONS

Local
Region
World
Business
2015

Sports
Features
Opinion
Letters

CONTACT US

To send your articles , please do email :
editor@jordantimes.com
call us : +962 6 5600-800
ext. 2392