

**MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA
REGIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS ON
GOOD GOVERNANCE PROCEDURES
IN COMBATTING COVID – 19**

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MENA REGIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS ON GOOD GOVERNANCE PROCEDURES IN COMBATTING COVID – 19

Across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) governments are enacting emergency legislation to respond to the coronavirus or COVID-19 pandemic, to ensure that their health systems have the medical equipment they need to save lives and to mitigate the worst economic impacts of the crisis

The MENA region chapters of Transparency International value the precautionary efforts taken by some governments in this region in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the response of citizens to support these efforts on all levels.

Emergencies on the scale of this require urgent additional support from a wide range stakeholders. To save lives and minimise suffering, the region's crisis response must be as efficient as possible. Otherwise, precious resources lost to corruption could cost lives and undermine the response to the pandemic.

Emergency financing and procurement mechanisms are being rolled out quickly, with a high degree of flexibility and few conditions. This is important, but without transparency and anti-corruption safeguards, there is a very real risk that emergency finances will be wasted or stolen, rather than used save lives and help people recover from the crisis.

In light of these challenging circumstances, the MENA region chapters of Transparency International urge governments to adopt a set recommendations that support emergency measures and a road map to combat the pandemic.

The following recommendations are intended to ensure the principles of transparency and good governance are applied in two main areas: public procurement under emergency and defence laws; and transparency in managing private donations to combat this pandemic.

Public procurement procedures during emergencies

Governments shall:

- 1-** Establish or allocate an online platform to provide information related to public procurement and bidding; including all information related to the goods and services required, and the contracting mechanism; publish the list of conditions, along with the bids that were submitted.
- 2-** Publish a list of all signed procurement contracts, along with the amounts and quantities of goods and services provided by companies. Identify the budget line allocated for each transaction, including whether it is from the general budget, the emergency budget, or special funds allocated by head of state or government, or if they will be covered from privately donated funds.
- 3-** Publish complete information regarding all companies and individuals contracted. If an exception of direct contracting exists, a clear explanation for the exception should be provided; the names of beneficial owners and shareholders should be transparent to prevent conflicts of interest and adhere to the principles of good governance.
- 4-** Clarify the mechanisms taken for monitoring and tracking services and their conformity with the terms and procedures of quality assurance.
- 5-** Identify the authorities responsible for monitoring the implementation of contracts and quality assurance, and publish periodic reports to ensure transparency and good governance.
- 6-** Conduct the procurement process openly online, or under the current circumstances, in closed circles that includes all bidders and other contractors working in the same sector.
- 7-** Providing complaint hotlines to report corruption incidents of any misconduct, to ensure implementation of laws and actions against the perpetrators, provided that the government announces all measures and actions taken are published and guarantees the principle fair trial, and protection of whistle-blowers.

Management of Private Donation Funds and Accounts in response to the effects of COVID-19

Citizens and other economic actors rushed to assist their governments in responding to this crisis. This was a positive response stemming from a sense of community and to meet an urgent national need. TI MENA chapters believe governments should adopt the following best practices and apply the principles of good governance in managing private donation funds and accounts:

- 1-** Unify donation accounts and place them under the responsibility of one official authority in order to calculate the sums and draft a clear management strategy and implementation plans.
- 2-** Publish the value of donations along with the names of donors online through an official website.
- 3-** Identify and publish criteria for the beneficiaries, the distribution mechanisms, and the intermediaries if they exist. Ensure that the allocations' management process is published in a manner that ensures justice and prevents any current or future use as a tool for political means.
- 4-** Establish fund management committees consisting of government, private sector and civil society working in the field of good governance, with responsibility for issuing detailed periodic reports. This is especially important following the announcements by some national governments of special support packages to revitalize the economy, including support to enterprises affected by the pandemic.
- 5-** In the event of any exceptional decisions, governments should provide adequate explanations of these exceptions, the causes and reasons, observing, as far as possible, the principles of justice and fairness.
- 6-** Obliging national banks and companies to facilitate procedures for citizens with regards to loan repayments and financial obligations, in line with government efforts and provide transparent procedures.
- 7-** Providing transparent procedures for the distribution of aid to the unemployed or small enterprises, in a manner that guarantees justice and transparency, and based on a clear set of eligibility criteria.
- 8-** Identifying the responsible authorities for receiving complaints related to violations or suspected corruption through dedicated websites or hotlines. Provide periodic reports publishing the number of received complaints and case handling according to the law.

TI MENA chapters demand all stakeholders not to take advantage of the current crisis to exercise unwarranted and unnecessary restrictions on human rights and freedoms, and citizens' rights in monitoring and accountability, especially the effective exercise of the right to access to information under the states' national and international obligations.

TI MENA chapters hope that through our joint efforts the local, regional and global efforts in combatting COVID-19 will be successful. We believe that this can be achieved in a way that rebuilds trust between the people and their governments, and supports good governance at the local, regional and global levels.

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