Coronavirus: WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus Should Resign

By Alex Berezow, PhD — March 2, 2020

The tenure of the World Health Organization's Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has been marred by incompetence and deference to dictators. The coronavirus pandemic is far too serious to allow Dr. Ghebreyesus to continue in his post. The WHO should be led by someone else.

It's unclear what planet World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus is inhabiting, but it's certainly not this one.

Today, CNBC [2] reports that Dr. Ghebreyesus claims not to have seen any evidence that Iran has been covering up its coronavirus cases, despite pretty clear evidence that Iran has been covering up its coronavirus cases. For instance, as CNBC indicates, Iran reported coronavirus deaths on the same day that it reported infections, which means the virus had been there possibly for weeks before the government said anything. Worse, BBC Persian [3] says it tallied 210 dead, but the government only acknowledges 54.

Dr. Ghebreyesus’s defense was that he cannot rely on journalists; instead, the WHO has its own mechanisms. Fine. (I wouldn't want the CDC to rely on journalists, either.) But one of those mechanisms resulted in Dr. Ghebreyesus appointing the late Zimbabwean dictator Robert Mugabe
a "goodwill ambassador" [4]," so maybe those WHO mechanisms need to be reconsidered.

That wasn't the only whopper Dr. Ghebreyesus told. On Sunday, CNBC [5] also reported that he said, "Based on the facts on the ground, containment is possible."

What?!

As of publication, the Wuhan coronavirus (COVID-19) has been confirmed in nearly 90,000 patients across 68 countries. The virus is thought to cause mild or asymptomatic infections as well as serious ones, implying that there may be hundreds of thousands of people infected. A genetic analysis suggests that the coronavirus may have been circulating in the Seattle area for six weeks [8], and today, New York City confirmed [7] its first case. The virus is way beyond containment at this point.

It's perfectly fine to be wrong. I was wrong [8]. I didn't think the coronavirus would be a big deal, but it's clearly now a big deal. When the facts change, you have to change your mind. Why is Dr. Ghebreyesus doubling down on something that is so obviously untrue?

It seems that Dr. Ghebreyesus has considerations other than public health in mind, such as politics. In late January, the WHO declined [9] to declare the coronavirus a global emergency. Then, when it finally got around to stating the obvious, it refused to name the microbe the "Wuhan coronavirus" (which is what everybody else had been calling it), opting in favor of the nonsensical but politically correct [10] SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19. (It is entirely routine to name viruses after locations. For example, Ebola is named after a river in Africa.)

On top of all that, Dr. Ghebreyesus praised China for its draconian response to the virus, which not only included quarantining millions of people but arresting anyone who "spread rumors." In an article [11] for the Council on Foreign Relations, Michael Collins concludes:

> The WHO's weak response to China's mishandling of the COVID-19 outbreak has laundered China's image at the expense of the WHO's credibility. The rate of infection in China appears to be declining, but the risk of a global pandemic is increasing. The time is ripe for clear leadership from the WHO based on science not politics.

Mr. Collins is absolutely correct. Dr. Ghebreyesus should resign.

But, of course, he won't. Not when WHO staffers spend $200 million a year on travel [12], flying in business class as they gallivant about the globe in 5-star hotels.

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