

UPJ Media Release

Tuesday, 18 February 2020

The Assembly of Rabbis and Cantors and The Union for Progressive Judaism of Australia, New Zealand and Asia look with continuing concern about the coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak. This virus has become a major pandemic, which has infected thousands of people across Asia and worldwide and has also killed over a thousand people. It is becoming clear that this virus may continue to spread and pose a danger to people across the globe. We continue to express our sorrow of the tragedy that is inflicting people in China. We hope that this outbreak will end soon, and in the meantime, we hope that people around the world can do their best to help.

Tragically, the outbreak has also been associated with a rise anti-East-Asian prejudice around the world. For example, an East Asian man in London was recently violently assaulted by attackers who reportedly shouted “coronavirus” at him. In a recent poll, 23% of Australians have said they are avoiding contact with people of “Chinese origin or appearance”. As one Chinese person noted in a recent edition of the New York Times, instead of offering comfort and concern people are reacting with fear and prejudice.

We call upon our friends and neighbours across the globe to likewise speak out and condemn those who use the outbreak as an opportunity to express racial prejudice. Indeed, this does not only include violent assaults and racial slurs, but the avoidance of contact with people simply based on their race.

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