HOW TO TALK ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS DURING COVID-19

By Dr. Israel Butler, Head of advocacy, Civil Liberties Union for Europe
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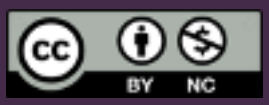

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SUMMARY

As often as possible, proactively communicate to the public the many ways in which we can use human rights as tools to navigate through the pandemic.

Explain the meaning and function of different rights and how these put into practice shared values that we find important. We can use human rights like media freedom, freedom of association and the right to elect parliamentarians to make sure governments take decisions that provide the right support and care to everyone. We can use rights to social security and health care to make sure everyone gets the support and care they need.

Avoid talking about human rights as if they are an obstacle to, clash with, or are incompatible with public health.

When we answer a government claim that rights need limiting to protect public health by directly contradicting it, or by concentrating on proportionality arguments, we are helping to cement a negative and unhelpful narrative about human rights. Faced with a binary choice between protecting rights and protecting health, most people will choose health. What's more, if the frame that human rights are a barrier to health becomes embedded, this is likely to make more people support restrictions on human rights in the long run.

When calling out governments who are probably acting in good faith but may be overstepping the mark follow these four steps.

1. Explain the freedoms at issue in terms that people will recognise in every-day situations.

2. Acknowledge we can put them on hold exceptionally, because we are looking out for each other.

3. Explain the potential problem of government overreach, using examples.

4. Explain how rights, such as access to independent courts, are a solution for regaining those freedoms.

When dealing with governments that seem to be acting in bad faith and making a power grab, don't focus on directly contesting their false narrative that they are protecting public health.

Direct contradiction will reinforce the idea that rights threaten health. Focus on the real story: a government is continuing to remove the rights that allow citizens to make sure the state is acting in their best interests to protect their health. If applicable, explain how the government is failing to take the necessary steps to protect public health. If the

government is scapegoating others or deflecting responsibility, explain how it is trying to divide the public to distract from its failings. Coronavirus should not be the focus of your narrative.

When speaking about at-risk groups, begin from a broader perspective that focuses on 'we' and 'us' as a broader group.

Start by identifying the values that bind us together, as caring people, rather than starting with the at-risk group. This broader group includes at-risk groups as part of the 'we', rather than portraying 'them' as others. Then explain how these values are not being fulfilled in relation to particular groups in society. Explain how the system the government has created puts them at greater risk and how we can decide to create something better instead.

1. INTRODUCTION

Many governments and media outlets are framing human rights as an obstacle to public health. And many of us who work in the human rights sector end up reinforcing this narrative in our communications, without realising the damage this does. The more often this frame is repeated in the media, by politicians and in our own communications, even if we are arguing against it, the more likely people are to believe that human rights are something that stand in the way of our safety and well-being. Ultimately, this will make it more likely that an increasing proportion of the public will come to regard human rights as unaffordable luxuries or a liability. People will become more likely to accept restrictions on their rights in the name of public health, and less likely to demand the removal of limitations that go too far in scope or that last too long.

But it is possible to promote an alternative way of thinking about human rights: as tools we can use to make sure our governments put the health and wellbeing of everyone in society at the forefront of decision-making. If we can encourage this way of framing human rights it is more likely to lead people to appreciate the importance and usefulness of their rights in creating the lives they want to live and the communities they want to live in. People who come to think of human rights in this way are more likely to want to guard their rights from interference and to actively use them to shape a brighter future.

a) Who is this guide for?

This guide is intended for anyone working in the human rights sector who communicates about their work to policymakers or the public. The guide offers readers advice about how to apply a method of communicating known as values-based framing. Values-based framing is shown to improve public understanding of and create support for progressive causes such as human rights. The guide offers suggestions on how to frame human rights when speaking about measures that authorities are taking (or failing to take) to halt the spread and minimise the impact of coronavirus. The advice in this guide is based on the results of decades of academic research from the cognitive sciences and case studies recorded by communications experts. We have created the example narratives and frames contained here by applying the lessons learnt from this research and its practical application.

b) Who does this guide help me speak to?

Broadly speaking, public opinion on human rights issues can be divided into three. Those firmly in favour of human

rights (your base of progressives), those firmly against human rights (authoritarians) and those in the middle who are moveable, swayable or persuadable. This latter group (which might split into further subgroups) will hold conflicting views about human rights. And research to date suggests the middle is usually the biggest group in society. Depending on what kinds of frames or narratives the middle receives and which types of underlying values these frames trigger, they can become more in favour of or more sceptical of human rights.

This guide shows readers how to use values-based framing to communicate with the moveable middle, while also activating your base, in a way that should create support for human rights. Reaching the middle is important. Authoritarian political movements and media outlets already use values-based framing to reach and sway this section of the population to oppose progressive causes like human rights. If we don't communicate with this audience, we will increasingly lose public opinion on human rights issues. You should not consider authoritarians as part of your audience. You won't be able to sway them, and you don't need to. The only reason to engage with them is as a chance to speak to the moveable middle who might be listening in.

c) What are frames, narratives and values?

Whenever we communicate, we use frames and narratives. This guide uses these terms interchangeably. A frame is a mental shortcut. We rely heavily on these mental shortcuts for most of the thinking we do. If I say the word *supermarket*, you probably have an image in your head that includes aisles, food items grouped by categories, a tiled floor, people stacking shelves and tills where you pay. Frames include some things and exclude others. Your frame of a supermarket probably doesn't include the idea of a bronze sculpture by the bread counter, or an oil painting hanging on the walls. We develop our frames about things according to the influences around us, especially from the way that politicians and the media describe things.

Frames and narratives don't just transport practical information. They also convey values. In this context, values refer to deeply held guiding principles that operate mostly at subconscious level. Depending on which values we prioritise, we tend to hold more progressive or authoritarian attitudes, or a mix of both. And the language we use activates and reinforces certain values.

For example, some politicians have tried to embed in people's minds a frame of civil society organisations as foreign paid political activists trying to undermine security and national culture. This is a frame that activates values associated with security (the safety of the nation) conformity (breaking the rule of being politically neutral) and tradition (national culture). It also points to civil society as the source of these threats.

Frames that activate values around security (which includes concern for one's health), conformity to the rules, upholding tradition, as well as economic position and social status or influence over others (either of one's social group or one's country compared to other countries) are likely to make people think in more selfish terms, and to endorse more authoritarian attitudes, including support for restricting human rights.

As activists we might try to reframe civil society organisations by talking about rights and democracy groups as bridges between the people and politicians that help bring democracy to life and create a society that works for everyone. This is a frame that activates values associated with self-direction (taking part in activism or having a say in your own future), as well as universalism and benevolence (creating an equitable society, inclusive of all members and working for the good of everyone). Frames that activate values like social justice, solidarity, individual freedom, creativity, friendship, love or compassion and care for others are likely to make people think more about helping the broader community and endorse more progressive attitudes, including support for human rights.

d) A word of caution

Ultimately, it's only possible to say how effective a particular narrative is at moving public attitudes in a given national setting by testing it. The example narratives offered in this guide have not been tested. But the research that the guide is based on does allow us to pick out narratives that are likely to be effective. It also allows us to identify those narratives that are likely to be ineffective or counterproductive. You should also keep in mind that language is deeply entwined with culture and history. A term in one language will often have different connotations in another language and produce a different effect. You should take this into account when using or developing narratives.

e) Why are we publishing this guide?

Liberties is a non-profit organisation promoting civil liberties inside the European Union. We are built on a network of civil liberties organisations from across the EU. We use advocacy, litigation, public education and public mobilisation to work towards our goals.

Recent years have seen a rise in support for political movements with authoritarian agendas. In part, this is due to the skill with which these movements engage in fear-based communications. However, our sector has difficulty communicating effectively so as to promote support for human rights issues. Liberties considers it to be of strategic importance to boost the communications capacity of the human rights sector. This guide, along with practical training we provide on values-based framing and strategic communications, is intended as a capacity building tool.

2. WE HAVE A PROBLEM WITH THE DOMINANT NARRATIVE ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS AND CORONAVIRUS

Some governments and media outlets place human rights and public health in opposition to each other. The basic narrative is that it's not possible to protect public health without restricting human rights. Put otherwise, human rights and health are presented as two incompatible ideas, and rights are portrayed as a potential threat to health.

It is well-established that if people are fearful about their security (including their personal health), they are more likely to favour measures that restrict individual freedoms. In other words, if people are made to think about public health and human rights as a binary choice, they will tend towards choosing health. And in the long-run, if a frame that portrays human rights as a threat to health becomes the dominant way of thinking, people will become more likely to endorse restrictions on human rights.

Organisations working in the human rights sector have tended to respond to the government narrative head-on, in a way that reinforces the idea that human rights and public health are incompatible. Typical arguments include:

- governments do not need to limit human rights (e.g. we can tackle this crisis while still protecting human rights);
- living with restricted rights is worse than living under the threat of coronavirus (e.g. what's the point in being healthy if we end up living in an authoritarian state?);
- it's in times of crisis that we need human rights most (e.g. it's when governments impose restrictions on human rights that we need to make sure we stand up for them);
- public health measures mustn't discriminate against particular groups (e.g. governments aren't doing enough to protect vulnerable groups).

There's nothing wrong with the sentiment behind these arguments. But the wording they use reinforces the framing that public health and human rights oppose each other and that human rights are a potential threat to public health.

This is similar to what happened during the 'war on terror' when the government narrative was that human rights prevent us from guaranteeing security. This was a narrative that some of us in the human rights sector ended up reinforcing. We did so by trying to engage directly with this false dichotomy, arguing that steps to protect security should not disproportionately limit human rights. In doing so we cemented a narrative about human rights that triggered security values, making people more likely to favour restrictions on human rights.

Now we face a similar situation. But our sector can instead choose to promote our own positive narrative about human rights, rather than repeating and arguing from inside the negative framing we want to challenge.

3. HOW SHOULD WE BE TALKING ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS?

If people are to appreciate and support human rights, they need to understand how human rights help them to do, experience, and share things they find important. Apart from people working in the sector and those actively supporting human rights (our base), most people (the moveable middle) don't really understand much about them. Put otherwise, most people don't have an accurate 'frame' of what human rights as a whole, or specific rights actually mean or do. That makes it easier for authoritarian governments and media outlets to create a negative frame for human rights as something that gets in the way of health care.

This means that one of the main things we need to do when we speak about human rights is explain what they do and how we can use them to build the lives we want to live and the communities we want to live in. We need to create positive frames about human rights in people's minds. And these frames should appeal to the values that underpin support for human rights in the mind, noted above, such as individual freedom, creativity, friendship and love, solidarity, showing care and compassion towards others. In this section we set out some examples of narratives you might use in different scenarios.

a) Whenever possible, speak about human rights as tools we can use to navigate through the pandemic.

In general, communications from the human rights sector focus on reacting to violations and injustices. We spend most of our time talking about what we are against, rather than what we are for. If we want people understand and support human rights, we have to spend more time talking about how we can use them to create the kind of society we want. In the current context, this is about how we use rights to make sure our governments make the right decisions and investments to navigate through the coronavirus pandemic.

It's important for our sector to place more emphasis on, and repeat, this positive narrative about human rights. If people realise that rights are important to them, in the short-term it makes it more difficult for governments to overreach their powers. That's because politicians will come to anticipate more public push-back. In the long-term it creates more grass-roots support for human rights and makes it harder for certain politicians and media outlets to successfully frame human rights negatively. Of course, it's still important to talk about the problems and injustices. We deal with this in sections b) and c).

Here are four examples of how you could explain particular rights in a way that makes them relevant and important for people in the context of navigating coronavirus. There are other rights you could explain in a similar way, for example, the right to vote for representatives in parliament, who make sure governments are exercising their powers in the public interest.

Freedom and independence of the media

We all want to be sure that our leaders are doing everything in their power to protect us. We want our governments to use our public resources for the right things. Whether that's investing enough in protective equipment for doctors and nurses or giving financial help to people who've lost their jobs so that they can afford to pay for their homes and buy supplies. It's not for us to say what the best strategy is to take against the virus. But we can be sure that politicians are much more likely to do what is best for the public if they know that voters are watching them. That's why there's a human right to a free and independent media. We rely on journalists to ask the right questions, point out where mistakes have been made or spread the word where particular policies have been effective. In countries where the public broadcaster is under government control or influence, or where private media companies are owned by oligarchs who are cosy with politicians, the public can't rely on journalists to keep the government on its toes.

Freedom of association

All of us hope that our politicians listen to our concerns, especially at this time when many people are worried and confused. It's not enough to tell our representatives what we think once every four or five years in an election. We need to talk to them between elections while they're in power and taking decisions. But who pays attention to a few isolated voices? That's why we have the right to create and work through associations. This allows concerned citizens to work together and get organised, so that members of the public can join their voices and make themselves heard. Whether that's associations of teachers looking out for their members and children in our schools, or organisations making sure at-risk groups like older people are taken care of. Associations keep democracy healthy by building a bridge between the public and politicians. Our governments are more likely to solve the problems that the public is worried about, if we citizens can tell them what's on our minds. In countries where governments make it hard for associations to exist, the public can't rely on activists to make politicians listen to their concerns.

Right to health

We are all better off when we are healthy. Good health gives us freedom. We can live for longer and be in better shape to enjoy time with our loved ones and provide for our families. That's why there is a human right to health care. Human rights law doesn't dictate to governments how much they should spend on health care. But it does require governments to put the maximum of their available resources into their health services.

The right to health care also says that governments can't go backwards. That is, governments should be constantly improving their health systems and not let standards drop over time. But that is exactly what has happened in parts of Europe in recent years, such as the UK, France and Spain. In these countries, governments have been cutting the amount they spend on their health systems.

A pandemic would be a strain for any health service because of the pressure of large numbers of people getting ill at the same time. But if governments have already inflicted cuts on hospitals, nurses and doctors, it is obviously going to make it harder for them to cope. Governments that have invested properly in their health systems, as human rights law requires, will be better prepared.

Right to social security

Businesses are firing employees or asking them to go on unpaid leave. That makes it hard to make ends meet, including keeping a roof over your head. All of us want to know that during difficult times when we fall ill or lose our jobs, we will be able to count on somewhere to live and a basic standard of living. That's one of the reasons everyone pays taxes and social security contributions. And that's why there is a human right to social security. Governments are obliged to create social security systems that will give everyone a minimum essential standard of living until difficult times pass. That includes, for example, housing, food, health care and other basics. A proper social security system ensures that people who lose their jobs don't have to go hungry or lose their homes during the pandemic.

b) When you need to highlight that governments are restricting our freedoms, follow these four steps.

One of our core tasks is to call out governments that are interfering with our rights. Use the approach outlined here for restrictions that seem to be taken in relatively good faith. That is, where it looks like a government is genuinely trying to protect public health and not permanently erode our freedoms, but there are concerns about the degree of restrictions and whether they will stop as soon as they need to.

Explanation is key. If you don't explain why our rights are important and what they do, what the problems are and why they exist and how the solutions will help, people will fill in the gaps with their own (often limited or ill-informed) assumptions.

i. Explain the freedoms you're talking about.

It's not enough just to say our 'privacy' or 'freedom of assembly' is being limited. Most people outside the human rights world won't understand what is behind these terms. By explaining the values that rights put into action, people can appreciate the worth of what they are being asked to put on pause. Explain what people use these freedoms for and how that connects to their daily lives and the things they find important. Here are some examples.

The right to protection of personal data

Everyone wants to be free to read and discuss the news, ideas and personal stories and go from place to place knowing that we are not being watched by others. That's why we have the right to data protection. Because it gives us the liberty to think, talk, share ideas and live our lives free from judgment by others.

Freedom of the media

Every day politicians make decisions that affect our lives. From decisions that affect where you can park your car, to how much you have to pay for electricity. Citizens need to keep track of what's going on. So that they know how to vote in an election, or whether to complain to their representatives while they are in power. But to be well informed, we need the media to be free and independent from politicians and powerful businesses. Otherwise we will only hear the version of events that these people want us to hear. That's why we have a right to freedom of the media.

Freedom of association

We like to connect with others. We live in families, and in communities and like to do things together. When we work together, we can

achieve bigger and better things than if we work alone. This is why we have the right to create associations. We use associations to share our love of hobbies and sports with like-minded people. Or to organise volunteers to take care of older people or clean public spaces. Many of us also use associations as a way of uniting our voices so that we can speak loudly enough to be heard by our representatives. That could be associations of nurses or teachers. Or associations that organise with citizens to talk to our representatives about protecting our basic freedoms or making sure our water and air is clean and healthy.

The right to peaceful assembly

Democracy isn't just about picking representatives every five years. We have to be able to talk to politicians in between elections when they are actually taking decisions that affect us. This is why we have the right to peaceful assembly. So we can join our voices with other concerned citizens and gather together in public spaces, like parks or town squares. This is one of the ways that the public can make our representatives pay attention to what we think is important.

Free movement

We're social people. We like to travel, move around, go to concerts, sports events, church or work. We all find it important to meet and spend time with family and close friends we love and care for. And that's why we have a human right to free movement.

ii. Recognise that sometimes we do need to put some of our freedoms on hold temporarily.

And that this is because we are caring people and look out for each other. So, we do our best to be responsible members of our community. For example:

If we use these freedoms to meet in large groups during a time when there's a dangerous virus, we can end up helping it spread. And we all want to do what is right for each other.

or

Many governments want to take personal information and use it to keep track of who is infected, where they've been, and whether people are staying home. This could be OK if the information was only used to fight coronavirus, if it is deleted after a short time, and if it stops being collected after the pandemic stops. That would keep the invasion of our

personal lives to a minimum and it could help to save people.

iii. Highlight the potential problem: a restriction might go too far or stay in place for too long.

Give an example of what this would look like now or where this kind of thing has happened before, e.g. the so-called war on terror.

Sometimes, governments go too far in limiting our freedoms and keep those restrictions in place for longer than they need to. We saw this after terrorist attacks in Europe a few years ago. Many governments gave security forces powers to spy on us, ban protests and search and arrest people without evidence. A lot of these limits on our freedoms are still in place. And in the end, none of these powers were actually any good at helping to prevent or punish terrorism.

Today, some governments in the EU are asking phone companies to hand over all the information they have about us without any limits. We don't know how long they will keep this information, what they will use it for in future, and if they will ever stop collecting it.

Many governments, such as the British, Italian and French, have also passed laws that allow the police to lock people up if they gather in public or are suspected of carrying the virus. In the UK these powers will stay in place for two years. That is probably a lot longer than they are actually needed. In Italy and France these powers are active only for weeks or months.

iv. Finish off by explaining rights again, but this time as the solution.

Think about rights we can use to make sure that governments only take what they really need and for as long as they need to combat the spread of the virus. Break down how those rights do this. As part of your explanation, don't be afraid to use metaphors and similes. These can help to make someone understand an unfamiliar concept quickly. But be careful to think about whether your metaphor might have unintended consequences.

Rule of law

Imagine a new law that allowed the police to take your car, so they can deliver life-saving medicines. You'd probably be happy to help. But wouldn't you want a guarantee you'd get your car back as soon as possible? And a guarantee that the police can't use your car for something else, like going on a trip to the seaside? You'd also probably want to know that there is an independent judge you can turn to, to make sure of these things. It's the same for our

liberties, like privacy or our ability to move around or meet other people.

This is why we have a human right to independent courts. It's their job to check up on governments when they restrict our freedoms. Judges make sure our leaders don't put any more of our freedoms on hold than they really need to. They also make sure that we get our liberties back as soon as governments don't need them anymore. And the same is true about our representatives in parliament. We have a human right to choose parliamentarians by voting in elections. And it is their job to make sure that ministers don't put too many freedoms on hold or for too long.

It's also good if you can end with some kind of call to action, to give your audience a way of showing their support for the bigger picture solution you're putting forward. This can be as small as asking someone to share content. A call to action helps create a sense of shared identity around your issue which in turn helps to build a movement.

c) Dealing with governments that are acting in bad faith: massive power grabs and scapegoating.

If you lump the more extreme situations together with the mainstream cases your arguments probably won't ring true. So deal with bad faith governments separately from good faith governments.

In this situation, the government will probably try to make the issue about restricting rights to protect public health, which is untrue. The best way to respond to this is not by directly contradicting the government's claim. This would mean that you have to repeat the government's rights versus health frame, and repeating a frame reinforces it, even if you're repeating it to disprove it. Myth busting is an example of a technique that human rights organisations often use, which is counter-productive, because it repeats the negative, false frame that we are trying to debunk. So avoid leading with a direct, head-on contradiction of a false frame. Instead, it's best to use a construction elaborated by Prof George Lakoff: the truth sandwich.

The real story here is either about a government grabbing power, removing the rights that would help citizens make sure a government is working in their best interests, and/or the government's failure to take the types of measures that are actually helpful to protect and support the public. So that should be your focus. That doesn't mean you can't talk about coronavirus. Just that you don't make it the focus of your narrative.

Follow these steps:

i. Explain what we expect a government to be doing.

This is a positive vision of what we want our governments to do for our communities. Usually in countries with authoritarian tendencies there are things that the government isn't doing properly or doesn't really care about. What this is exactly might vary from one country to another. It might be a failure to invest in health care or social security or neglect of certain groups like older people, people without housing, people held in detention or migrants held in camps. Here's an example of how that might look:

> When we give politicians permission to govern, we want them to do what's best for all of us. In the coming months our communities will be navigating their way through the coronavirus pandemic. We all want our representatives to use the powers we've loaned them to keep us safe and give everyone the support they need.
>
> Governments should make sure that everyone gets the testing and treatment they need, and that our doctors and nurses get the right equipment and protective gear. This is why we have the right to health care. Governments also need to make sure that anyone who loses their job or falls ill has the right support. So they can afford the basics, like food, medicine and somewhere to live. That's why we have the right to social security.
>
> Our health depends on our neighbours' health. Their health depends on their neighbours' and so on. No matter what colour you are, what you believe in, whether you live in the countryside or the city, whether you're a native or a newcomer. This illness affects all of us and reminds us we are all human.
>
> This means that our government has to make sure everyone gets the care and support they need. Whether that's making sure people who've lost their jobs get financial support, or people without homes have somewhere to shelter. Whether it's making sure newcomers in immigration centres, or people held in prison have proper food, medicine, treatment and enough physical room to prevent the infection spreading. Our health depends on everyone else's health. We can only take care of each other if we take care of everyone.

ii. Explain how the government is not taking the right measures

And, importantly, explain why. Here's an example of how you might do this:

> Our government has not invested public money in hospitals, or doctors and nurses to give them the resources they need. The authorities

aren't using the taxes we have paid towards our own social security to provide us with the support we now need to buy basic things like food and pay the rent if we lose our jobs. The government is not investing in giving care and support to people who are more at risk of dying from the virus, like older people.

This is happening for three reasons. First, many politicians in the government are corrupt. They have wasted taxpayer money by giving it to relatives and friends who own businesses. They do this by paying them millions of Euros to do jobs for the government that actually cost a lot less and then pocketing the difference. This means there isn't enough money to invest in the things we need.

Second, top politicians have also given jobs in government to their friends and relatives, so they can earn a high salary. But these people are often not qualified to do the job and are more worried about getting their pay cheque than doing what's best for all of us. This means that many politicians take bad decisions that don't give us the right support because they lack the skills or aren't interested.

Third, the ruling party has been able to get away with this, because it can hide the truth from the public. That's because the ruling party has taken over the top courts and silenced activists who criticise what politicians are doing. That means that it has been very difficult for judges or rights groups to make sure the government answers to the law or the public when it misuses its powers. The government also controls most of the media, so it can make sure the public only hears what it wants them to. And it has rigged the elections, which means no matter how bad a job they do, it's easier for the current government to stay in power.

Now the government is using the current situation as an excuse to take away more freedoms. For example, by jailing journalists who try to tell the public the truth about what the government is doing. Or by giving the Prime Minister power to make and change laws without needing our elected representatives in parliament to take a vote. This is dangerous, because we rely on independent journalists and on our MPs to make sure our leaders are taking the right decisions for the public. Without these safeguards, the government has little incentive to take decisions that are in our best interests.

iii. What if the government is scapegoating particular groups?

Then you should also explain why this is going on and why it's important for us to unite across our differences. Here's an example of what this might look like:

> Some greedy politicians and powerful business owners think that they can divide us against each other. They try to pit people who live in towns against people in the countryside, natives against newcomers. They try to divide us according to our colour or ethnicity or whether we can afford a home or not. They want to distract us from their failures, by making us blame each other, instead of them. But the virus shows us that we are dependent on each other no matter where we live or what we look like. Anyone who tries to use a health crisis to divide us puts us all in danger.

iv. Then come back to what we all expect of government.

This would be the place to insert an ask if you have one, for example, share the content, sign something, or join a virtual protest. This will vary depending on whether your content is aimed at a domestic or an international audience.

> It's only by uniting across our differences that we can demand the care and support that government should be providing to everyone in society. If you want your politicians to work for all of us and respond to our concerns, then [take x action].

If it is unrealistic to expect any positive change to come from the central government, then try to think of other solutions that people can support. Structural solutions are more important than individual solutions. It's important to include solutions. Otherwise people are more likely to be resigned to the status quo. You could think of things that people can get behind at the level of local government, or other means of organising efforts, like through religious bodies or associations.

d) Talking about at-risk groups

Certain groups in society are more at risk of contracting the virus, such as those in institutional settings like newcomers in detention, prisoners and care workers (a majority of whom are women). Some are more at risk of getting seriously ill or of dying, such as older people and those with existing health problems. And the government's response to the pandemic has secondary effects, meaning certain groups miss out on support that they would normally receive because of diverted resources. For example, persons with disabilities or older people who receive support in their homes from care workers, or those who rely on food banks. Restrictions on freedom of movement also make it more

difficult to escape situations of domestic and gender-based violence.

When talking about at-risk groups, we tend to focus on 'them' - as separate from us. This makes the problems they face, their problem, not ours. And we become less likely to support structural solutions that could eliminate the inequalities that place people in this position of risk. Some people may even think that you're arguing for special or privileged treatment for groups whom they see an undeserving, at least with regard to prisoners or newcomers in detention.

So, it's important to begin from a broader statement of our shared values first, and only then explain how these values aren't currently being fulfilled in relation to certain groups. This allows us to focus on 'we' and 'us', a broader community of caring people that includes those persons who may be at higher risk. That means that anyone in your audience, even if they did not identify with the at-risk group, feels the connection. The 'we' makes us feel part of the same group that is bound together by shared values and experiences, and helps to stimulate empathy and a desire to help others. And it makes us more likely to support the solution, because it's one that makes life better for our group. Here are a couple of examples of how you might do that.

On persons in an institutional setting

This situation shows us that our health depends on everyone else's. We are all connected to each other. To the person in the house next door, in the next town, in the next country and beyond. We can only stop the virus spreading and keep each other safe if we give care and support to everyone, no matter where they are. That includes people who live close to each other in confined spaces. Whether that is care homes for people with disabilities or older people, homeless shelters, prisons, hospitals or camps holding newcomers and people asking for asylum. Being in a confined space creates a bigger risk that the virus can spread. There are many things we can ask government to do to stop this from happening [then explain your solutions].

On persons at risk of domestic or gender-based violence

We think of our homes as somewhere that family members show each other love, understanding, respect and care. Unfortunately, some partners do not behave this way, and are violent towards other adults or children in their home. Many of us are spending most of our time at home with our families at the moment. This creates two problems.

First, if a violent partner is around all the time, it can be difficult to call a helpline. Second, because more people are at home, there are more people forced to spend all day with violent partners.

There are refuges where people can go to escape violent partners. But the current situation means many of these are already full and some people cannot get to safety. To make sure all of us can live in a safe place, the government needs to invest more public money and open more refuges [or other appropriate solution].

4. GENERAL TIPS

a) Basic structure of a frame/ narrative

Effective narratives can be structured in four steps. Maybe you have picked out this structure in the examples above.

i. A 'values statement'

This is where you explain what it is that 'we' find important by appealing to underlying values. These can include things like individual freedom, creativity, solidarity, responsibility towards others, honesty, giving everyone the same chance to do well in life, love or friendship. For our context, the values statement will often explain a particular human right that you want to talk about. But do this in terms that help someone appreciate what that right does and why that's important for them.

ii. The problem

Explain that there's a problem and why it's a problem. In particular: how does this situation or phenomenon stop the values that you said we all share from being put into practice. You have to identify the agency behind the problem as well. Who is doing what to feed into this problem? What decisions are being made, what things are being done or not done that allow the problem to happen. So avoid speaking in the passive voice. Rather than saying 'our personal information is being taken', say 'the government is asking companies to give them our personal information'. By breaking down the different decisions governments make (or allows others to make) that are feeding or creating the problem, you open people up to the idea that the problem isn't inevitable. The problem is happening because someone has created a system that allows it to happen. It means that people become receptive to your solution about how we can take different decisions to produce an outcome that is in line with our values.

If you're responding to a lie, then don't forget to explain why the government, politician or media outlet is lying. For example, are they trying to pit people against each other? deflect blame and responsibilities to others? and why?

iii. The solution

Explain your solution to the problem. This shouldn't be about what individuals can do. We know that already because governments are very good at telling us what we should do individually (wash your hands and stay home) - often so that we don't think about what the government should be doing at a structural level (invest in hospitals). Think more about the structural solutions. You don't need to explain detailed policies when

talking to the public. Just an outline of a big idea is enough. And it's great if you can say how a particular human right offers the solution. Remember that you will need to break down what that right does and how it offers the solution.

iv. Call to action

Try to include some kind of call to action. What is it that your audience can do to show their support for the solutions that you're putting forward. It doesn't need to be something big like voting in a particular way. It could be as little as asking people to share a post. By asking people to do something, you help to create a sense of shared identity with other people who support your cause. And that shared identity is necessary if you want to build a movement and mobilise the movement to support change.

b) Metaphors

A lot of framing human rights involves explaining things in terms that people understand by connecting a right to things we find important. That means we have to frequently break down complicated ideas. Sometimes we can use a metaphor as a shortcut. A metaphor takes some kind of object, activity or physical process that everyone is familiar with in their everyday lives and then applies it to explain the concept that you want them to understand. A good metaphor will be simple and easy to understand and repeat to others. Be careful, sometimes metaphors can have unintended consequences, because everything about the metaphor carries over to the thing you're explaining. It's best to do some kind of testing of metaphors to see how/whether your target audience understands what you are trying to get across. As noted at the start of this guide, the metaphors below have not been tested.

You can use metaphors to talk about the way we deal with the coronavirus pandemic in general terms. Or you can use metaphors to explain how certain problems work, how certain solutions work, or to explain particular rights.

Participatory democracy is like taking care of your teeth

We all want to have a say in how we are governed. That's why we vote in elections - so that we can choose our political representatives. But democracy isn't just about picking our politicians every four years. It's about giving the public a say over how our representatives use their power while they are in office. Maintaining democracy is like caring for your teeth. It's not enough for us to visit the dentist once in a while. We also need to floss and brush regularly or our teeth will rot and drop out. In the same way, a healthy democracy is built on regular conversations between our representatives and us, the public.

That's why it's so important for concerned citizens to be able to form associations and work together. Associations allow us to join our voices together and make ourselves heard so we can speak regularly to our elected representatives. Associations keep democracy healthy.

Independent courts are like football referees

Judges are there to make sure that everyone, whether you're government, a corporation or the church, plays fairly and by the same rules in society. The law applies the same to all of us. Like a referee makes sure players don't cheat on the football pitch, judges make sure the rich and powerful don't get special treatment. That's why judges have to be independent.

The dominant metaphor being used to speak about the coronavirus is a war metaphor. Our response to coronavirus is often referred to as a 'fight', the virus has been called an 'invisible enemy' and doctors and nurses are referred to as the 'front line'. There are problems with the war metaphor. People already fear that their health is threatened, and the war metaphor probably reinforces the notion that there is a threat to our safety. As noted, fear has a paralysing impact and makes us less able to contemplate that there could be solutions that would allow us to do things better. War also demands sacrifices and involves collateral damage. So the war metaphor could make people resigned to the idea that some people will just have to suffer, even if this is really avoidable. In addition, when people feel that their health or security is threatened, they become more likely to endorse restrictions on human rights. So overall, it's not helpful for us to reinforce the war metaphor by using conflict-related words.

A disaster metaphor is probably also going to have similar downsides. For example, referring to the virus as a storm that we have to weather, or the idea of battening down the hatches. This is likely to make people more fearful of their personal safety, which can trigger support for rights restrictions. It is also likely to make people feel there is only one way to deal with the virus – by enduring it – because it is just too powerful and scary, like a natural disaster. That can make people less likely to question the government response and to regard what the state does as beyond their control or inevitable. And that makes it harder for people to think that it's possible to take alternative approaches and find solutions.

Instead it's better to try to find ways of speaking about our response to the virus that capture the values we are emphasising in our frames and narratives:

- everyone is in this together, we are interdependent, and our fates are shared

- we don't know exactly what the solution is, but we do have the right tools to find the best solutions possible.

Some experts have suggested a jigsaw puzzle metaphor, which captures that people in society need to work together and can contribute different elements to the solution.

The metaphor of a journey may also be suitable. It captures the idea that there is an end in sight, because journeys have a destination. There may be different ways to get to a destination and journeys sometimes involve challenges along the way. But there are also tools we can use to decide what the right path is (like map, compass or GPS, which represent human rights). The idea of a journey by sea also allows us to talk about navigating our way through coronavirus, and has the idea that we (the crew) need to work together, and everyone has different tasks. The downside of a sailing metaphor might be that some people might associate sailing with extreme wealth and an unrelatable experience.

c) Some final do's and don'ts

Don't	Instead do
Don't talk about coronavirus as if it's a person taking away human rights. e.g. coronavirus kills democracy or civil liberties fall victim to coronavirus. This obscures the fact that the damage to democracy and human rights is due to the decisions politicians are making.	Talk about how a government is taking a decision that is bad for democracy. And explain how democratic guarantees (free press, freedom of association, right to vote for parliamentarians who exercise oversight, independent courts) help us make sure governments are taking the right decisions for all of us.
Don't talk only about a crisis and problems. Yes, we must recognise problems and how serious they are. But if we do only this it will make people fearful, which will prevent them from being able to see a way out or contemplate that there's a solution to a structural problem. They become more likely to stick their head in the sand and find individual coping mechanisms. And in the long-run, they will become more likely to endorse measures that limit human rights.	Balance your mention of the crisis or explanation of the problems with a much bigger dose of hope and solutions. Talk about what things will look like – your vision of a better world – if we put the solutions into effect. There's no strictly mathematical formula, but some experts say that the hope and solutions should take up 3-4 times more space than the problem.
Don't talk about rights as something in the abstract that we need to 'save' on principle. e.g.: 'governments must respect human rights when fighting coronavirus'; 'we can beat coronavirus without violating human rights'; 'The coronavirus crisis is a crisis for human rights'.	Break down what things the right you're talking about allow us to do that we find important. If you can relate it to every day lived experiences that's ideal. The reason human rights are so important is because they give us the tools to create the lives and communities we want. Specifically in this context, they give us the tools to navigate coronavirus and emerge in the best shape possible.
Don't talk about coronavirus as an 'opportunity' to create a better world in the future or say that corona has a 'silver lining'. Yes, wonderful things can emerge from terrible events. But referring to a phenomenon that kills loved ones and turns peoples' lives upside down as an 'opportunity' makes us sound heartless, insensitive, out of touch and distasteful. Who would want to sign up to that agenda?	Talk about the fact that we have many decisions to make about the future. Coronavirus has been a stress test for our communities. It has shown us where our government has created cracks, weaknesses or traps in the system that people fall through or into. We can now choose to build a stronger, more resilient society where everyone has access to the same opportunities and support. Whether that's investing in good quality health care for everyone, making employers give workers secure contracts with a decent wage, building more social housing, making sure corporations make a fair contribution to the taxes that pay for their workforce's education and health, or having an independent and well-funded public broadcaster etc.
Don't say 'more needs to be done' or 'action needs taking' by a government. Even if you are working with a limited character count. e.g. 'The government has passed a law to cut down prison overcrowding, but more needs to be done to improve the situation'. This does not qualify as a solution. If anything, it's likely to make people feel like the problem can't be solved, because you haven't alluded to there being solutions about how to deal with it.	Say who needs to do something and say what that something is. If you're limited for space, e.g. you're promoting an article on twitter, then say something like: 'To stop the virus spreading we need the same quarantine measures for everyone no matter where they are. That includes people in confined spaces like prisons. Here are three solutions to avoid overcrowding.'

5. FURTHER READING AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This guide has drawn heavily on the work of Anat Shenker-Osorio published in ASO Communications, 'National COVID-19 messaging document' and 'A Brilliant Way of Living Our Lives; How to Talk About Human Rights', and her podcast series 'Brave New Words'.

This guide also adopted suggestions made in the following guides concerning COVID-19:

- The Workshop, 'How to talk about COVID-19'
- Frameworks Institute, 'Framing COVID-19'
- Principle Co., 'Communicating Corona / COVID-19: 8 tips for Australian Leaders'
- Public Interest Research Centre's evolving online resource

Accessible resources on values-based framing include:

- Public Interest Research Centre & Counterpoint, 'Building bridges: Connecting with values to reframe and build support for human rights'
- George Lakoff, 'Don't think of an elephant'
- George Lakoff's & Gil Duran's Framelab podcast and blog
- Frameworks Institute's collection of 'Framing Files'

For tips on how to test narratives on a budget see:

- Public Interest Research Centre & ILGA-Europe, 'How to Test Your Communications'

The Civil Liberties Union for Europe (Liberties) is a non-governmental organisation promoting the civil liberties of everyone in the European Union. We are headquartered in Berlin and have a presence in Brussels. Liberties is built on a network of 19 national civil liberties NGOs from across the EU.

Website:

liberties.eu

Contact info:

info@liberties.eu

The Civil Liberties Union for Europe

Prinzenstr. 103
10969 Berlin
Germany

CIVIL
LIBERTIES
UNION FOR
EUROPE