

Correspondence

Global health governance and disaster recovery for rebel returnees during COVID-19

ABSTRACT

This article highlights the need for governing some gradual ruptures from the past to achieve a sense of new normalcy in public health. The rebel returnees during the pandemic form a case of a vulnerable group who triply experience disasters: from the pandemic and natural disasters to terrorism. Global health governance carries on the management of past problems attaining their maturation and faces new ones for disaster recovery.

Keywords COVID-19, disaster recovery, global health governance, rebel returnees

“We have journeyed to a place from which it looks unlikely that we can return, at least not without some kind of serious rupture from the past—social, political, economic and ideological,” says a recent editorial of this journal.¹ This generic diagnosis of our current constellation of events speaks of the wide-ranging effects of the pandemic. Serious ruptures at this point are difficult interventions unless small-scale ones create some semblance of ‘return.’ That being said, there are medically prescribed considerable points that will lead to a comprehensive convalescence.² Important recovery points range from carefully distinguishing cases to reduce psychological impact, identifying risk factors and levels, structuring leadership schemes, to jumpstarting—albeit gradually—the restoration efforts so that poor health outcomes can be abated and medical responses can be maximized. This correspondence emphasizes that public health and disaster recovery interventions must be triply felt by rebel returnees during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, which warrants them parity of access to the restoration efforts as well.

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic is a disaster that has many faces. That is to say, it is one thing to suffer economic losses and medical deaths from the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) infection, income inequalities,³ or lack of hospital resilience⁴ during the crisis. It is another to have these while dealing with natural disasters⁵ under Anthropocene lenses⁶ where there is

insufficiency of space and medical response. Still, it is triply disastrous for those who are under domestic or international terrorism.⁷ With all the attention drawn to health and economic disaster recovery, rebel returnees form a vulnerable group that should be treated no less in consideration.

War as a disaster should be avoided. Even the metaphors of waging war against the virus must also not be used liberally.⁸ The Yemeni Civil War, South and West Darfur of Sudan, Israel-Palestine attacks illustrate the grim means and consequences of battlefields, especially during a pandemic. As such, those who forego arms to achieve peace should be recognized for their full rights when they are reinstated to mainstream society. Recovery can mean putting extra effort into the reparations so that transitions can be manageable. The Philippines, for instance, has approved amnesty programs⁹ that must encourage rebels not to resort to recidivism. Reports gathered from key informants doing social work and human rights interventions reveal as well some developments of former rebels returning.¹⁰

International disputes should also be gradually resolved (recall Qatar’s recent deal with Egypt and other Gulf countries or Turkey and Greece’s talks) to improve situations during the pandemic disaster and focus more on public health cooperation and governance. If this pandemic has become triply disastrous in contested areas, global health governance should ensure that rebel returnees be given the opportunity of (1) parity in terms of medical treatments such as

vaccination, (2) psychological interventions, (3) sustainable local resiliency preparedness kits in naturally hazardous places and (4) possible safe places to reside in after returning from the mountains and war-torn territories. This is aside from cash aid distributions that help in giving all-inclusive package assistance.

To begin the recovery process, global health governance must consider safety and feasibility as important elements. The return of rebels is a gradual ‘rupture’ to send the message that states must welcome the implementation of integral support to the population it serves and protects. Normalcy from the past led to the pandemic but issues that are gradually resolved in a maturation standpoint during the pandemic push the situation to focus on newer normal predicaments.

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