

Hope is in the air: the Israeli 'Common Sense Model' for Corona in context

By Dr. Clemens Heni, Times of Israel (TOI) Blogs | Jan 2, 2021

If Israel was a rational country and Bibi a serious politician, it should end all lockdowns and all antidemocratic measures due to Covid-19 right now. Why? Firstly: The entire crisis is based on a controversial and hardly scholarly PCR test, and not on a threat to the entire society. Secondly: Only a tiny fraction of Israeli society is older than 65 years, according to Wikipedia some 10,5 per cent. But it has already vaccinated over 10 percent of its population, more than one million people.

The main aim of this article is to show two things: On the one hand there is an irrational approach in Israel towards Covid, which is mainstream. On the other hand, there is the "Common Sense Model".

As we know from scholarship, 99,95 percent of people under 70 will not die from Covid-19, if taken the virus. Most people will not even get the virus, though. The official numbers, however, are completely wrong – Israel has for sure not only the official 428,000 "cases". Rather 5-10 times that number. The WHO estimated worldwide 750 million Corona cases early in October 2020, while at the time officially there were only some 55 million cases. This is because most people never were tested and never occurred in any statistic. That is also indicating the irrational test epidemic or pandemic we are witnessing.

It is much more reliable and scholarly in nature to test a representative part of society (a so-called cohort) for antibodies, T-cells and the like – instead of testing healthy

people and put them even in quarantine, based on an unscholarly PCR-test. Many millions of people had to get into 14 days of quarantine without being sick, imagine! That is among the worst public health crimes in the history of mankind. Based on these antibody-tests we know the infection fatality rate, which is completely different to the case fatality rate, like 0,20 percent compared to 3,1 percent, for example.

Contrary to the flu, most people – over 80 percent – have no or mild symptoms. The entire panic was and is irrational. It was from the outset the dream of Bibi or Merkel and Johnson, Macron or Trump to control their societies via panic driven policies, lockdowns and masks.

As a scholar, translator and publisher of the book “The Israeli Nation-State“, co-edited by Fania Oz-Salzberger and Yedidia Z. Stern, I was particularly struck by a piece of Yedidia Stern in the Jerusalem Post on October 1, 2020. Stern is a great scholar of democracy and the Jewish state, to be sure. He is an important and outspoken critic of Benjamin Netanyahu. Stern’s idea to commemorate the legacy of Yitzhak Rabin via a Rabin Memorial Day is fascinating. I would consider Stern center/center-left, more or less. But similar to my experience with center-left mainstream people in Germany, Corona seems to have taken over the brains of many people. Corona may not be a threat to our immune system in the first place, rather for our ability to still think rational and clear. Stern is the incoming President of Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI). His voice is important, so let us take his words seriously.

The very title of Stern’s article from in the Jerusalem Post is strange, if not shocking:

An army of nine million to fight coronavirus

Well, Israel is experienced in warfare and it has to win every

single war, as we know. Otherwise, it would fail. It is a fantastic achievement of 2020 that the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Morocco now or very soon will have diplomatic relations with the Jewish state. That makes peace with the entire Arab world very realistic in the years to come. That is good news, very good news. For BDS and the Palestinians, Arab support for Israel is shocking and a huge setback.

But “an army of nine million” to fight nature? Would Yedidia Stern have ever written “an army of nine million to fight the flu?” “An army of nine million to fight cancer”? “An army of nine million to fight obesity”? Climate change will become the biggest threat to all of humanity in the years to come. Will there also be an “army of nine million” or more to fight it, as it will be much more dangerous to the country than any virus might be?

Stern goes on:

Let's begin with the main point: Our country's leadership has ceased to be relevant in the war against the coronavirus.

Again: You can never ever have a “war” with nature, to be sure. That is unscholarly in nature and panic driven, not a rational analysis of a virus.

But it gets even much worse:

It is highly likely that in the next two or three weeks more Israelis will succumb to COVID-19 than died in the four years of the Second Intifada (1,030), and that on Sukkot, the daily death toll will exceed the number slaughtered in one of the worst terrorist attacks in Israel's history: the Passover Eve massacre at the Park Hotel in Netanya (30), after which the IDF launched an all-out assault on the terrorist infrastructure in Judea and Samaria. Already today we are grieving over a long list of those who have succumbed to the virus, twice as long as the roster of Israeli soldiers who

gave their lives for us in the Six Day War (780).

That is such an unscholarly and maniac comparison. Wars are events among human beings and between countries, terrorist groups, militia, suicide bombers, countries and the like. As if SARS-CoV-2 is an antisemitic virus like the Intifada was driven by antisemitic ideology. How stupid can a commentator be? Was Covid made to destroy the Jewish State, as was the intention of the Arab armies in the Six Days War? How fanatic and truly stupid, unscholarly is such a comparison? Did Stern ever compare the typical seasonal flu with let's estimate 781 deaths a few years ago to the Six Day War?

Was it less harmful for Israel when people died of a virus like Influenza compared to Corona? Does Stern know, that Corona viruses have always been up to 15 percent part of acute respiratory infections? This is the reason why up to 81 percent in Germany alone have T-cells to combat SARS-CoV-2. According to a University of Tubingen study, we had these T-cells against SARS-CoV-2 even before 2020, before this virus was detected ("Cross-reactive SARS-CoV-2 peptides revealed pre-existing T cell responses in 81% of unexposed individuals..."). That is proof that Corona is not at all a completely new virus. Compare this to HIV in the 1980s with an infection fatality rate of 50 to 100 percent! HIV was new and extremely more lethal at the time than Corona could ever be. Cross-immunity from T-cells are much more important, indeed crucial, than masks or "social distancing" (what a stupid and dangerous term!).

The unscholarly outburst of Stern goes on:

In countries in which discipline comes natural to their citizens, such as Japan, Singapore and South Korea, the population's across-the-board compliance with the rules has saved lives, with no need for drastic lockdowns. In Israel, which holds the international trademark on chutzpah, the

famous Israeli free spirit has led to catastrophe. At the end of the day, the coronavirus pandemic is a disease caused by the blatant flaunting of discipline, for which the penalty is death.

With no scholarly evidence and with ignorance of factors such as climate, sunshine, population immunity, T-cells, population density, age structure, political culture, and other factors, he claims that some nations have more “discipline” than others and therefore had not so many deaths. That is not a scholarly argument at all, just a hypothesis, nothing else. Epidemiologically spoken, it is also a question of deaths in previous years.

Take a country with many deaths due to the flue like two or three years ago. Perhaps that country has had less vulnerable people in spring 2020. Perhaps some countries have many more people over 80 in 2020 compared to 2016, for example? That is the case in countries such as England or Germany, for example. This is what epidemiology and public health teaches us. But we need to listen to them instead of promoting panic, and fear. The collateral damage of lockdowns and masks mandates are unbelievable high. They will kill many more people – young people and those under 80 – in Israel in the years to come than Corona. Desperation and isolation kill.

Ask any medical expert working in nursing homes will confirm to that. Desperation and isolation also kill young business people, artists, musicians. Those who are lucky move to Sweden or Florida (where there is no mask mandate and the Governor Ron DeSantis, despite his former Trump alliance, is among the most scholarly politicians when it comes to Corona, “Gov. Ron DeSantis and medical experts talk reopening at COVID-19 roundtable”).

During the crisis and because of lockdowns, though, many people became vulnerable, as immune systems are closely

related to our mental health. A very unhappy and traumatized person is more likely to get sick compared to a more relaxed and not traumatized person. Every doctor will confirm that. Tens of thousands of people with dementia died all alone in their rooms, with no visitors allowed. That was a major lockdown crime. Others were not allowed to see relatives on their deathbed without masks. That was another crime of the mask maniacs.

Yedidia Stern, though, assumes that Israeli themselves made up the crisis via their behavior, and that assumption is tremendously antidemocratic, unscholarly and dangerous:

In Israel, which holds the international trademark onchutzpah, the famous Israeli free spirit has led to catastrophe.

That is out of touch with reality, just a hypothesis. And his support of “discipline” truly resembles German discipline, as Germans love discipline during the antidemocratic crisis, as we all know.

However, masks do not work, as many scholars have shown. Take an article by David Cayley in the Journal of Illich Studies from December 2020:

Having created this scarecrow, it then becomes quite easy to assimilate to it a new bogeyman called the “anti-masker.” Now you have an instant characterization for all who may question the policy of lockdown. In actual fact the question of masks is scientifically quite murky. Until last spring both the W.H.O and Canada’s chief medical officer, Teresa Tam held that they were of no utility in blocking an infectious agent as miniscule and as wily as a coronavirus. On April 20th of this year, the Ontario Civil Liberties Association released a study by retired physicist Denis G. Rancourt, in which he reviewed the scientific literature on masks and concluded bluntly that “masks don’t work.” “There have been extensive

randomized controlled trial (RCT) studies, and meta-analysis reviews of RCT studies,” he wrote in his abstract of this article, “which all show that masks and respirators do not work to prevent respiratory influenza-like illnesses, or respiratory illnesses believed to be transmitted by droplets and aerosol particles.”

Rancourt refers to these studies, for example:

Jacobs, J. L. et al. (2009) “Use of surgical face masks to reduce the incidence of the common cold among health care workers in Japan: A randomized controlled trial”, American Journal of Infection Control, Volume 37, Issue 5, 417 – 419.<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19216002>

N95-masked health-care workers (HCW) were significantly more likely to experience headaches. Face mask use in HCW was not demonstrated to provide benefit in terms of cold symptoms or getting colds.

(...)

bin-Reza et al. (2012) “The use of masks and respirators to prevent transmission of influenza: a systematic review of the scientific evidence”, Influenza and Other Respiratory Viruses 6(4), 257–267.<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/j.1750-2659.2011.00307.x>

“There were 17 eligible studies. ... None of the studies established a conclusive relationship between mask □ respirator use and protection against influenza infection.”

A Study from Denmark clearly shows that there is close to no difference in terms of getting the virus if you wear a mask or not:

A total of 3030 participants were randomly assigned to the recommendation to wear masks, and 2994 were assigned to control; 4862 completed the study. Infection with SARS-CoV-2 occurred in 42 participants recommended masks (1.8%) and 53 control participants (2.1%).

David Cayley concludes:

Here one almost has to pinch oneself when contemplating the degree to which ritualism and superstition can be disguised as science. Rancourt's survey, and the more recent Danish study, if not definitive, should at least weigh heavily in public discussion, but instead the "anti-masker" has become the very epitome of the anti-social, anti-scientific rube.

Ignoring and not even discussing all these findings about masks, just like the German government, for example, Yedidia Stern goes on and claims:

First, advertising agencies and PR firms can launch carefully crafted and creative campaigns to help people internalize the link between their own behavior and other people's deaths.

This reminds me of the most shocking "panic paper" ever drafted by a federal German government from March 2020. In it, the Ministry of the Interior urges politicians and decision-makers to point to little children. Why? They shall have the feeling that their misbehavior might be the reason why they see their parents or grandparents die on the sofa in the living room gasping for air.

Stern also wants to blame people – supposedly not "the other" like Arab or religious Israeli, rather all people:

Stickers such as "I pledge to maintain social distancing and always wear a mask," should become a standard feature on every Israeli's clothing, auto bumpers and balconies. This

would result in the shaming of those who do not publicly commit to this pledge and thus put the public at risk.

Yedidia Stern is not even mentioning that people might have a medical certificate to not wear a mask. Take people with asthma, or women who are victims of rape and sexual violence, when the criminal put cloths on their mouths to silence them, for example.

He is not even mentioning that these are living people who cannot wear a mask without risking to get severely hurt, getting a heart attack or cannot breathe anymore. These people have medical certificates – why is he not mentioning these exceptions from the rule? Did he ever deal with diversity, handicapped people, or traumatized people (there are many people of that kind in Israel, due to terror, for example)?

Instead, Stern wants to blame these people:

This would result in the shaming of those who do not publicly commit to this pledge and thus put the public at risk.

This happens on a daily basis in Germany and I assume in Israel as well. In Germany, some teenagers have been beaten up because they did not wear a mask – in a residential area, where it was not at all mandatory (as if beating up a person with no mask would be OK if it happens in an area where masks are mandatory). Finally, asymptomatic people may not at all be infectious: Covid-19: “Asymptomatic cases may not be infectious, Wuhan study indicates”.

Why is Stern following the panic driven trope that all people shall pretend to be sick and infectious and therefore wear a mask? Why? Where does his love for irrationality and authoritarian measures come from? Love for the people? Love for those who lost all their money, everything they had build up in a restaurant, small shop or other businesses, let alone

love for musicians, artists, painters, scholars in universities and cultural institutions? Just shot them all down, make a mask mandatory and kill the entire public space in Israel?

Stern has no medical experience, nor do I have. But I studied with Professor Ivan Illich 25 years ago at the University of Bremen – Illich was a leading public health scholar – and I learnt in 2020 a lot of things from medical scholars, public health experts and epidemiologists this year. I have co-written and edited two books on Corona (190 and 380 pages, published in May and October 2020, respectively) and published dozens of articles in German and English.

Take Professor Ines Kappstein, she was working in many hospitals her entire career and published an article in August 2020 where she convincingly proved that “masks do not work”. That “Journal for Hospital Hygiene up2date” is a mainstream journal, among its editors are scholars from the Charité or the Robert Koch-Institute in Berlin, for example.

Kappstein can show that the Robert Koch-Institute simply said that masks work, despite missing evidence! There might also be a huge gap in scholarship between the panic driven and extremely authoritarian head of the Robert Koch-Institute, Lothar Wieler, a veterinary surgeon, and the staff. The same holds for the Charité hospital, its panic driven poster boy Christian Drosten, and the more serious co-workers there.

Why are mask mandates and lockdowns not working, despite their devastating consequences for democracy? Take Sweden as main example: Sweden never had a lockdown, never closed restaurants and shop, never had a mask mandate, only the advice to be respectful. Advice, not order. No penalties. Israel, though, like Germany, seems to be loving penalties, orders, and, yes, police violence as well as denunciations by neighbors.

Sweden still has a lower death rate than the UK, France,

Italy, the US, Spain and other countries with extreme mask mandates and lockdowns. Sweden is the only country and democracy worldwide, where adult people have been treated respectfully and as adults – not as toddler or children who need to be told what to do.

Even if Stern believes that masks do work, he should discuss that many scholars proof otherwise. He can say, that he does not believe these mainstream studies, but as a non-expert to urge the public to put “blame” on those who do not follow the Israeli mask mandate – is simply unscholarly, undemocratic and outrageous.

Stern is even getting more ridiculous or insidious:

Ultra-Orthodox leaders should follow the bold examples of Rabbi David Yosef and Rabbi Gershon Edelstein, and exploit every possible opportunity to trumpet the obligation under Halacha, Jewish law: “Be most careful of your lives.

That is simply unbelievable, to invoke religion and the Halacha to follow antidemocratic, irrational measures to stop an unstoppable natural virus, which is not at all threatening our societies – just a tiny part of them and only a fraction of that a tiny part. Again, he invokes the irrational trope that individual behavior is responsible for death of other people. Even worse, he says that a person has not the right to end his or her life. Every single adult must have the right to decide if a risk is worth taking or not, regardless what risk. Be it Covid, be it a motor-bicycle at the age of 73, as Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry Michael Levitt from California (a former IDF man) – a supporter of the Great Barrington Declaration – said.

Yedidia Stern ends his truly irrational article like this:

Enough with the blaming. The time has come to accept responsibility. We must drill it into our minds: It doesn't

matter what the other person does; what's critical is what I do. We can defeat the Angel of Death that is waltzing through our streets and homes, rescue the economy and restore national solidarity by means of one simple formula: two meters and a mask. Perhaps we should name the struggle "The Two-Meter War."

Even the two-meter rule is a joke, to be sure, as Professor Robert Dingwall from Nottingham Trent University in the UK emphasizes. He is a medical sociologist and has shown, among many other important insights, that in hospitals it was always about the one-meter rule when it comes to respiratory viruses, for example. For no other reason but panic and maniac, Boris Johnson has then introduced a two-meter distance, just like Stern promotes it. No medical evidence nowhere. We can learn a lot from Dingwall, including his take of Philip Strong about "Psychologic epidemic" from 1990. Stern could read that as well, if he is interested in a scholarly analysis of an epidemic.

Even the World Street Journal writes: "The Failed Experiment of Covid Lockdowns. New data suggest that social distancing and reopening haven't determined the spread."

The WHO and many scholars claimed early on that masks do not work. At some point in April and later, they changed their mind, as shown and quoted above by David Cayley – to aggravate the panic. Our entire public space and shops (the few still open) and public transport have become panic rooms. With no evidence. The Austrian head of the federal Health Organization, Franz Allerberger, said on TV that even in the underground train masks do not work and close to no one ever got infected in a train, let alone a shop or supermarket. In particular, Allerberger said, "masks in open-air space are completely useless".

What is most striking for me is the following: the

authoritarian character of many people out there. Those people, many from our political and cultural elites among them, who have literally no idea about medical affairs, but follow irrational policies and urge the entire country to put blame on those who do not wear a mask or who put not enough "distance" between themselves and a possible "victim".

To assume, every single person is a threat to each other, is the most maniac idea in the history of mankind since the end of the World War II.

Did Stern ever deal with the Ct-value of PCR-tests? How many positive PCR tests in Israel are reliable, taken the fact that only a Ct-value below 30 or below 27 or less can indicate a more serious virus load? Does he know? Did he at least more recently follow a court rule like from Portugal, where it was judged, that a PCR test cannot justify quarantine, as a PCR test is not able to confirm if a person has enough a virus load at all?

The PCR test "is unable to determine, beyond reasonable doubt, that such positivity result corresponds, in fact, to the infection of a person by the SARS-CoV-2 virus", said the Lisbon Court of Appeal.

Although this court rule is from November, and Stern's comment from October 2020, there was much evidence before, internationally, that PCR-tests are not valid at all. The unreliability of any PCR-test on Corona by Drosten et al. has been shown more recently as well by 22 international experts and Professors in infectiology, biology, immunology, virology, and related fields ("Review report Corman-Drosten et al. Eurosurveillance 2020", Pieter Borger(1), Bobby Rajesh Malhotra(2) , Michael Yeadon(3) , Clare Craig(4), Kevin McKernan(5) , Klaus Steger(6) , Paul McSheehy(7) , Lidiya Angelova(8), Fabio Franchi(9), Thomas Binder(10), Henrik Ullrich(11) , Makoto Ohashi(12), Stefano Scoglio(13), Marjolein Doesburg-van Kleffens(14), Dorothea Gilbert(15),

Rainer Klement(16), Ruth Schrufer(17), Berber W. Pieksma(18), Jan Bonte(19), Bruno H. Dalle Carbonare(20), Kevin P. Corbett(21), Ulrike Kämmerer(22).)

We know from the WHO that the Infection Fatality Rate of Corona is between 0.14 and 0.23 percent. The average age of death is almost everywhere about 80 years or more.

Stern loses touch with reality, again, and writes:

Second, the media should publish the obituaries of COVID-19 victims on a daily basis. Instead of the obsessive attention focused on our disgraceful politics, the media should be unmasking the devastating price we are paying for the national fiasco; not as yellow journalism, not to defend the prime minister or to force him out of office, but rather to save lives.

If most people are just tested by a non-reliable test, how does Stern know for sure that all victims had no comorbidities and would not have died anyway this year? Professor Nida-Rümelin from Germany said in a talk-show to a representative of Merkel's government, that the tiny number of 0.8 percent of the first 2000 deaths in Italy had no serious preconditions. Read: most people were already were sick and would have died very soon.

There is an answer to this not evidence based trope by Irish philosopher Sinead Murphy from the University of Newcastle in England, just a few days ago, on December 30:

The Guardian newspaper ran a headline for months this year – So Much Living Left To Do – under which were written accounts of those who had died with COVID-19. Yet the average age of Covid death in England and Wales is more than 82 years. Older than the average life expectancy. And of those who died younger than this, almost all had co-morbidities. Those who died with COVID-19 this year did not have so much living left

to do. They had, almost universally, very little living left to do. Their lives were not unimportant. But their lives were coming to an end.

But when life is merely non-death, there is no nuance, no context, no qualification. There is not more life and less life, there is not better quality of life and worse quality of life. There is simply life – absolute life. And therefore no limit to the amount of living left to do.

When life is no longer life-towards-death, when life is a matter of life or death, life loses its vital metre. There is no rise and fall. There is no time to die. There is just life. Which is to say, non-death.

That is exactly the case in that fascinating and tremendously important article by Sinead Murphy, without following her Heideggerian tropes in that paragraph (and her pro-Heidegger ideology can also be found in her book “Zombie University”).

Maniacs in 2020 have defined life as non-death. But life is much more, without universities, sports, culture, pubs, restaurants, beaches, public life – there is no life at all. To be sure, no lockdown has saved a single life. But lockdowns destroyed uncounted lives and businesses, both in Israel and mainly in the non-industrial countries, where people suffer and die from hunger, as the World Food Programme, the Nobel Prize Laureate for Peace in 2020, said.

While close to no one in sub-Saharan Africa died of Corona, hunger is a huge topic, the same holds for vast parts of Asia. These countries were victims of their elites and politicians, and they were influenced by Western panic policies of the EU, Israel, of America, as World Food Programme Executive Director David Beasley says:

What kind of impact has COVID-19 had on global hunger, and what are you expecting to come down the line?

After COVID, the number of people we projected to be marching to the brink of starvation went from around 135 million to 270 million. That's a brutal number. As economies contract, particularly western economies, that has a ripple effect through the Middle East and Africa. Then there are the unintended consequences of decisions made in a vacuum. At the peak of the COVID crisis in May, you had 1.6 billion kids out of school—370 million of those missed out on school meals. For many of them, the school meal is the only meal they receive in a day. So they are now going to be more vulnerable to not just COVID but also measles, cholera, diphtheria, and malaria. You won't believe how many ministries of health, or presidents or prime ministers I've had to call and say: if you shut down that port, or this distribution point, or that border, I'm not going to be able to get the food in.

More recently, on Dec. 13, 2020, Professor in Philosophy Nida-Rumelin was again on German TV and urged politicians to stop lockdowns, mainly because the economy will be not just harmed, but completely destroyed. Already now, Nida-Rumelin said, we fear “30 million deaths” in the non-industrialized countries, as “supply chains are interrupted” etc.

If people in Thailand, the Philippines (a general view on the dramatic collapse of tourists in the Philippines be found here) or Indonesia and India had built a tiny economy based on young Israeli tourists, who want to flip out after their IDF service, these economies just faded away in 2020/2021.

Ramesh Thakur, an emeritus professor in the Crawford School of Public Policy, Australian National University; a senior research fellow with the Toda Peace Institute; a fellow of the Australian Institute of International Affairs; and a former United Nations assistant secretary-general, already wrote on May 29, 2020, in the Japan Times:

In low-income countries dominated by daily wage laborers

working in the informal economy, people “fear hunger may kill us before coronavirus.”

In India millions of interstate migrant laborers were caught unprepared by the lockdown imposed with four hours’ notice on March 25. Especially after it was extended in mid-April, many decided that with no jobs and wages, and public transport shut, they would rather walk hundreds of miles to home in groups, and die in their home villages than in lonely conditions on foreign soil. Sadly, many have died along the way. The story of 12-year old girl Jamlo Madkam is one of the few to make it into the national and international press.

Not all critics of hard lockdown policies are motivated by greed. Conversely, the self-virtuous can sometimes climb so far up the moral high horse that they lose sight of the ground reality. This crisis finally confirms just how disconnected inner-city elites are from the values of liberal international solidarity that animated their intellectual forebears.

Stern is not even pointing to these international consequences of lockdowns and mask mandatory panic industries. It is easy for very rich people and countries to implement such measures, but it is an existential threat to many people, hundreds of millions of people, in the not-industrialized countries.

In addition, mask mandates are destroying all or so-called democracies into hygiene-state regimes.

Almost no people under 60 died of Covid, very few under 70 and most people who died of Covid were 80+ and would have died in 2020 anyway. That is not cynicism, but reality. Old people know that. The University of Munich (LMU) emphasized a few days ago, that Germany has no substantial excess mortality at all. Euromomo, a page dedicated to analyze excess mortality in most European countries, also shows that Germany has close to no excess mortality. The official 34,000 or more Covid-19

deaths in Germany so far are mainly *rather deaths of natural causes*. If Covid was dangerous for the entire society, many people under 60 would have died. And they did not. Nowhere on earth.

Instead of promoting authoritarian measures, we shall focus on both fighting antisemitic conspiracy myths concerning Corona, as well as on fighting antidemocratic policies in Western countries. We even know from Merkel and other politicians that they embrace the totalitarian style of China. In particular, Merkel said, that in China or South Korea people are “not rallying” against Corona policies, and “wear masks”. Such a support of a dictatorship – China is a one-party dictatorship with no free press, with a huge catalogue of human rights violations – speaks volumes. So much for ‘democrats’ who embrace both China and the mask.

Contrary to Yedidia Stern’s panic driven and authoritarian, antidemocratic bumper-stickers to shame those who do not follow his order, there are other Israeli who are true experts when it comes to viruses: professors at Israeli hospitals and Universities. There is a sub-group of co-signers of the Great Barrington Declaration (from Oct. 4, 2020) in Israel.

A part of that group is now performing a specific Israeli wing of that declaration, called “Common Sense Model”:

Common Sense Model

The alternative model aims to breach what has become a wall-to-wall consensus of government non-pharmaceutical interventions. It was conceived by three Tel Aviv University faculty members: Profs Udi Kimron, Ariel Munitz, and Motti Gerlic; and now has the backing of 148 scientists and physicians.

Similar in essence to the US-based Great Barrington Declaration (signed by more than 50,000 scientists and medical practitioners to date), the Israeli model calls to

handle the coronavirus pandemic in a rights-respecting approach that cuts back government's coercive measures to the bare minimum.

Last week, in what may be the harshest criticism yet penned, more than 100 Israeli physicians signed a letter excoriating the government's policies employed to combat the coronavirus.

"We, male and female physicians in Israel, strongly object to the coercive measures against the spread of the coronavirus, including lockdown, curfews, closure of the education system, digital surveillance and movement restrictions," the letter stated, published first by broadcaster Channel 12.

"The coercive measures now deliberated constitute a destructive infringement of fundamental civil rights, and their enforcement lacks medical justification with a black flag raised above them."

One of the signers of the Israeli „Common Sense Model“, is Dr. Tomer Cooks:

Dr Tomer Cooks is a faculty member at the Department of Microbiology, Immunology and Genetics at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, who has been against lockdowns from the start.

Cooks makes many tremendously important points in my view, according to the report of i24news:

"Even though I'm used to being out of the mainstream, in scientific and medical issues I'm always surrounded by peers who would see 'eye-to-eye' with me. Climate change, risk factors for cancer, vaccines; these are all part of my 'day-to-day' milieu. Suddenly, here, many well-educated and experienced friends were embracing the draconian lockdowns as the savior from a monstrous plague."

He further hit back at the excessive government spending to implement the lockdown policy, reaching as high as \$68 billion, according to financial outlet Globes, whereas "if we took NIS10 billion [\$3 billion] eight months ago and smartly spent them on creating a system that allowed the virus to spread in the young and healthy population – like we always do – then we would not be facing such a disaster," he warned, referring to the high figures of unemployment, increase in national debt and deficit, which could take decades to pay off.

"Simply look at the numbers," Cooks continued. "Sixty million people were projected to die worldwide in 2020. We are already at the end of December and we can safely determine that this number is stable. No excess mortality – no matter what measures were taken."

"Lockdowns are never a good answer, so no. There is no excess death in Israel currently. There was an uptick that lasted two months, very similar to a typical Israeli winter and I don't remember us shutting down society then. If the vaccine is efficient, we can protect the elderly for a short while without locking down the entire population. It has been a harsh year for many, mostly from the weaker parts of society which will need a lot of support in the coming years, and since we already cut down civil budgets, I feel like we are heading to a very tough period."

I just can hope that the political and cultural elite in Israel, represented by someone like Yedidia Stern, is listening to the professors and doctors at Israeli universities, hospitals and other medical institutions. There is no war of 9 million Israeli against a virus. Period. Stop this panic and finally, after almost 10 months, start listening to the real scholars in public health, epidemiology, medicine, immunology – and first and foremost to the social scientist and intellectuals to urge our societies to

immediately stop all lockdowns, curfews and mask mandates.

Otherwise many more people will die. Many more. Our leaders are already responsible for those thousands and tens of thousands and millions of deaths caused by postponed surgeries, cancer treatments, heart treatments, suicides and destroyed businesses and university careers, theater careers etc., and most urgently, postponed measles vaccinations like in Africa, and hunger ('usually', a 23,000 people die of hunger on a daily basis – is there a war against hunger?, this number has increased due to the consequences of lockdowns.)

In my view, at the core of the entire crisis lies a huge lack of self-confidence and the love for authoritarianism, even a joy to order people what to do. "We are at war – are you a traitor?"

Why are so many people frightened of death, despite the fact – early on – that almost exclusively very old and sick people are targeted?

Why have so many people not the slightest idea of life and death as part of life? There was never a life without risks and there will never be. A few weeks before I first came to Israel there was an attack on an Israeli aircraft in Kenya, in late November 2002. My flight was mid-December from Vienna. Of course, I took my flight, but not all international speakers came to that important conference of the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism (SICSA), headed by Prof. Robert S. Wistrich (1945–2015). A few years later there was an alarm in Ben Yehuda street, when I was in my hotel at Zion Square in Jerusalem, in the famous and historically "Jerusalem hostel". Happily, the "bomb" was not a bomb. But there was a risk, that is for sure. We always take risks. Where does this completely unprecedented panic vis-à-vis Corona come from? Is it the a-social media complex of Twitter and Facebook alone? Or rather the aim of politicians to rule over people, to make the entire world a kind of China?

We can all die on a daily basis, be it an accident, a heart attack, cancer, fire, a thunderstorm, heat wave, a respiratory of another virus, wars, terror attacks and the like. Israel has huge experience with these kinds of daily threats.

Where does this unprecedented panic come from? Why do adults have so less mental and metaphysical strength? Did they never experience that during a crisis the most important thing is to gather and debate, to listen to others, to enjoy art, music, or drinks and food – and to never ever isolate? Isolating is the worst thing a society can do when it comes to what crisis ever, as human beings are social beings. Life with masks and no gatherings is in fact no life – it does not protect a single person – but it destroys everything our societies are all about: smiles, to stick out one's tongues, to cry or laugh and uncounted other human feelings we can find in our faces and those of "the other".

We have the biggest panic epidemic in the history of mankind. Even scholars and political activists and commentators in big newspapers succumb to that panic and stopped thinking rationally, evidence based and scholarly.

But the Israeli Common Sense Model can show the Jewish country a way into a great future. A future of rational discourse, only protection for the very few who need it and completely normal life for all others. As "normal" life in Israel never was "normal", but it was great and will be even greater taken the huge advantage of a possible peace with the Arab world and a tough fight of Iran alongside the Arabs. Life in Germany never was great, but since the end of Nazi Germany it was never as bad as today.

Things have to become better and they will become better. Perhaps. Otherwise we will no longer live in democracies, but in hygiene states with complete digital control of fever at airports, restaurants, shops, universities, with total control of whom we met for how long and where, with mandatory masks

everywhere, most people walk with a stoop, there would be no smile at Ben Gurion Airport anymore (at least every winter, when Influenza will kill, as usual, hundreds or 1000 people in the Jewish state, which is part of life, no drama nowhere), so why should I ever return to Israel in the first place? I shall return, because there are serious people out there, like the Common Sense medical scholars and practitioners, or because of Yoram Lass, who gave the Robert S. Wistrich Memorial Lecture 2020 at the Berlin International Center for the Study of Antisemitism (BICSA) on May 26, 2020.

I am a public intellectual, political scientist and publisher. I never sold so many books as in 2020, I am not happy about that, as these books were about Corona and the panic industry. There has never been such an important time for that kind of scholarship, but most people fail, almost all Universities embrace authoritarian measures. Still, for book authors in the social sciences and humanities this is the time to speak out.

However, never has there been such a bad time for dystopian fiction writers.

About the Author

Dr Clemens Heni is director of The Berlin International Center for the Study of Antisemitism (BICSA)