



INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO COMBAT EPIDEMICS: A STUDY OF THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

International cooperation in confronting epidemics is one of the most famous manifestations of human solidarity in our modern era. Global situations of health crises, for example (Corona pandemic) showed a unification of efforts between countries and international organizations to combat the spread of cross-border epidemics, analyzing the role played by international organizations –and the World Health Organization in particular - in this field, coordinating global responses to epidemics, and evaluating the effectiveness of international cooperation mechanisms are the most important basic objectives of this study.

The study relied on the descriptive approach to explain the nature of the work of international organizations and to observe official reports and real-life experiences in managing health crises, It also relied on the analytical and comparative methods , to conclude that strengthening international cooperation requires reforming institutional structures, increasing technical and financial support for developing countries, and activating joint monitoring and early warning mechanisms.



التعاون الدولي لمكافحة الاوبئة: دراسة في دور المنظمات الدولية

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المخلص

معلومات المقالة

يعد التعاون الدولي في مواجهة الاوبئة واحداً من أشهر مظاهر التضامن الانساني في عصرنا الحديث، فالأزمات الصحية العالمية ، مثل جائحة كورونا (كوفيد-19)، أظهرت توحيداً للجهود بين الدول والمنظمات الدولية لمكافحة انتشار الاوبئة العابرة للحدود. وان تحليل الدور الذي تؤديه المنظمات الدولية، ومنظمة الصحة العالمية على وجه الخصوص، في هذا المجال، وتنسيق الاستجابات العالمية للأوبئة، وتقييم فعالية اليات التعاون الدولي، هي أهم الاهداف الاساسية لهذه الدراسة.

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اعتمدت الدراسة على المنهج الوصفي في بيان طبيعة عمل المنظمات الدولية، وملاحظة التقارير الرسمية والتجارب الواقعية في ادارة الازمات الصحية كما واعتمدت على المنهج التحليلي والمنهج المقارن ; لنخلص الى نتيجة مفادها ان تعزيز التعاون الدولي يتطلب اصلاح الهياكل المؤسسية، وزيادة الدعم التقني والمالي للدول النامية، وتفعيل المراقبة المشتركة واليات الانذار المبكر.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

- المنظمات الدولية الحكومية
- المنظمات الدولية غير الحكومية
- برنامج الاغذية العالمي
- اللجنة الدولية للصليب الأحمر
- منظمة اطباء بلا حدود

Introduction

The spread of epidemics is one of the most serious threats facing the international community due to the human and economic losses it causes, the weakness it reveals in the public health systems of many countries, and with the development of global trade and travel, epidemics have become limitless, which makes combating them a collective responsibility that exceeds the ability of the state alone, the importance of international cooperation has become clear as the basic tool for confronting these crises, whether this is done through the exchange of experiences and information or through the coordination of economic and health policies between countries, here the importance of this study appears, which shows the role of collective action in confronting epidemics, such major global institutions as the World Health Organization, the United Nations, and international relief organizations are all entities that represent the institutional framework that translates the principle of human solidarity, which ensures the existence of realistic measures intended to curb the proliferation of diseases and ensuring fairness in the distribution of treatments and vaccines, therefore, the study seeks to examine the effectiveness of international efforts in confronting epidemics and to explain the most important activities of international public and Private Organizations engaged in epidemic response and efforts to limit their proliferation.

Research Importance

The importance of the research can be summarized as follows:

- 1- The study addresses an issue with global humanitarian security dimensions that contributes to clarifying the relationship between international law and health policies.
- 2- The study raises a contemporary legal issue related to the role of international organizations in combating epidemics, in light of current health developments, which requires studying the legal framework regulating the work of these organizations.
- 3- The study shows the actual need to develop the international cooperation system to confront epidemics, including cooperation between countries on the one hand, and between countries and international organizations on the other hand.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research appear in:

- 1- Knowing the legal framework for the work of international organizations in the field of combating epidemics, while explaining the basis on which these organizations base their work.
- 2- Explaining the role of international governmental organizations in combating epidemics or in preventing and limiting their spread. This is evident through coordination between countries and the development of policies and mechanisms for cooperation.
- 3- Demonstrating the contributions of international non-governmental organizations in combating epidemics, especially those related to health awareness and humanitarian relief.

Research Problem

The main question of this study arises from:

How adequate is the legal framework regulating the work of international governmental and non-governmental organizations in the field of combating epidemics?

Thus, other sub-questions appear, which are as follows:

- What is the legal basis for international cooperation between countries and organizations in combating epidemics?
- How can international organizations manage health crises?
- What is the role of international organizations (governmental and non-governmental) in combating epidemics in light of the rules of international law?
- What legal obstacles and challenges limit the effectiveness of international organizations in combating epidemics?

Research methodology

This study relied on a set of scientific methods that are appropriate to the nature of the subject. The descriptive method was used to describe the manifestations of international cooperation and efforts related to combating epidemics. The analytical method was also used to analyze the legal materials and texts of relevant international documents. In addition, the comparative method was used by comparing the performance of governmental and non-governmental organizations in the field of combating epidemics.

Research Structure

The research is divided into three topics:

Topic One: The juridical framework guiding the operations of international organizations in combating epidemics

Topic Two: The work and endeavors of international ((governmental organizations)) in combating epidemics

Topic Three: The work and endeavors of international ((non-governmental organizations)) in combating epidemics

Topic One

The juridical framework guiding the operations of international organizations in combating epidemics

International organizations play an important role in combating epidemics and diseases, and this role is based on a legal basis that we will explain in two points: The first point will explain the legal framework for the work of international governmental organizations in the health field,

and the second point will explain the legal framework for the work of international nongovernmental organizations in the health field.

The First Requirement

the legal framework for the work of international public/governmental institutions operating in the health sector

The framework of international governmental health institutions is based on an international legal foundation consisting of a set of international agreements and legal rules that regulate cooperation between countries to confront epidemics and threats to human health. This framework is known in legal jurisprudence as (international health law), and it is defined as (a set of legal rules that aim to regulate international efforts aimed at preventing, combating, and limiting the spread of diseases across international borders, in order to achieve the protection of public health at the global level)¹ .

This framework has evolved with the international community's growing awareness of the seriousness of epidemics and infectious diseases that transcend national borders. This has led to the conclusion of several international legal instruments that regulate cooperation procedures between countries and international organizations in the health field, most notably the International Health Regulations, which constitute one of the most important legal tools for regulating the reporting of epidemics and coordinating the international response to confront them²

International cooperation is one of the most important aspects of integration between states within the framework of public international law, Infectious diseases and epidemics are no longer just an internal issue, but have become a serious cross-border threat to global human security, as a result, the international community has created an integrated legal system to enable international organizations to play their role in confronting epidemics, either in the form of binding rules for states or presented as coordination mechanisms, the ((United Nations)) Charter of 1945 is the basis for this legal framework, as it stipulates (saving future generations from the scourge of wars and achieving the social and health well-being of all humanity)³.

The World Health Organization was established based on this Charter, as it is the specialized agency concerned with international public health. This organization has global jurisdiction that transcends the regional borders of countries, which gives it the legal basis for coordination and intervention to confront epidemics, this is evident from the text of the organization's constitution on (allowing all individuals to achieve their optimal level of health)⁴.

In addition to the above, international humanitarian law has also included indirect references to combating epidemics - particularly in cases of armed conflict - as the Fourth Geneva

Convention of 1949 stipulated (taking preventive health measures in occupied areas to protect the civilian population from epidemic diseases)⁵ .

It is clear from all of the above that all of the above mentioned constitutes an integrated organization and a legal basis that allows international governmental organizations to work jointly with member states or with regional organizations such as the African Union, the European Union and the League of Arab States to confront the spread of epidemics, it provides technical support, issues instructions, and coordinates the international response, and this was clearly demonstrated during the Corona pandemic, the World Health Organization activated the provisions of health and international regulations and declared a state of public health emergency with an international dimension on January 30, 2020⁶.

Despite the above, this legal framework faces multiple challenges, some of which are related to countries' respect for the principle of health transparency, and others are related to the extent of countries' obligation to report the spread of epidemics in a timely manner, although international health law is binding in theory, its mechanisms of implementation and application are limited, and it does not have the authority to punish or impose coercion, which makes the effectiveness of its application depend on mutual trust and international cooperation between countries ⁷.

The Second Requirement

the legal framework for the work of international private/non-governmental institutions operating in the health sector.

The legal framework governing the work of non-governmental organizations in the health sector is fundamental, regulating their activities and defining their rights and obligations. Although these organizations do not possess the full international legal personality of governmental organizations, international law recognizes their existence and practical influence, as evidenced by the scope of their work within the global humanitarian framework. These organizations base their work on the United Nations Charter, which authorizes the Economic and Social Council to make appropriate arrangements with non-governmental organizations regarding matters within its competence⁸.

The basic regulations of these organizations determine their health and humanitarian goals, but the actual legal framework is evident in the bilateral agreements or memorandums of understanding that they conclude with countries or intergovernmental organizations, which allow them to work in epidemiological crises, Médecins Sans Frontières, in cooperation and coordination with the World Health Organization, played a pivotal role in confronting the Ebola epidemic in West Africa (which spread between 2014-2016)⁹.

Considering that the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies relies in its work on the statute of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement of 1986,

which authorized it to intervene in health crises and epidemics when the country concerned is unable to combat these crises, international humanitarian law has also granted this movement a distinguished legal status as a (neutral and independent institution working to protect human life and health)¹⁰ .

In addition to the above, international non-governmental organizations play an important oversight role in holding international governmental organizations and governments of countries accountable for their performance in confronting epidemics, legal reports were issued about the failures of some countries to respond quickly when (the Corona virus) spread, based on the right to health and the principles of transparency mentioned in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966¹¹.

It is noted that these organizations, when carrying out their work, face many legal challenges, such as financing, licensing, and freedom of access to affected areas, many countries impose legal restrictions about the functions of private/non-governmental organizations under the pretext of sovereignty and security, which reflects the tension between the principles of national sovereignty and the principle of humanitarian cooperation ¹²

Finally, after all that has been mentioned, it becomes clear that the legal framework for the work of international organizations –both governmental and non-governmental in the field of combating epidemics – is based on a delicate balance between common international obligations and national sovereignty, however, the effectiveness of this framework depends on the will of countries and their commitment to genuine cooperation and information exchange, which is the essence of international cooperation in the health field.

The Second Topic

The work and endeavors of international ((governmental organizations)) in combating epidemics

Combating epidemics is one of the most important shared responsibilities of the international community, and international (governmental) organizations have played a central role in setting global health policies. We will explain this with two requirements: The first requirement will show the role of the World Health Organization in combating epidemics, and the second requirement will show the role of the United Nations system and its affiliated agencies in combating epidemics.

The First Requirement

The function of the World Health Organization in combating epidemics

The World Health Organization is the main UN body responsible for combating epidemics. Therefore, it has issued the International Health

Regulations, which impose an obligation on countries to report any health emergency that constitutes a global threat¹³. We summarize its role as follows:

1- Issuing medical protocols and guidelines: The World Health Organization issued unified protocols for treatment during the period (Covid-19), quarantine procedures, and methods of controlling infection¹⁴.

2- Early warning: The World Health Organization adopts a global system for early warning, issuing warnings to member states, and responding to monitoring health inspections¹⁵.

3- Supporting the provision of vaccines globally: The organization contributed to establishing the (COVAX) initiative to ensure equitable distribution, as in the (Covid-19) vaccine¹⁶.

4- Coordinating international cooperation: One of the most important measures of the World Health Organization in combating diseases is that it activated the International Health Regulations to control international travel and procedures for reporting epidemics and infectious diseases¹⁷.

5- Addressing infectious diseases: This organization addressed infectious diseases (malaria, smallpox, onchocerciasis, suspension disease, tuberculosis, Ebola, and finally the Corona-Covid-19 pandemic), these diseases are among the most widespread and deadly to many people throughout the ages, and the efforts of this organization were represented in developing important strategies that contributed to reducing the spread of these diseases and saving the lives of many people¹⁸.

The organization has dealt with many epidemics and diseases very effectively, including (malaria, lupus, smallpox, tuberculosis, yaws, Ebola), but the most important and recent of the organization's efforts was its response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19). The organization's efforts were as follows:

- Searching for a suitable vaccine

The World Health Organization, in coordination with laboratories worldwide, has conducted numerous tests to develop a suitable vaccine against the novel coronavirus. The organization has assembled approximately 400 experts and specialists in disease control to work towards finding a vaccine that can rid humanity of this pandemic¹⁹.

- Providing assistance to countries (preparedness and response)

The World Health Organization announced its strategic plan for preparedness and response, which outlines the essential actions that countries should take. This plan relies on the continuous updating of data to understand the nature of the virus. This data serves as a resource for countries in developing the plans they must implement to combat the virus. The Solidarity

Response Fund is one of the most important steps taken by the organization to provide adequate care for those infected with this disease. Donations to the fund have reached nearly .one billion dollars, enabling the organization to develop and provide a vaccine²⁰

-Training healthcare workers

The organization worked diligently to develop the skills of a large number of healthcare workers. Users of the social learning network also conducted interactive online courses, which were attended by many specialists and those interested in the field, thus contributing to increasing their expertise and providing them with better training²¹.

-Combating misinformation and providing accurate information

The organization has developed numerous targeted guidelines to help combat the Coronavirus, publishing approximately (50) pieces of advice for all of humanity in general and for healthcare workers in particular. It has also utilized the internet to disseminate necessary community awareness and activate legal controls²² to protect against the disease²².

The World Health Organization faces a number of challenges in its work. The lack of funding will threaten the organization's capabilities to prepare for epidemics and provide technical support and rapid response to countries, the lack of funding will also affect the number of employees and dismiss them, which will reduce the organization's effectiveness in tracking epidemics and managing crises, on the other hand, the World Health Organization operates within the system of member states, which means that there are some countries that may be late in submitting their report on the existence of an epidemic or in implementing health recommendations on matters related to their sovereignty²³

In turn, we see that despite the political and financial challenges facing this organization in its work, the World Health Organization is classified as the backbone of international coordination in the face of epidemics, in terms of its efforts in providing scientific guidance, supporting member states and its concern for protecting public health. The organization can increase its effectiveness and reduce the impact of cross-border epidemics through sustainable funding and strengthening international commitment to the organization's principles and goals.

The Second Requirement

The function of the United Nations system and its agencies in combating epidemics

United Nations agencies be instrumental in combating epidemics, and the most prominent of these agencies are (the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Programme).

First: The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), whose role can be summarized as follows

1- Community awareness: The United Nations Children's Fund launched extensive campaigns targeting children to educate them on the need to pay attention to personal hygiene and wash hands to prevent diseases and infections.

2- Protecting children's right to education: Although many countries closed their schools during times of health crises, we find that the organization (UNICEF) supported distance education programs during the epidemic period and provided educational portfolios to countries that closed their schools²⁴.

3- Providing the necessary vaccines for children: (UNICEF) is one of the organizations that purchases the most vaccines in the world, as it works to provide them and send them to poor (low-income) countries²⁵.

4- Providing the necessary health supplies: The organization (UNICEF) distributed millions of sterile soap and masks to schools and camps in remote places during the epidemic period, especially during the Corona pandemic (Covid-19)²⁶.

It should be noted that UNICEF plays an important role in combating the causes of diseases, as it does not only fight epidemics after they have broken out, but also has efforts aimed at eliminating the causes of epidemics and diseases. We summarize these efforts as follows

-Improving Early Childhood Health

One of UNICEF's most common goals is reducing childhood illness and mortality. Healthy growth is not only important for increased income and productivity but also for improving quality of life. UNICEF has adopted an early childhood health strategy that focuses on developing basic skills and building capacity. It has found that low self-esteem, insecurity, and neglect are all linked to poverty and poor health. Therefore, UNICEF has made the following efforts in this area

*UNICEF has informed 81 countries that they have a national early childhood action plan.

*UNICEF has intervened by implementing its early childhood health programs, benefiting 615,049 children under the age of five, representing 76% of its target.

*UNICEF, in partnership with 115 countries, implemented multiple programs in the field of childhood growth and health care, and these programs made a tangible contribution to improving children's health care²⁷

-Addressing Malnutrition

Malnutrition usually manifests at an individual level, but its underlying causes extend to the family, which is considered the nucleus of society. UNICEF has addressed this by emphasizing that eliminating malnutrition requires efforts to reduce its underlying causes, as malnutrition is not only related to the lack of healthy food, but also to the ability to access various social services. UNICEF has developed many programs that provide scientific studies to reduce malnutrition. For example, UNICEF contributed to supporting governments in studying the prevalence of goiter in children aged 8-11. The study revealed that the disease was 38% prevalent among children, prompting UNICEF to collaborate with these countries to make iodized salt available in the markets. This helped reduce the severity of the disease and increased iodine consumption from 5% to 75% within three years, leading to the success of their program²⁸ .

-Providing Clean Water and Sanitation

Improving water and sanitation resources is one of UNICEF's goals. Clean water is a basic human need, and children suffer from diseases like diarrhea and cholera due to contaminated drinking water and unsanitary toilets. This has prompted UNICEF to develop projects and plans to change this situation and help governments improve water supplies and sanitation facilities. UNICEF uses simple techniques such as drilling wells and equipping them with powerful pumps. UNICEF also provides awareness campaigns to encourage people to maintain hygiene and conserve water supplies. One example of its efforts in this area is its support for a project in India, which has suffered from ongoing water crises. UNICEF developed water provision technologies that are easy to use, This enabled it to cover 80% of the population's clean water needs in India²⁹ .

Furthermore, UNICEF continued to build local capacity to innovate and develop new services. In Sudan, UNICEF encouraged a new approach to rainwater harvesting from surface catchment basins. It also mandated independent assessments of the sustainability of water networks in 27 countries. The number of countries where UNICEF supports community-based hand washing efforts increased from 71 in 2018 to 90 in 2019, with initiatives reaching 2.4 million children in 8,260 schools to ensure access to basic hand washing and sanitation facilities³⁰ .

Despite the above, UNICEF faces numerous challenges in carrying out its work, such as the immense pressure of high demand for preventive support and immunization at a time when the health infrastructure in many countries is weak. This makes it very difficult for UNICEF to mount an effective collective response. On the other hand, the organization's teams struggle to reach families and children in the most vulnerable areas, as UNICEF's mandate combines health and education, and the numerous conflicts and humanitarian crises in various countries

hinder the organization's teams from reaching children and fulfilling their duties³¹

We believe that UNICEF plays a vital role in protecting children's health and promoting prevention of epidemics and diseases, especially in developing countries, and that what makes it complementary to international governmental work is its focus on vulnerable groups. However, it is necessary to strengthen its coordination with other health organizations to ensure the integration of prevention and treatment efforts and to reduce duplication of programs.

Second/The World Food Programme, which played its role during the period of health crises, and we summarize its role as follows:

1-Medical supplies: The World Food Program contributed to transporting medical equipment to low-income countries, where this equipment was used during periods of epidemics and communicable diseases ³²

2- Providing food to affected areas during epidemics: The World Food Program provided food aid to tens of millions during crises, including during the Corona pandemic (Covid-19), a period in which countries closed their shops and businesses to ensure that the epidemic did not spread further³³

3-Supporting monitoring and early warning systems: The World Food Programme's role is clearly demonstrated through

-Rapid intervention in the event of outbreaks of plant and animal diseases and epidemics

- Monitoring plant diseases affecting food security³⁴

-Monitoring animal diseases for potential transmission to humans, such as foot-and-mouth disease and avian influenza³⁵ .

4- Supporting health infrastructure: This is done by providing affected countries with health and food equipment, and cooperating with relevant organizations to provide the necessary vaccines for diseases and epidemics³⁶.

5-Coordination with relevant authorities: The World Food Programme coordinates with international humanitarian agencies to ensure a rapid response to combat epidemics and diseases, especially waterborne diseases³⁷.

6- Preparing research and disseminating scientific evidence: The World Food Programme conducts joint research programs on plant and animal diseases and how they are transmitted to humans. It also assists countries in developing effective preventive policies and preparing international reports related to diseases and how to control them³⁸.

The World Food Programme faces multiple challenges related to its heavy reliance on voluntary contributions from donor countries, making it vulnerable to economic and health fluctuations. Furthermore, the spread of epidemics leads to increased poverty and malnutrition rates, thus increasing the demand for WFP services while available resources dwindle, creating a significant gap between the scale of humanitarian needs and the actual capacity to respond³⁹.

We believe that the World Food Programme contributes directly to reducing the spread of plant and animal diseases and epidemics. Although many try to downplay its importance, it plays a vital role in linking public health and food security. We urge that it be given greater attention in future studies.

The Third Topic

The work and endeavors of international ((non-governmental organizations)) in combating epidemics

Combating epidemics is not confined solely to the actions of international governmental organizations. International non-governmental organizations have made important contributions to combating epidemics and deadly diseases that have threatened the lives of many individuals in various countries, we will explain this with two demands: the first will be the role of Médecins Sans Frontières in combating epidemics, and the second demand will be the role of the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in combating epidemics.

The First Requirement

The function of of Médecins Sans Frontières in combating epidemics

It is one of the most well-known international non-governmental organizations in the field of emergency health care and response to health crises and epidemics. It was established in 1971 to provide medical care to affected communities in areas of conflict, epidemics and natural disasters, with the necessity of adhering to the principles of humanity, neutrality and independence⁴⁰.

We can summarize the most important activities of Médecins Sans Frontières in combating epidemics as follows:

1-Establishing disease isolation and containment units: The organization has built and designed many specialized units to limit the spread of epidemics, including rapid intervention teams that are equipped to deal with cases of rapid spread of the epidemic⁴¹.

2-Providing technical support to local health personnel: The organization trained local medical staff on the necessary procedures and measures needed to combat epidemics, globally approved methods of treatment for the epidemic and prevention methods to limit the spread of diseases⁴².

3-Epidemiological surveillance and documentation: The organization is concerned with collecting health data and field monitoring of the outbreak of the epidemic, which contributes to developing accurate information and providing it to the international community and strengthening the public health response⁴³

4-Providing direct medical care: This is done through the organization's efforts to build field hospitals and specialized mobile treatment units to treat those infected with epidemics such as Ebola and Covid-19⁴⁴ .

In terms of real practical experiences, during the outbreak of the Ebola epidemic in West Africa for the period (2014-2016) and the Covid-19 epidemic for the period (2020-2021), The interventions of Médecins Sans Frontières were one of the most important reasons in combating the spread of epidemics and saving thousands of people, especially in those areas that witnessed the collapse of their health infrastructure.

Médecins Sans Frontières faces many challenges while carrying out its work. Some countries believe that this organization does not have the right to testify or submit its reports because that would harm its internal affairs, sometimes, some countries and armed groups obstruct the organization's activity and accuse it of working on behalf of major powers, which leads to harassment of the organization while it is performing its work, which sometimes leads to expulsion, on the other hand, some countries see the organization's work as biased towards a particular party during armed conflicts, as the principles of international humanitarian law require the provision of humanitarian and medical assistance to individuals during armed conflicts , the medical intervention and rapid response carried out by the organization is the core of its work and its duty, and is not bias on its part at the expense of one party over another⁴⁵.

We believe that Doctors Without Borders is characterized by its flexibility and ability to respond quickly to health crises in countries. We also believe that the organization's interventions on the ground, especially in areas that other organizations or governments are unable to reach, reflect the importance of volunteer work in promoting public health and greatly complement the efforts of other official institutions.

The Second Requirement

The function of the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in combating epidemics

The International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent is one of the private organizations which has exerted clear impact in combating epidemics, and this is evident through its humanitarian and emergency efforts, the main purpose of establishing this committee was to provide humanitarian assistance during disasters and conflicts, but it expanded to include the necessary medical response that works to combat the spread of

epidemics and diseases⁴⁶, the activities carried out by the Committee in order to achieve its goal are the following:

1-Rapid intervention in countries experiencing crises: One of the most distinctive features of the committee is its rapid movement to intervene in conflict areas or epidemic outbreaks to make it a vital actor in limiting the spread of epidemics⁴⁷

2-Providing basic medical assistance: The Committee's role in this area is evident through the distribution of personal protective equipment (sterilization materials, masks, emergency medical supplies), which helps combat the spread of epidemics in countries⁴⁸ .

3-Providing technical support to countries: The Committee deploys medical volunteer teams to provide first aid to critical medical cases, and also contributes to awareness and prevention of infectious diseases that spread over a short period and lead to the emergence of an endemic society⁴⁹ .

4-Health monitoring and organizing vaccination campaigns: The committee monitors the spread of epidemics in cooperation with local authorities. The committee also makes multiple contributions to international and national vaccination programs that work to combat the spread of epidemics⁵⁰ .

The committee has proven its effectiveness during the spread of multiple epidemics (Cholera, Ebola, Covid-19) through its rapid and healthy response to the affected countries, and by enhancing trust between local communities and international bodies.

However, the committee, while carrying out its work, faces multiple challenges, including internal challenges related to the committee's activity and external ones. The internal challenges are represented by weak implementation mechanisms and the absence of effective implementation mechanisms, which makes the organization fail to reach the victims and confront their suffering when epidemics spread⁵¹, the work of the committee often adopts an approach of secrecy and failure to disclose physical violations. This is clearly evident from the siege imposed on Iraq in 1991, supported by Resolution No. 661, during which the norms of international humanitarian law were violated by starving the people, not receiving appropriate medicines, and the widespread spread of diseases, the committee provided its assistance, but it was not sufficient to combat hunger and epidemics, especially among women and children⁵²

As for external challenges, they are represented by the refusal of countries to provide the services of this committee. It is known that the work of the committee is summarized in providing aid directed toward victims of armed conflicts and always seeks to reach them and provide the necessary food and medicine, however, some countries refuse these services on the pretext that their members do not want to receive food or medicine from this committee. This pretext is nothing but a clear obstruction by some countries of the work and activities of the committee, on the other hand, we see that some countries refuse to accept the services of the committee because they conflict with the principle of sovereignty, but this is not true. When

the committee carries out its work by providing the necessary medicine to victims in armed conflicts, it does not conflict with the principle of sovereignty guaranteed in international law, when international law recognized that states are entitled to accept or deny the ICRC's offers, it did not make the right absolute, and states do not hold the right to refuse the ICRC's support arbitrarily and without good reason, as sovereignty is no longer a right but a duty to protect their nationals from any danger that threatens them, including the risk of the spread of diseases and epidemics ⁵³.

We believe that the International Committee of the Red Cross, as one of the most important non-governmental organizations, is a key element in the health and humanitarian response during disasters and conflicts. Despite the restrictions imposed by international humanitarian law and funding, the Committee has extensive field experience and the ability to reach difficult areas, making it an effective element in confronting epidemics and health disasters.

Before concluding, and after discussing the role of international governmental and non-governmental organizations in combating epidemics, we arrive at the following comparisons:

- Regarding their areas of expertise: We observe that international governmental organizations coordinate cooperation among countries to develop international strategies and policies for combating epidemics, while international non-governmental organizations focus on providing humanitarian and field support to countries and contribute to the implementation of health programs.
- Regarding their scope of work: We observe that international governmental organizations work with national governments and official bodies, while international non-governmental organizations operate within local communities.
- Regarding their legal nature: Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) are established by agreement between states and possess independent international legal personality, such as the World Health Organization (WHO). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), on the other hand, are not established by agreement between states but rather through civil society initiatives.
- Regarding their core activities: IGOs monitor the spread of diseases and provide necessary support to states (scientific guidance and expertise). NGOs, however, focus on supporting volunteer campaigns, participating in rapid response to health crises, and providing medical assistance.
- Regarding organization and powers: We observe that intergovernmental organizations have the authority to issue international health regulations and recommendations, while international non-governmental organizations do not possess this binding authority but play a complementary role based on humanitarian and voluntary work.

In conclusion, despite the preceding comparison, intergovernmental organizations have an integrated role with international non-governmental organizations in combating epidemics. When the former develops the necessary international health frameworks and strategies in this

field, the latter supports humanitarian efforts and provides services to affected communities, thus enhancing the effectiveness of the international response to epidemics and diseases.

Conclusion

It is clear from all of the above that confronting epidemics is no longer a purely health issue, but rather has become an international issue with legal, security and humanitarian dimensions, requiring concerted efforts between various organizations (governmental and non-governmental) within an organized legal framework that ensures the effectiveness of intervention and speed of response, the pivotal role played by organizations, especially the World Health Organization (providing technical support, monitoring the spread of epidemics, and developing health guidelines) remains ineffective if it is not matched by the cooperation of countries and their commitment to the recommendations issued by these organizations.

We will explain the most important results and suggestions we reached in this research as follows:

First: Results

- 1- The international legal framework provides a legal basis for the activities carried out by international organizations, while simultaneously it lacks in some aspects effective binding mechanisms.
- 2- Combating epidemics constitutes a common international obligation, in accordance with international legal standards, especially the International Health Regulations.
- 3- International governmental organizations have a significant impact on coordination and guidance when epidemic crises arise.
- 4- International private /non-governmental organizations play a practical role on the ground alongside the role of governmental organizations, which enhances the efficiency of the international response and ensures limiting the spread of epidemics.
- 5- The success of the efforts of governmental and non-governmental organizations in combating epidemics depends on the effectiveness of coordination and cooperation between countries and these organizations, especially when exchanging health information transparently and responding quickly to emergencies.

Second: Proposals

- 1- The call for the establishment of an independent oversight mechanism to monitor the work of international organizations in the field of combating epidemics.
- 2- Coordinating collaboration among governmental and non-governmental organizations to ensure integrated roles and avoid duplication of efforts made by each organization.
- 3- Calling on countries to adhere to the recommendations and decisions issued by relevant international organizations, in particular (recommendations issued by the World Health Organization).
- 4- Developing work on the early warning system, and calling for the accurate exchange of health information between countries and under the supervision of relevant international organizations.

- 5- Supporting the independence of international health organizations and enabling them to take effective and rapid measures in cases of the spread of the epidemic in the international community.
- 6- Establishing a permanent funding fund for emergency health situations, especially during crises and wars.

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