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## CHINA & WHO: RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PANDEMIC



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## **CHINA & WHO: RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PANDEMIC**

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Around 5.38 million have been infected and over 344 thousand people have died till now due to the novel coronavirus disease also termed as 'COVID19'. Global Economy has gone into recession, worse than the great depression with an estimated damage of over 9 trillion dollars. Who can be held responsible for the spread of this deadly virus?

China has been put under the scanner by the international community for the catastrophic virus that was originated in China and since then has spread to over 185 countries with U.S.A, Italy and Spain having the greatest number of fatalities. It is not clear to the international community whether the coronavirus is made intentionally by China but they do agree

upon the fact that lack of efforts to contain the virus and disseminating wrong information about the virus caused virus to spread outside China. This could be understood by a series of events that led to the spread of virus around the globe. First case was reported in Wuhan on December 10, 2019 which was not yet believed to be coronavirus. Six days later, authorities termed it as common flu medication resistant virus. Doctors warned about this virus which had symptoms similar to SARS but were reprimanded for spreading false information. Beijing pressurized countries to keep their borders open to China with WHO issuing a statement on Jan 10, 2020 recommending against countries restricting travel and trading with China. No clear evidence of Human-to-Human transmission of the virus was found by Chinese authorities with WHO confirming the same. The following day, first U.S case from Wuhan was confirmed. On 18 Jan, 2020, New Year party was attended by tens of thousands of people in Wuhan which led to even faster dissemination of virus in Wuhan and ultimately to the rest of the world.

These events clearly indicate China's efforts in concealing the news of the deadly virus and spreading misinformation about it. Doctors who tried to warn about the virus were sent to jail for spreading false rumors. Dr. Li Wenliang, ophthalmologist at Central hospital of Wuhan warned about the virus in an online chatroom but was made to sign a document by Chinese officials which said that he made false comments and later died of that same virus. He was later exonerated by the Chinese government and an apology was issued to his family after the news of the coronavirus was spread outside the national boundaries. Media was strictly censored and any news related to virus on social media was asked to delete. There is evidence that human to human transmission occurred among close contacts in Wuhan as early as Mid-December but authorities in their announcement denied it with WHO recommending states to keep their borders open with China which boosted the outgoing of the virus hosts. By Jan 22, 17 people were killed and 570 were infected but still authorities repeated of no more infections. China failed to share info to WHO at the right time. University of South Hampton in their report said that 95% of the cases could have been reduced if China acted three weeks earlier to combat the

deadly disease. China waited till 14 February before disclosing the information and by the time, 1700 health workers were already infected by coronavirus. The experts at WHO were stymied by Chinese officials for data on hospital transmission. The Washington Post on 26 February in their story concluded that China was not sending details that WHO and other experts needed.

China's delay in reporting the outbreak violated the international law. Article 6 of International Health Regulations requires states to provide expedited, timely, accurate, and sufficiently detailed information to WHO about the potential public health emergencies identified in the second annex in order to galvanize efforts to prevent pandemics. WHO also has a mandate in article 10 to seek verification from states with respect to unofficial reports of pathogenic microorganisms. States are required to provide timely and transparent information as requested within 24 hours and to participate in collaborative assessment of the situation. Yet China rejected repeated offers of epidemic investigation assistance from WHO in late January and U.S agencies in early February without explanation which has created suspicion among the states of active

concealment of true facts and information by China. Under CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), states party to the convention have an obligation to people from trading and eating endangered species which is likely how COVID19 infected humans. Wuhan's seafood market is poorly maintained where are mixed with illegal wildlife trade creating virus to transfer from animals to humans.

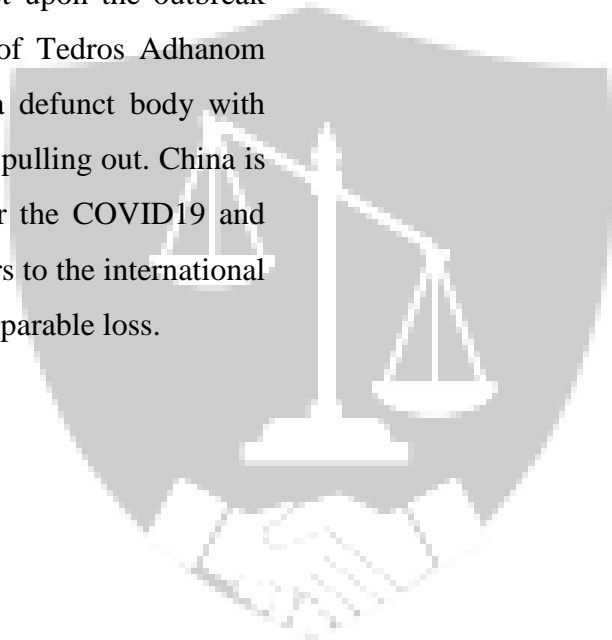
If China helped spread the virus across the globe, WHO was the one who supported it and accelerated the process. On March 11, WHO declared coronavirus as a 'Global Pandemic'. They waited so long to ascertain that even when health officials alerted WHO to the widespread. The disastrous recommendation which was issued by WHO to not to restrict travel and trade with China had serious implications. People who were infected in Wuhan were still allowed to travel to other countries which accelerated the spread of virus. If USA had not declined the recommendation of WHO, they would have seen more number of cases which would have been unable to cater to. WHO Chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus tweeted and praised China for handling the disease well when no new national cases were reported in china but were rife in other countries with

Italy facing thousands of deaths per day. Instead of countering the pandemic, he was politicizing the crisis and defended Chinese government as well as praised for its transparency. Why WHO defended the Chinese government even when there was clear evidence of inaction against coronavirus and cover ups by China?

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus is from Ethiopia, the country whose largest trading partner is China. The economy of Ethiopia is totally dependent upon China. China from time to time had been investing millions of dollars in infrastructural and economic development of Ethiopia. Recently, China invested 160 million dollars to build a stadium in the capital city of Addis Ababa. If China pulls out of investing and aiding in Ethiopia, the economy is finished and would never be able to recover. China was also an important ally of Tedros in the WHO's Director General Elections in 2017. Due to these reasons, instead of investigating properly and applying sanctions on China for acting in negligent and untimely manner, WHO chief was praising and defending the efforts of China and also helped in suppressing the severity of coronavirus outbreak.

Both China and WHO are answerable to the international community for their actions

and inactions. The coronavirus could have been contained and reduced drastically if China hadn't in lieu of saving itself from political embarrassment and pursuing self-economic interest, concealed, covered up and suppressed the news of coronavirus in its early stages. WHO has been stopped funding by the U.S.A Government due to failure of WHO to act upon the outbreak under the leadership of Tedros Adhanom which makes WHO a defunct body with single largest investor pulling out. China is legally responsible for the COVID19 and owes trillions of dollars to the international community for the irreparable loss.



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