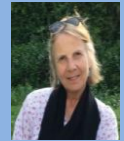




Sohail Mahmood
Foreign Secretary of Pakistan

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan, Pakistan has mounted a two-pronged national “war” effort against covid-19. At a time of unprecedented challenge to humanity, the aim is to safeguard both lives and livelihoods as much as humanly possible. On one hand, Pakistan is combating the virus through aggressive awareness campaigns, selective and smart lockdowns, vigorous testing, and contact tracing and quarantine. On the other hand, social and economic impact of the pandemic is being mitigated through \$ 8 billion relief package, encompassing comprehensive social safety nets in the form of Ehsas programme, taxation and monetary policy incentives to SMEs, and stimulus to strategic industries such as construction. The country's ability to conduct mass testing, and health care system's capacity to look after critically ill is being rapidly expanded.

On the international plane, Prime Minister Imran Khan has called for a ‘Global Initiative on Debt Relief’, to create fiscal space for developing countries to cope with the crisis. Through the Pakistan Missions abroad, all possible assistance is being extended to our stranded citizens in helping them get back. The Missions are also in close contact with Pakistani diaspora. With host governments and our community, the Missions are working to mobilise support, resources and equipment pivotal for our fight against Coronavirus. As in the past, through unity, faith and discipline, we will Insha Allah overcome this challenge as well.



Victoria Schofield
Author and South Asia Expert, London

A month or two ago no one of this generation had any concept of how a worldwide epidemic or 'pandemic' would affect our lives. Now with the rapid spread of corona virus from country to country, its significance has become horribly familiar, illustrated by daily statistics of those who have 'sadly died' and a whole list of do's and don'ts constricting our activities. Being in the grip of a pandemic has also spawned a range of previously unheard of activities: being in lockdown, social distancing, self-isolation. But it also means resilience, compassion, and a realisation that, despite the challenges we are individually and collectively facing, it could be so much worse. Contagious as the virus is, there could be yet more deaths, it could spread even more rapidly. Moreover, in the 21st century we have the advantage of an extraordinary means of communication which, less than half a century ago did not exist. And so we have to remind ourselves that we are fortunate this is happening in 2020; what if the pandemic had occurred in an age when there was no internet and we were unable, as we are now, to remain in touch with family and friends although physically isolated from them? Strange as it may seem, I believe, amidst the shock of having to adopt a completely new lifestyle and the bereavement some inevitably will face, we must be thankful - thankful also that we do have committed medical staff, who are prepared to put their lives on the line to help others, that those involved in essential work are prepared to go out and do their jobs, and equally that those, who can work from home, are doing so, thereby minimising the risk for others. Finally, as Her Majesty the Queen said in her recent broadcast. 'We should take comfort that while we may have still more to endure, better days will return.'



Tooba Khurshid Gardezi,
Shanghai Jiao Tong University

The COVID-19 may upend international law foundations particularly for the people in conflict zones. Riding through the storm, the pandemic unlocked formidable executive powers, where, extensive emergency legislations are being rushed through local houses, letting governments rule by decree or threatening the human rights. As they offer shortcuts, states endorse such legislations, ergo they persist and become permanent. Whether pandemic ends with vaccine in few months or lingers longer, states must not cloak themselves on justifying their departures from fundamental values (due diligence obligations) to ordinary law-making procedures in times of emergency crisis. As time goes on, we will see such instances multiply if not recorded and investigated.