



FIGHTING COVID-19: AJWS's Human Rights Response to the Global Pandemic

A GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

The COVID-19 pandemic has reached all 18 countries AJWS serves, wreaking havoc on a catastrophic scale. The pandemic is disrupting and destroying lives everywhere, but we know from our 35 years of experience responding to disasters that this crisis poses an existential threat to the vulnerable communities AJWS supports across Africa, Asia, Central America and the Caribbean.

The pandemic is magnifying inequality between rich and poor in devastating ways, and igniting an increased rise in authoritarianism, bigotry and violence in the communities where we work:

- People living in slums or refugee camps are unable to observe social distancing.
- Impoverished countries lack healthcare and economic infrastructure to weather the crisis.
- Lockdowns have cut off vital food and supplies, and many governments have failed to provide financial relief.
- Leaders have circulated misinformation about how the virus spreads and blamed the pandemic on minorities—sparking assaults and arrests.
- Authoritarian regimes are abusing their power—muzzling the press and backing legislation that threatens human rights.

AJWS'S EMERGENCY RESPONSE

When COVID-19 emerged, AJWS was well-positioned to respond—due to our experience rising to the challenges of Ebola and decades of responding to other emergencies. We nimbly shifted our support of our 519 grantees so they could battle the pandemic and defend human rights under threat. Our focus is on the dual imperatives to save lives in the short-term and protect human rights in the long-term, acting on our Jewish responsibility to repair the world and protect the inherent human dignity of all people.

SPOTLIGHT: HALTING COVID-19 IN DISPLACED PERSONS CAMPS

In **Sulawesi, Indonesia**, COVID-19 has cruelly struck just two years after a tsunami and earthquake killed nearly 5,000 people and left thousands more homeless in 2018. These tsunami survivors now live in makeshift displaced persons camps, because the Indonesian government never rebuilt permanent housing.

With support from AJWS, a local organization, *WALHI*, is providing emergency aid and protective equipment for these families. They're also working with a coalition of human rights groups advocating for the Indonesian government to provide the aid it promised to these citizens two years ago. *WALHI*'s director, Haris Abdul, said, **"We're together in this crisis and we won't leave anyone behind."**

●●●● AJWS'S COVID-19 RESPONSE HAS FOUR PILLARS:

● Addressing Urgent Humanitarian Needs

We are enabling organizations to provide threatened communities with desperately needed aid. When COVID-19 first struck,

our grantees distributed emergency food, personal protective equipment and other essentials. Now, AJWS is investing in the long-term wellbeing of these communities by ensuring that they have enduring sources of food and that they can access key services, like reproductive health care and psychosocial support.

●● Spreading Life-Saving Information

Because many communities lack accurate information about COVID-19—due to false reporting and limited

