

## **Preface**

The wave of the spread of COVID-19 arrived in Japan in February 2020. The Pandemic has caused a dramatic change in law and order in the world. New normalcy has emerged, symbolizing the remarkable transformation of the world. How to take “social distancing” became almost a top priority for all people on the planet. In the post-COVID-19 world, avoiding the “Three Cs” (Closed spaces, Crowded places, Close-contact settings) has been recommended in Japan and abroad as a measure to prevent the spread of infection. Restricted public spaces (often even in the private space, too) is today considered to be for “public good.”

Under these circumstances respecting religious freedom as religious and cultural rights has become a vital issue. This problem is particularly pronounced in Judaism and Islam, where group worship is a religious obligation or commandment. Whether to bury or cremate the deceased person whose life was lost due to COVID-19 generated a public debate in the Muslim communities in Europe. For Muslims, burial of the deceased is mandatory for the deceased and the families due to Islamic teachings. In Islamic societies in the Middle East and Southeast Asia, cremation is not practiced even during the pandemic. On the other hand, in Europe, the state’s measures to cremate infected victims for epidemiological and public health reasons have led to Muslims’ protests. In the world of Judaism, some Jewish Ultra-Orthodox communities have not stopped mass worshipping nor closed their schools amid the pandemic, despite the state order to do so.

Preventing the spread of the coronavirus infection is the most core human rights issue of the “right to live.” The spread of the infection endangers human life and if the corona infection becomes severe it can lead to death or serious after-effects. Also, the number of socially and economically vulnerable people who have lost their jobs has increased. It is ironic, but those who complied with the national policy of keeping social distance became unemployed. For people, such as these, the right to live is threatened differently.

This project examines how religious freedom and public epidemiological good can be compatible, especially in the complex and multi-layered effects of the COVID-19 infection. This report consists of two parts. Part 1 discusses religious freedom under the pandemic conditions from both human rights and human security perspectives. Part II covers the case studies both in the worlds of Judaism and Islam. This part illustrates the

relationship between state authority and religious communities, media coverage of COVID-19 and Jewish Ultra-Orthodox communities, and the pandemic effects on Muslim women in their daily lives and social movements. The articles in this volume are the outcome of this project, which started in May 2020 and continued up to March 2021. Two Webinars with scholars from abroad, on January 10th and 13th, 2021 inspired the authors. These Webinars stimulated much discussion among the participants and the contributors of this report. Some synopses of the two Webinars are to be posted on the Doshisha University's website shortly.

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