

**In der Corona-Krise: Eine Stimme aus der Zivilgesellschaft /
In the Corona crisis: a voice from civil society**

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This biological disaster might be a chance for autocratic regimes to reconsider their politics and instead of wasting their budgets on disciplining and punishing their populations, they should use them to build strong and just nations.

A Column by Hind Arroub

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Corona: A virus shaking the world, reshaping tomorrow

A View from Morocco

Under the catastrophic pressure of disease, the Moroccan regime is rapidly implementing solutions which were the people's demands before corona time.

When Corona struck, the Moroccan State hastened to adopt all possible preventive measures against the disease out of fear of popular discontent with the weak, the "nickle-and-dimed" and the marginalized. This included constituting a Collective

Corona Fund which raised 32 Billion Dirhams (3 Billion dollars) in a very short period of time, without resorting to borrowing. Also, a monthly stipend of 2000 Dirhams (200 dollars) was granted to the needy. Moreover, as one of the confinement measures, the due date for rents, mortgage payments, and utility bills was postponed, in order to maintain the economic and social stability of the country as well as the financial well-being of its citizens. This was done to keep the hungry commoners from protesting in the streets, bearing in mind that deprivation often defies the state's confining laws and orders. It appears that the Moroccan state is trying its best to solve the complex issues fathered by Corona.

In the surprising trials and tribulations of the Corona disease, the Moroccan State has mobilized all its forces and resorted, through the arm of its government, to exceptional urgent measures in order to face the global pandemic and keep the nation and its people safe. These commendable efforts show us that when one wants to find a solution, the goal will be reached. Emergency solutions, as applied in numerous political and economic contexts, were called for throughout the history of independent Morocco. But unfortunately, these demands, had not found welcoming ears with the rulers. Punishment and fear replaced dialogue and negotiation, and those who dared to voice demands concerning a better and equal life, justice and decent citizenry, had been jailed. Today Corona, this invisible virus, unmasks our frail structures and delivers us back to our bleak situation. The state apparatus is taking all necessary measures and cannot put Corona in jail.

My hope is that Corona crisis will become the corner stone of a national open social dialogue as well as a trust builder between the leader and his people.

I kindly ask, hereby, the institution of the Monarch, as the highest authority in Morocco, to order the release of prisoners of opinion and participants in social peaceful protests, in order to benefit from their share of knowledge in the construction of our new home during these pandemic times, as well as in the period of post-reconstruction. These men and women behind bars are firm believers in the greatness of their country and are willing to volunteer to build a safe and hopeful motherland.

The biological catastrophe united all people on earth behind the rallying call of facing Covid-19 and being saved from its claws. We were so busy in our daily routines, our egotistical pursuits, and our virtual cocooning, that we forgot the fate that united us all. The humans of the 21st century believed to be in control of life, aided by an arsenal of tanks, inventions, predictions of imminent dangers and preying on nature, until a biological invisible predator, contagious, fast and as tiny as few atoms, took them by surprise, like in times of the Plague or the Spanish Flu. This invisible guest disabled our movement, weakening the most majestic nations, let alone weaker ones. Is Corona a revenge of Mother Nature, hurt in its pride? This tectonic earthquake will, for sure, constitute a paradigm shift in human life, from Pre-Corona to Post-Corona times.

The After-Corona era will introduce us to new concepts and mores, shaking signifiers and signified in all fields.

World geopolitics, Economic hierarchies, modes of governance and the conduct of international relations will no more remain the same. This "guest" will, without doubt, change the nature of the chessboard's major players, their moves and their coalitions. Will we become more isolationist or will we confess to our need of mutual cooperation? Will closing borders, no matter how exceptional and deterrent a measure this is, become a global reality, or will we be inspired to rethink freedom of movement? Will medical confinement become a political confinement even in democratic regimes or will it push authoritarian regimes to weigh in the importance of their citizens? Will the Military force shift from a destructive war machine to a constructive human reserve of labour? What will become of international institutions after having failed to predict the coming of this "plague"? Will they favour restructuring, or will they continue to weaken vulnerable economies through debt and imposed economic plans? Will our collective conscience lick the wounds of its Corona wounds to remember those of the Palestinians, Syrians, Iraqis, and Yemenis? To put it simply, will it pay attention to the displaced, the migrants and the unjustly incarcerated? Will our populations, the vulnerable ones at least, wake up one day to reclaim their history by

consolidating social cohesion, class rapprochement and by believing in our common destiny?

The “*homo coronus*”, be he or she rich and poor, has been social-distanced, and in some countries, has needed permission to set a foot outside his very house, and his needs reduced to what was deemed essential. Corona is calling humanity to refresh its academic memory, far from profligate consumerism. We are in a time when we are redefining our relationship to things and wants, brothers and sisters, spirit and matter, and to time and space. This biological disaster might be a chance for autocratic regimes to reconsider their politics and instead of wasting their budgets on disciplining and punishing their populations, they should use them to build strong and just nations. This episode will also be an opportunity for developed nations to let go of their grip on international stock markets, technological gadgets and military toys, lest they all be destroyed, in a blink of an eye, by an invisible Virus. On a more humanistic level, this disease confined us to sanitize not only our bodies but also our souls so that our inner selves become more resistant to our whims and vagaries. Let us all ride the wave of creativity, innovation, humor, and solidarity, for Corona is merely a vanishing tornado that leaves in its trail learning crumbs to be collected by those among us who are ready to read Corona's lips.

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