



ADRU
Academy of the
Disaster Research Unit



SARS CoV 2 Monitoring Report

Week 21, May 18th – May 24st

Academy of the
Disaster Research Unit (ADRU)

Rationale

As part of a real time evaluation of the SARS CoV 2 pandemic (with focus on epidemiological, economical, societal, and cultural developments in Germany and Iran) the research team, under the leadership of Prof. Dr. Martin Voss, is conducting a weekly monitoring of real time developments. Multiple national and international media outlets, research platforms and scientific and organisational guidelines, briefs and updates are screened on a daily basis to feed into this weekly outlet. The rationale behind this is to support the projects' network partners in Iran and Germany with a condensed overview of key developments, trends and events that are shaping the global, German and Iranian outbreak response and recovery. The selection of subjects are driven by 3 factors:

- relevance to network partners – based on regular bilateral and multilateral feedback/input
- the focus area of the real time evaluation (epidemiological trends, economic, societal and cultural effects, escalating risks and downstream effects, risk communication and vulnerabilities)
- global trends and developments as the pandemic evolves

The setup of these short briefs is structured by technical area, with country relevance and specificities included under each main headline. The chapters are precluded by pertinent general observations. This could be mainstream big ticket items or fringe subjects that are easily overlooked in the global flood of information. Some topics will be followed through their evolution in time while others may only appear once. While subjectively selected, the briefs are descriptive in nature and leave analysis and critical interpretation to the reader. Initially based on the research teams' perception of relevance, the content will gradually represent the importance of topics for network partners in both countries.

Keywords: pandemic, covid-19, health, epidemiology, data, science, treatment, trial, risk, escalating risks, vulnerability, global, , economy, society, culture, risk management

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Academy of the Disaster Research Unit (ADRU) gGmbH
C/O Katastrophenforschungsstelle
Carl-Heinrich-Becker-Weg 6-10
D-12165 Berlin



General Observations May 18th – May 24th

An increased awareness, made visible through its' broad unveiling in the media, of the impact of Corona on peoples' health seeking behavior is coming to light (long predicted within the medical societies). People are afraid to attend health services and therefore don't seek care when needed. This may be causing - in the extreme - excess deaths that could and should have been prevented. It may also lead to the deterioration of preexisting health conditions e.g. through draconian lock down measures and increased hospital focus on the pandemic that put a hold on elective, yet still much needed surgical interventions.

Cyclone Amphan hit India and Bangladesh on [Wednesday](#). The storm was the first super cyclone to form in the Bay of Bengal since 1999. Though its winds had weakened by the time it struck, it was still classified as a very severe cyclone. Coronavirus restrictions have been hindering emergency and relief efforts. Covid-19 and social-distancing measures made mass evacuations more difficult, with shelters unable to be used to full capacity¹. (BBC)

WHO has a special focus on [Infodemics Management](#) - Social science evidence in outbreak response in its 121st daily sitrep where the organisation highlights the work of a technical working group of social scientists that was convened to guide and support further development of the COVID-19 Research Roadmap agenda. The aim of this group is to translate evidence from the social sciences into action that can inform response strategies by developing and sharing protocols, tools and technical expertise, for example on key considerations from social science on public use of face masks, immunity passports, homecare, routine immunization programmes, and vaccine implementation. The group achieves its objectives through collaboration and by coordinating action with other initiatives, including with the research arm of the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN³).

[The World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development](#), celebrated every year on 21 May, is an opportunity to celebrate not only the richness of the world's cultures, but also the importance of cultural competency and intercultural dialogue within healthcare systems. It also reminds us that public health efforts against the COVID-19 pandemic require a **whole-of-society approach** and must include vulnerable populations such as refugees and migrants in national plans and strategies⁴.

Despite a rise in new cases, President Rohani said that [the containment phase had begun in the country](#), by emphasizing that ten provinces were in the containment phase. He mentioned that **screening and diagnosis** should be the primary strategy for the health care system⁵.

¹ BBC (21.05.2020): Amphan: Kolkata devastated as cyclone kills scores in India and Bangladesh, retrieved from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-52749935>

² World Health Organisation (20.05.2020): daily situation report Nr. 121, retrieved from: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports>

³ GOARN 2020: GLOBAL OUTBREAK ALERT AND RESPONSE NETWORK Provides international public health resources to control outbreaks and public health emergencies across the globe <https://extranet.who.int/goarn/>

⁴ World Health Organisation (20.05.2020): Embracing cultural diversity unlocks key resources for more inclusive health systems, retrieved from: <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-determinants/migration-and-health/news/news/2020/5/embracing-cultural-diversity-unlocks-key-resources-for-more-inclusive-health-systems>

⁵ International News Agency (23.05.2020): COVID-19 containment phase has begun/ Holy shrines to be reopened after Eid al-Fitr, retrieved from: https://iranpress.com/iran-i147586-covid_19_containment_phase_has_began_holy_shrines_to_be_reopened_after_eid_al_fitr



The [holy shrines, museums, and businesses](#) are to be reopened after Eid-al-Fitr. Moreover, all the employees working for governmental institutes and administration should back to work with the shortened working hours until further notice⁶.

A campaign for "[Destigmatizing Corona](#)" has been initiated by the number of Iranian experts from different fields of expertise, including medicine, social science, and psychology. The primary mission of the campaign is to destigmatize COVID-19 disease through talking about what the Corona stigma is and to be the voice of those whom the corona has isolated and made them isolated⁷.

Health

Epidemiology: Case numbers globally have reached 5 204 508 cases (101 502 in the last 24 hours) and 337 687 deaths (4 286 in the last 24 hours) according to WHO on May 24th⁸. The organisation has a straight forward explanation as to why figures vary widely between different reporting agents:

Caution must be taken when interpreting all data presented. Differences are to be expected between information products published by WHO, national public health authorities, and other sources using different inclusion criteria and different data cut-off times. While steps are taken to ensure accuracy and reliability, all data are subject to continuous verification and change. Case detection, definitions, testing strategies, reporting practice, and lag times differ between countries/territories/areas. These factors, amongst others, influence the counts presented, with variable underestimation of true case and death counts, and variable delays to reflecting these data at global level.

The latest media briefing at [WHO](#) this week highlights that South America and within it Brazil have now become the "new" hotspot⁹.

Iranian epidemiologists observed that the common symptoms of the disease have changed from [respiratory to gastrointestinal](#), which is rarely accompanied by a fever that might lead to a delay in diagnosis and further spread of the virus¹⁰.

The COVID-19 pandemic at the end of this week reached a milestone in Africa, with more than 100 000 confirmed cases. The virus has now spread to every country in the continent since the first case was confirmed in the region 14 weeks [ago](#). Cases continue to rise in Africa and while overall it took 52 days to reach the first 10,000 cases, it took only 11 days to move from 30 000 to 50 000 cases¹¹.

⁶ The Strait Times (23.05.2020): Coronavirus: Iran to reopen religious, cultural sites, Middle East News & Top Stories, retrieved from: <https://www.straitstimes.com/world/middle-east/coronavirus-iran-to-reopen-religious-cultural-sites>

⁷ PAC; New Campaign aims to destigmatizing corona (14.05.2020), (in Farsi) retrieved from: <https://www.magiran.com/article/4042https://www.magiran.com/article/4042936936>

⁸ World Health Organisation (24.05.2020): Daily Situation Report Nr. 125, retrieved from: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports>

⁹ World Health Organisation (22.05.2020): WHO officials say South America a 'new epicenter' of coronavirus pandemic retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=thPbj9hrlZs>

¹⁰ Radio Farda (19.05.2020): Experts In Iran Say Coronavirus Symptoms Changing From Respiratory To Gastrointestinal, retrieved from: <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/iran-experts-say-coronavirus-symptoms-changing-from-respiratory-to-gastrointestinal-30620493.html>

¹¹ WHO Regional Office for Africa (22.05.2020): Africa COVID-19 cases top 100 000, retrieved from: <https://www.afro.who.int/news/africa-covid-19-cases-top-100-000>



Treatment: the [Lancet](#) reports that chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine does not only not help treating patients but in fact increases mortality among COVID patients¹². [WHO](#), in above mentioned briefing, urges that the widespread use of both drugs continue to be not recommended until trials are concluded¹³.

Political, Economic, Social, Cultural Effects

The [Lancet](#) published an article on the impact of social determinants of health, including **social inequality, poverty, and the physical environment** that impact COVID-19 morbidity and mortality. By overviewing numbers of studies carried out in different countries, the article suggests that social determinants of health must be included as part of pandemic research agenda, public health goals, and policy implementation.

The International Labor Organisation reports in its [third edition](#) of the ILO monitor “COVID-19 and the world of work” that Among the most vulnerable in the labour market, almost 1.6 billion **informal economy workers** are significantly impacted by lockdown measures and/or working in the hardest-hit sectors.

Reports are mounting on the **disproportionate affect** the “we are all in the same boat” pandemic has. Trying to get to the source of some of these reports I looked at the UN office of the high commissioner for human rights where the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Philip Alston, [states](#) that “*While some States have taken important initiatives such as direct cash payments, suspension of evictions and coverage of furloughed employees’ salaries, for the most part support measures have been utterly inadequate and the most vulnerable populations have been neglected. This is cruel, inhumane and self-defeating, since it forces them to continue working in unsafe conditions, putting everyone’s health at risk.*”

In both, the small number of INCREASE health Corona interviews with health workers this week and in verbal exchange with other health professionals the expression of frustration, concern, anger and disbelief towards people not adhering to social distancing, wearing masks in public and other simple measures was at the forefront of all conversations. In a recent, lengthy NYT [article](#) an MD sums it up: “*Seeing photos of people flouting social distancing, Dr. Wei said, “does feel a little bit like an insult to what we went through as a health care system and health care workers. We risked our lives to save as many lives as possible, and people can’t wear a mask — they can’t stay six feet apart.”*”

Cascading risks

A **downstream effect that of major concern** is described in a [New York Times](#): Physicians are increasingly worried that stroke victims, heart patients and those with other ailments may be dying at home rather than seeking help. “*Patients who are sick need to come back to the emergency department,*” said Dr. Stuart G. Kessler¹⁴. And a [recent analysis by the New York City health department](#)

¹² The Lancet (22.05.2020): Hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine with or without a macrolide for treatment of COVID-19: a multinational registry analysis, retrieved from: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)31180-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)31180-6/fulltext)

¹³ World Health Organisation (22.05.2020): WHO officials say South America a 'new epicenter' of coronavirus pandemic retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=thPbj9hrlZs>

¹⁴ Fink S., for The New York Times (20.05.2020): *Hospitals Move Into Next Phase as New York Passes Viral Peak* Retrieved from: https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/20/nyregion/hospitals-coronavirus-cases-decline.html?campaign_id=154&emc=edit_cb_20200520&instance_id=18653&nl=coronavirus-briefing®i_id=130358435&segment_id=28620&te=1&user_id=0298fb3b9b8eff4fbf3c83b3760090a



found that from mid-March to early May, over 24,000 more deaths than normal occurred, with nearly a quarter involving people not believed to be infected by the virus¹⁵. Many may have been caused by “delays in seeking or obtaining lifesaving care,” the study’s authors wrote.

Other sources on the same phenomenon include the [New England Journal of Medicine](#)¹⁶ and [Kaiser Health News](#)¹⁷.

Johns Hopkins continue to describe a variety of second and third-order effects of the COVID-19 pandemic with focus on impacts on health beyond COVID-19 cases and deaths. They have noted previously that emergency department volume has decreased since the onset of the US epidemic and implementation of community mitigation measures¹⁸. A substantial portion of this decrease is due to fewer trauma patients, which is believed to be, in part, a result of fewer cars on the roads and [fewer automobile collisions](#)¹⁹. The sharp decline in trauma patients has led to an associated decline in available organs for transplants. We also noted previously that EDs are reporting decreases in the number of stroke and heart attack patients as well, another major source of organ donations. Additionally, donor patients are often kept on ventilators and other life support to keep the organs viable until a recipient can be identified and the transplant surgery scheduled, but there is concern in some areas that these ventilators could be needed for COVID-19 patients. Overall, transplant surgeries in the United States reportedly decreased by more than 50% compared to this time last year²⁰.

Interruptions [Routine immunization](#) continue to be of great concern. At least 80 million children under one at risk of diseases such as diphtheria, measles and polio as COVID-19 disrupts routine vaccination efforts²¹. The 3 agencies call for concerted efforts to safely deliver routine immunization and proceed with vaccination campaigns against deadly vaccine-preventable diseases. Since March 2020, routine childhood immunization services have been disrupted on a global scale that may be unprecedented since the inception of expanded programs on immunization (EPI) in the 1970s. More than half (53%) of the 129 countries where data were available reported moderate-to-severe disruptions, or a total suspension of vaccination services during March-April 2020²².

The cost of inaction - COVID-19-related [service disruptions](#) could cause hundreds of thousands of extra deaths from HIV. A modelling group convened by the World Health Organization and UNAIDS has estimated that if efforts are not made to mitigate and overcome interruptions in health services and supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic, a six-month disruption of antiretroviral therapy could lead to more than 500 000 extra deaths from AIDS-related illnesses, including from tuberculosis, in sub-

¹⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (15.05.2020): Preliminary Estimate of Excess Mortality During the COVID-19 Outbreak — New York City, March 11–May 2, 2020, retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6919e5.htm>

¹⁶ NEJM (14.05.2020): Where Are All the Patients? Addressing Covid-19 Fear to Encourage Sick Patients to Seek Emergency Care retrieved from: <https://catalyst.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/CAT.20.0193>

¹⁷ Stone W., Yu E., (09.05.2020):Eerie Emptiness Of ERs Worries Doctors As Heart Attack And Stroke Patients Delay Care. <https://khn.org/news/eerie-emptiness-of-er-worries-doctors-as-heart-attack-and-stroke-patients-delay-care/>

¹⁸ Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security (21.05.2020): COVID 19 Update retrieved from: <https://myemail.constantcontact.com/COVID-19-Updates---May-21.html?soid=1107826135286&aid=funyH6kb148>

¹⁹ Dembosky A. for NPR (20.05.2020): Organ Transplants Down As Stay-At-Home Rules Reduce Fatal Traffic Collisions, retrieved from: <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/05/20/858712314/organ-transplants-down-as-stay-at-home-rules-reduce-fatal-traffic-collisions?t=1592463780725>

²⁰ Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security (21.05.2020): COVID 19 Update retrieved from: <https://myemail.constantcontact.com/COVID-19-Updates---May-21.html?soid=1107826135286&aid=funyH6kb148>

²¹ GAVI, UNICEF, World Health Organisation (22.05.2020): At least 80 million children under one at risk of diseases such as diphtheria, measles and polio as COVID-19 disrupts routine vaccination efforts, warn Gavi, WHO and UNICEF retrieved from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/22-05-2020-at-least-80-million-children-under-one-at-risk-of-diseases-such-as-diphtheria-measles-and-polio-as-covid-19-disrupts-routine-vaccination-efforts-warn-gavi-who-and-unicef>

²² Ibid.



Saharan Africa in 2020–2021. The research highlights the need for urgent efforts to ensure the continuity of HIV prevention and treatment services in order to avert excess HIV-related deaths and to prevent increases in HIV incidence during the COVID-19 pandemic²³.

Risk Communication

More and more countries are **easing restrictions** in an attempt to return back to "normal." **Iran** is not an exception as the government moves forward on "reopening." Through official communication channels like national TV, **Iranian officials** keep asking people to follow social distancing, avoid unnecessary travel and hygiene protocols.²⁴ While officials say that the country was in the containment phase, the spike in numbers raises concerns about the new wave of the outbreak, with the average [2 000 new daily cases in the last 7 days](#).²⁵ Since two months ago, provincial and local authorities have not been allowed to release data related to new daily cases and death in their **provinces**, and most of the news coming from provinces are based on unofficial sources.²⁶ The **crowded streets** and roads also suggest that more people are returning to their "normal" life, which can be a sign that they are not taking social distancing measures seriously anymore.²⁷ The inadequate transparency in risk and crisis communication processes can have negative impacts on **public trust** and thus public behavior and attitude relating to official recommendations for social distancing rules.²⁸

Half of the "Reopen America" tweets spreading conspiracies about the Coronavirus and calling for **lifting the lockdowns** [are bots](#). Researchers at Carnegie Mellon University for Informed Democracy and Social Cybersecurity estimate that between 45 to 60 percent of accounts on Tweeter spreading misinformation are automated accounts known as bots²⁹.

Vulnerabilities

Many corporate sectors are becoming vulnerable as they are plummeting due to business shutdowns, quarantine, and restrictions on social mobility. With no or less revenue for an extended period, voluntary closures or bankruptcies might be followed by more firms. Since the corporate solvency crisis has short-term and long-term negative impacts on the economy, governments take emergency measures to support firms' liquidity with [the three main areas of policies: Tax referral, financial support for debt repayment, and temporary support to wage payment](#). However, country-specific institutional settings

²³ World Health Organisation (11.05.2020): The cost of Inaction: COVID-19-related service disruptions could cause hundreds of thousands of extra deaths from HIV, retrieved from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/11-05-2020-the-cost-of-inaction-covid-19-related-service-disruptions-could-cause-hundreds-of-thousands-of-extra-deaths-from-hiv>

²⁴ Mandatory Hygiene standards for businesses and workplaces(24.05.2020). Retrieved from <https://www.alef.ir/news/3990304047.html>

²⁵ National Committee on COVID-19 Epidemiology and Iranian CDC- Ministry of Health and Medical Education, IR, Iran. (23.05.2020) Situation Report on Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Iran. Retrieved from http://corona.behdasht.gov.ir/files/site1/files/IRAN_COVID19_Factsheet_N.42_-23May_En.pdf

²⁶ Consequences of stopping provincial daily Corona cases public reporting (19.04.2020). (in Farsi). Retrieved from: <http://newspaper.hamshahronline.ir/id/98612/>

²⁷ Pictures: Tehran Crowded Streets (21.05.2020). (in Farsi). Retrieved from: <https://www.mehrnews.com/photo/4930793/>

²⁸ Why people do not trust on official Corona cases reports; an interview with Javad Imam: *the first condition is maximum transparency* (18.03.2020). (in Farsi). Retrieved from: <https://www.magiran.com/article/4025962>

²⁹ Holmes A. for The Insider (22.02.2020): Roughly half the Twitter accounts pushing to 'reopen America' are bots, researchers found retrieved from: <https://www.businessinsider.com/nearly-half-of-reopen-america-twitter-accounts-are-bots-report-2020-5?r=DE&IR=T>



can shape the efficiency of the policies and interventions, and their relative ability in the recovery may be related to whether the economies will change structurally out of COVID-19 pandemic³⁰.

The German federal government continues [to support parents who should care for their children](#) at home due to the pandemic and thus are not able to work. They are entitled to 10 weeks of continued payments with the custody. The single parents are entitled to 20 weeks of the continued payment. The entitlement is subject to the conditions that children who are under 12 years old, who are disabled or help dependent, who are looked after by their parents as there are not any other care options³¹.

³⁰ Demmou L., Franco G, Calligaris S., Dlugosch D. (23.05 2020):Corporate sector vulnerabilities during the COVID-19 outbreak: Assessment and policy responses Retrieved from: <https://voxeu.org/article/corporate-sector-vulnerabilities-during-covid-19-outbrea>

³¹ Deutschland.de ():The Federal Government informs about the Corona crisisretrieved from: <https://www.deutschland.de/en/news/german-federal-government-informs-about-the-corona-crisis>



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c/o Katastrophenforschungsstelle
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12165 Berlin