



UN adopts resolution calling for 'cooperation' on virus

United Nations, US

The UN General Assembly on Thursday approved a resolution calling for "international cooperation" and "multilateralism" in the fight against COVID-19, in the first text to come out of the international body since the outbreak began.

The resolution, approved by consensus, also stresses "the need for full respect for human rights" and that "there is no place for any form of discrimination, racism and xenophobia in the response to the pandemic."

Russia was unsuccessful in opposing the resolution with its own text that was supported by four other countries.

The UN resolution emphasizes the central role of the body in the global health and economic crisis. It was submitted by Switzerland, Indonesia, Singapore, Norway, Liechtenstein and Ghana, and adopted by 188 of the 193 states that make up the body, diplomats said.

The Russian text -- which also discussed cooperation but included an implicit demand for a general lifting of international sanctions, seen as a brake on efforts to fight the virus -- was supported by the Central African Republic, Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela.

Unlike the UN Security Council, the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly are not binding but have a strong political value depending on their support.

Coronavirus survivors donate plasma hoping to heal the sick

AFP | New York

As she emerges from quarantine, recovered COVID-19 patient Diana Berrent is eager to join the battle against the pandemic and donate precious antibodies that researchers hope might help others.

In mid-March, the New Yorker woke up with a 102-degree (39 Celsius) fever and intense chest heaviness, becoming one of the first from her Long Island neighborhood to test positive for coronavirus.

This week, Berrent was the first survivor in her state screened for antibodies -- immune system-generated proteins that can ward off viruses -- to contribute to initial tests seeking treatment for the infection that's left more than 51,000 people dead worldwide.

Convalescent plasma, the fluid in blood teeming with antibodies post-illness, has proven effective in small studies to treat infectious diseases including Ebola and SARS.

Now, the US Food and Drug Administration has greenlit physicians to experiment with the strategy as coronavirus patients fill hospitals and the nation's positive caseload spikes to over 236,000.

Bruce Sachias, chief medical officer of the New York Blood Center -- which will collect, test and distribute donations in the city -- said while there is reason to believe plasma transfusions can help alleviate the current crisis, tests underway are not intended to yield golden-ticket solutions.

"It's really important for us to be very cognizant of the fact that



Diana Berrent was the first coronavirus survivor in New York state to get screened hoping to donate anti-body rich plasma

we're still in very new territory," he said.

Crisis mode

Eldad Hod and Steven Spitalnik -- transfusion medicine doctors leading trials at Columbia University's Irving Medical Center -- are cautiously optimistic but, like Sachias, emphasize the unknowns.

Spitalnik said they believe "within seven to 14 days after the onset of an infection, that people will develop an immune response and eventually make high amounts of antibodies -- although exactly when the peak of antibody production will be, we don't know."

He said some data suggests antibody production could peak around 28 days post-infection, and hopes the new research could provide a clearer picture.

Hod said each donation "can potentially save three to four lives."

The primary goal now is ac-

quiring a significant plasma stock, so researchers can conduct formal studies with control groups who would receive non-convalescent plasma, and others the antibody-packed donations.

Initial plasma, however, will be distributed for "compassionate use," Hod said -- to patients outside studies but for whom other strategies have failed.

They also aim to test treatments on already-hospitalized patients and as a preventative therapy in settings like nursing homes.

Spitalnik said that normally they would want "highly controlled" clinical trials, which take longer but are more definitive.

But "this is a crisis," he said.

"We understand and we are amenable to doing things that will take shorter amounts of time -- but hopefully we'll yield at least some rigorous results."

Internal hazmat suit

Berrent is eager to open her personal blood bank and crossing her fingers in hope the process can prove life-saving.

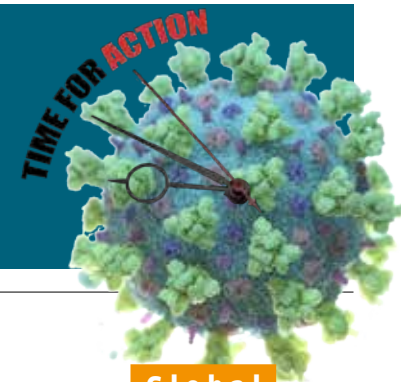
"We can be superheroes," the 45-year-old photographer said. "These are unprecedented, frightening times where everything is beyond our control -- except for we as survivors can help," Berrent said.

"We can be the ones running towards the fire in our own internally built hazmat suit. And that is a tremendous opportunity -- how could you not take advantage of that?"

Berrent's antibody levels met donation requirements -- but she is waiting on results of a nasal swab test to make sure any remnants of coronavirus have dissipated.

In the meantime, she's started the more than 17,000-member Facebook group "Survivor Corps" to mobilize other survivors to share their immunity.

"I can't wait to donate," Berrent said. "We need a forward-looking solution-based approach that offers hope because things are very, very bleak right now."



Global

Covid-19 Cases:

1,083,596

Deaths

58,150

Recovered:

227,738

Active cases

796,708

Closed cases

285,888

Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	New deaths	Total Deaths
USA	266,279	+733	6,803
Italy	119,827	+766	14,681
Spain	117,710	+587	10,935
Germany	89,838	+127	1,234
China	81,620	+4	3,322
France	64,338	+1,120	6,507
Iran	53,183	+134	3,294
UK	38,168	+684	3,605
Turkey	20,921	+69	425
Switzerland	19,606	+55	591
Belgium	16,770	+132	1,143
Netherlands	15,723	+148	1,487
Canada	12,375	+5	178
Austria	11,506	+10	168
S. Korea	10,062	+5	174
Portugal	9,886	+37	246
Brazil	8,229	+19	343
Israel	7,428	+4	40
Sweden	6,131	+50	358
Australia	5,350	+3	28
Ireland	4,273	+22	120
Russia	4,149	+4	34
Denmark	3,757	+16	139
Ecuador	3,368	+25	145
Philippines	3,018	+29	136
Pakistan	2,637	+6	40
India	2,567		72
Indonesia	1,986	+11	181
Mexico	1,510	+13	50
Algeria	1,171	+19	105
Hungary	623	+5	26
Lebanon	508	+1	17

Figures as of closing

Pentagon removes captain of virus-struck aircraft carrier

Washington

The Pentagon removed the captain of the coronavirus-stricken USS Theodore Roosevelt Thursday, saying he mishandled communications over how the outbreak was sweeping through the warship.

Acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly said Captain Brett Crozier was wrong to distribute to a wide range of people copies of an emotional, four-page letter describing the threat of the outbreak to the ship's nearly 5,000 sailors, allowing it to be leaked earlier this week to US media before top defense officials saw it.

Modly said that while there have been 114 cases of the coronavirus in the crew so far, none has been severe and Crozier overstated the severity when he suggested sailors were going to die without fast action.

Crozier "demonstrated extremely poor judgment in the middle of a crisis" in

his handling of the letter, Modly said.

"It misrepresented the facts of what was going on the ship" and created "a little bit of panic" that was unnecessary, he said.

"I have no doubt in my mind that Captain Crozier did what he thought was in the best interests of the safety and well-being of his crew," said Modly. "Unfortunately, it did the opposite."

In addition to frightening families of the sailors, he said, "it raised concerns about the operational capabilities and operational security of that ship that could have emboldened our adversaries to seek advantage."

Modly said the situation was exaggerated and that it was not correct that the Navy leadership was not addressing the problem at the time the letter went out.

In addition, he

'accelerating'

Crozier's letter, which leaked Tuesday, sparked concern that the virus was out of control and suggested the Navy leadership was not responding.

Crozier stunned experts by saying the ship had to be evacuated to ensure the coronavirus does not spread further.

"The spread of the disease is ongoing and accelerating," he wrote. "We are not at war. Sailors do not need to die," he pleaded.

"Removing the majority of personnel from a deployed US nuclear aircraft carrier and isolating them for two weeks may seem like an extraordinary measure," he added. "This is a necessary risk."

Modly said the situation was exaggerated and that it was not correct that the Navy leadership was not addressing the problem at the time the letter went out.

In addition, he

faulted Crozier for "an uncharacteristic lapse in judgment" in sending an unclassified letter meant for his superiors to as many as 30 people, increasing the chance it would be made public.

The letter "undermined the chain of command who had been moving and adjusting as rapidly as possible to get him the help he needed," Modly said.

Middle East

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases	Serious, Critical	Tot cases/1m pop
Bahrain	673	+29	4		388	281	3	395
Saudi Arabia	2,039	+154	25	+4	351	1,663	41	59
UAE	1,264	+240	9	+1	108	1,147	2	128
Kuwait	417	+75			82	335	16	98
Oman	252	+21	1		57	194	3	49
Jordan	310	+11	5		58	247	5	30
Iraq	820	+48	54		226	540		20
Egypt	985	+120	66	+8	216	703		10

