

The Effectiveness of Persuasive Appeals during COVID-19 Pandemic: A Case of Jordanian Defense Orders

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Abstract

Jordan was one of the first Middle Eastern countries to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors of this paper examined the Jordanian government's persuasive appeals in defense orders issued between March and August 2020 to contain the pandemic. The authors discussed how the focus group responded to these appeals and concluded that this behavior did not halt or reduce the daily incidence or death rates, resulting in a major crisis of trust between the government and the public. The authors also concluded that some measures were not followed by citizens, as evidenced by their failure to follow preventive measures and the timing of the ban, despite the fact that persuasion was used.

Keywords: Effective • Persuasive appeals • Crisis • Defense orders

Introduction

Since February 2020, the world has been exposed to the COVID-19 virus, and the World Health Organization has coordinated international efforts to ensure the proper management of its negative impacts on individuals and their standard of living [1]. On 3rd November, 2020, the WHO declared COVID-19 to be a global pandemic. Jordan was one of the first countries in the Middle East to respond to the pandemic by taking systematic preventive measures to limit its effects and repercussions [2]. The Jordanian government rushed to provide adequate medical treatment for the affected, and to maintain basic public services for citizens. In so doing, it implemented a total lockdown to contain the disease and reduce its impact (IDLO, 2020). It is well known that Jordan suffers from many pressures and challenges, the most important of which are a lack of natural resources and its economy [3]. In addition to these, Jordan has a complex demographic composition resulting from the presence of Palestinian, Iraqi and Syrian refugees; this situation places severe pressure on the infrastructure and increases unemployment rates. In this regard, the scale and duration of pandemic revealed a lack of preparedness in many areas affecting the lives of citizens and their standard of living.

On March 26, 2020, the WHO published a set of strategies for all countries to implement to confront the pandemic, including: increasing the number of health sector workers and improving their

training; positioning these workers as required; implementing systems to enable the detection of suspected cases; expanding the production of reagents and ensuring their adequate availability; identifying potential and appropriate sites on which to establish health centers to receive suspected cases and then building them; and, developing plans to impose quarantine and apply the required government measures to defeat the epidemic (World Health Organization, 2020). The Jordanian government has made a great deal of effort to reduce the incidence of the epidemic by initiating preventive measures early, and avoid a crisis situation which would overwhelm health capabilities [4-9]. However, these efforts were met with disapproval and rejection by large segments of the Jordanian public, because they were alien to the wider public's culture, convictions, and behavior. The government was therefore required to persuade people to accept these new ideas and attitudes, and so it resorted to harnessing several means of communication to achieve this goal. The most important of these was the announcement of the activation of Defense Law No. 13 of 1992, followed by the first 15 of the various defense orders which are the subject of study.

Attempts to change behavior via written communications are usually conducted by employing rhetoric in persuasive persuasion through various means of communication. The art of the effective use of words in speaking and writing, while the art of persuasion depends on the number of persuasive appeals used to win over the masses to a specific idea, product, or service. Persuading the masses

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necessarily requires that those in charge of the communication process, whether spoken or written; for example, they may present reliable evidence sources for the information and ideas that they propose (ethos), or employ words and phrases based on logic (logos), or raise emotions in the target audience (pathos). In the Jordanian defense orders focused on in this research, we may see the contents as informational messages published in written, visual and audio media, in an attempt to attract the attention of the public and convince them of the need to confront COVID-19. Prior to this pandemic, "In the coming influenza pandemic, whether now or in the future, and whether the virus is light or heavy, the vaccine will be the first and most important weapon in confronting it, and the second most important weapon in confronting it is communication". Given the importance of the communication process during epidemics and pandemics, this study focuses on the forms of persuasion employed in the defense orders in order to persuade the public to change their thoughts and behavior in confronting Covid-19. To determine which forms were employed, we analyze the persuasive appeals (moral, emotional and logical) employed in the first 15 defense orders issued by the Jordanian government, based on Defense Law no. 13 of 1992 (hereafter the Defense Law).

Increased emotional responses to positive social messages while isolating oneself during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results showed that public health messages often use persuasive language to change attitudes and behaviors, triggering a wide range of negative and positive emotions. How emotions play a vital role in individuals' behavior during epidemics. Fear, for example, increases the likelihood that citizens will follow public health advice while hope can stimulate false optimism that may lead to lower levels of protective behavior. The study also used time-series automatic regression analyses to show that the emotional rhetoric used can influence the number of daily COVID-19 cases.

Current responses to COVID-19 in Indonesia between January and March, 2020. The study analyzed media content related to government speeches, and reports on the implementation of measures that the Indonesian government demanded its people adhere to in order to confront the spread of Covid-19. Five recommendations were made:

- Strengthening health responses as defined by the WHO
- Applying a proactive approach to saving lives and humanitarian coordination that enables governments to take the right continents
- Strengthening economic resilience
- Being transparent during strategic crises, communicating about risks, and engaging social influencers
- Promoting a comprehensive community-based cooperative approach to achieve resilience and readiness.

The use of rhetorical appeals to increase credibility, reasoning, and emotions, and increase persuasion focused on the use of credibility, reasoning, and emotion to increase persuasion rates. The study found that certain rhetorical techniques can help persuade people to accept the arguments. Logic, emotion, and ethics, if deliberately used, add a convincing power to what is written.

Literature Review

Jordanian government procedures

The Jordanian government quickly implemented medical measures to contain the pandemic, such as by forming a committee of health care professionals and government officials to coordinate the effort to confront COVID-19. The Ministry of Health made plans to contain the pandemic and also implemented health protocols in line with the strategies announced by the World Health Organization (World Health Organization, 2020) and, in this regard, it launched several on-going awareness-raising media campaigns in various media and communication outlets. All the security services and armed forces provided assistance such as by transporting food, water and fuel to all regions and neighborhoods, including the various refugee camps. On March 17, 2020, King Abdullah II of Jordan approved the use of the Defense Law and imposition of a state of emergency. The King stressed that the application of the law must not hinder the civil and political freedoms of Jordanians and must preserve public freedoms and freedom of expression. As a result, the government imposed a curfew in all parts of the Kingdom, closed the external and internal borders between cities and governorates, banned public gatherings and events, and implemented strict social distancing measures. In addition, the government allowed dairy, food and pharmaceutical factories to continue operating to meet the needs of citizens, within necessary conditions. As a result of these measures, which continued for 40 days, the Jordanian economy has greatly declined.

Undoubtedly, confronting COVID-19 is a national issue that requires concerted and consistent efforts. The British government, for example, considered that "the advancement of national interests requires the use of defense as a means of communication to influence the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of the masses" (U.K. Government, 2019). The main defense orders issued by the Jordanian government are presented in (Table 1).

Defense order No.	Purpose	Date
1	To protect the private sector from the consequences of the pandemic, which was then in its early stages on March 19, 2020. The order was the most prominent of those which disrupted some provisions of the Social Security Law	Mar. 21, 2020
2	To restrict the movement of people across all regions of the Kingdom	Mar. 20, 2020
3	To impose fines and penalties up to and including imprisonment, in addition to permitting vehicles to be seized and shops to be closed in the case of violations. The penalties are raised for repeated violations	Mar. 26, 2020
4	To establish a fund to combat the pandemic, called the 'Hemmat	Mar. 31, 2020

	National Fund'. Two accounts receive donations: the 'Al-Khair' account for the benefit of poor and needy families set up through the Ministry of Social Development, and the 'Donations/Ministry of Health' account through the Central Bank of Jordan		tourism sector. Refunds of bank guarantees provided by tourist offices and travel agents were allowed
5	To suspend the implementation of the provisions of the Jordanian Companies Law No. 22 of 1997	Mar. 31, 2020	
6	To protect workers' rights in various economic sectors in light of the tendency to gradually operate some sectors with the continuation of the curfew	Aug. 4, 2020	
7	To organize school and university education, remote vocational training, and student evaluation mechanisms	Apr. 15, 2020	
8	To protect public health, and limit the spread of the emerging pandemic	Apr. 15, 2020	
9	To provide economic protection and support for companies affected by the pandemic, including a daily support mechanism and a series of important measures and decisions to support workers in affected economic establishments and protect them from the effects of unemployment	Apr. 16, 2020	
10	To extend the prescribed period for filing income tax returns, and the period relating to the obligation to transfer tax to the Income and Sales Tax Department	Apr. 30, 2020	
11	To obligate the owners of authorized facilities to operate with the utmost caution, and to abide by the means of prevention against the outbreak of the pandemic	Mar. 5, 2020	
12	To amend the penalty in Defense Order No. 3 stipulating a curfew, and the reports contained thereunder, so that the penalty is a fine of 100 to 500 dinars. In accordance with this order, penalties for the perpetrators and repeat offenders were also increased	May 20, 2020	
13	To support the sectors affected by the pandemic, especially the	Jun. 14, 2020	
14			To create protection and empowerment programs to sustain the work of the private sector and enable it to bear the burdens entailed by the pandemic
15			To reduce the financial burden of establishments and individuals through Social Security Initiatives.

Table 1. The 15 defense orders considered in this study.

Persuasive appeals

The content of any message, regardless of its form, is linked to the ability to persuade in order to influence ideas and change behavior. Hence, it is imperative for those in charge of public relations to consider approved trends in the content of the messages they broadcast. When media content has clear objectives, it usually has a strong influence because it increases awareness and education and shapes public behavior. During crises, government public relations managers may resort to extreme caution in formulating their communication messages before publication, and always set in mind a clear focus regarding what is and is not included. In other words, the content is shaped with the aim of aligning the agendas of the public and the media, as it is not easy for the audience to understand the frameworks that govern the media content of the messages to which it is exposed. This means that audiences do not build their opinions and decisions by themselves. The Greek philosopher Aristotle, writing in the fifth century A.D., described logical, emotional, and moral ways to motivate and persuade the public. These concepts will now be clarified in turn.

Appeals to logic

Logical appeals are primarily rhetorical appeals that focus on the arguments presented by the author, and are achieved if the recipient is convinced of an author's argument. Such appeals depend on the principle of reason and proof, because using these appeals requires providing the public with reasons to adopt a position, value or practice, and then supporting these reasons with evidence from research, statistics, figures and proven facts. Indeed, one study has shown that the most persuasive messages are those that contain explicit and proven arguments.

Appeals to ethics

Ethos refers to the credibility of a speaker in terms of three dimensions: competence, trustworthiness, and dynamism. The two most researched dimensions of credibility are competence and trustworthiness. In other words, in order to persuade audiences, such appeals focus on the speaker being honest, fair, loving and respectful; in this regard, characters such as celebrities are loved because of their talent or expertise, while power holders are

respected for their position or profession, and friends and neighbors are likable for their similarity in social status.

Appeals to emotion

An appeal to emotion is rooted in feelings and may create feelings of joy, anger or sadness. Such appeals require explanations coupled with the experiences of specific contemporary or historical figures.

From the above definitions, it is clear that persuasion can easily be used in all media by including messages broadcast to different audiences. Within this framework, it must be noted that the public is always keen to understand the numerical and statistical language contained in communication messages, and so this must be clarified and simplified to avoid confusion and the subsequent loss of the message. Moreover, the increase in the use of emotional appeal has led to the public being distracted and thus not responding to what is requested and so, for this reason, persuasive appeals in communication messages on the economy must be carefully considered.

Materials and Methods

This study employed qualitative analysis to focus on the content and form of the various persuasive approaches employed in 15 defense orders announced by the Jordanian government between 19 March and 9 August, 2020.

Result

Logical appeals were used most by the government, accounting for almost 38% of the total; this indicates that government was aware of what should be done. The government focused on convincing the public through persuasive logical appeals, rather than other types. However, fear appeals were also quite common and comprised 30% of the total, indicating that the government was also aware of the importance of this type of appeal in achieving positive responses to its orders seeking to protect the public from COVID-19 (Tables 2 and 3).

Persuasive appeal type	Number	Percentage
Logic	22	37.3
Emotion	10	16.95
Ethics	9	15.25
Fear	18	30.5
Total	59	100

Table 2. Frequency distribution and percentage of persuasive appeals in the 15 defense orders.

Defense order No.	Type of appeal			
	Logical	Emotional	Ethics	Fear
1	2	1	1	1
2	1	0	1	1
3	0	0	0	3

4	1	1	2	0
5	0	1	0	1
6	1	1	3	2
7	3	3	1	1
8	3	0	0	2
9	2	1	0	0
10	1	0	1	0
11	2	0	0	3
12	0	0	0	4
13	3	1	0	0
14	1	1	0	0
15	3	0	0	0
Sub-total	22	10	9	18
Total appeals	59			

Table 3. Frequency distribution and percentage of persuasive appeals by defense order.

Types of appeals employed in all defense orders

In the following sections, we consider each defense order in detail (Table 4).

Defense Order No.1 (March 19, 2020)	
Logic	The obligatory social security insurance contribution ratio payable to the Social Security Corporation was amended for March, April and May, 2020. The total monthly contribution is 5.25% of the employee's wage, subject to deductions, with 4.25% payable by the employer and 1% deducted from the employee (as opposed to the original contribution equivalent to 21.75% of the employee's salary, subject to deduction, with 14.25% payable by the employer and 7.5% deducted from the employee)
Emotion	By linking the decision to human health
Ethics	Presenting promises: especially those related to allowing citizens to fulfil their needs for specific hours, starting from March 24, 2020, i.e., four days after the date of the decision
Fear	This was evident in this matter through the threat

	of punishment in the event of failure to respond, so the violator could be imprisoned for a period not exceeding one year
Defense Order No. 2 (March 20, 2020)	
Logic	A curfew and lockdown
Emotion	-
Ethics	Some exceptions were given to certain persons/sectors
Fear	This came with fear of the spread of the pandemic to justify the decision and link it to the global health situation
Defense Order NO. 3 (March 25, 2020)	
Logic	-
Emotion	-
Ethics	-
Fear	Any person authorized to open their business, but who opens it outside the permitted hours, is subject to a fine of not less than JOD 1,000, and ordered to close the business for 14 days
	Any individual who violates the provisions of Defense Order No. 2, which prohibits the movement of people in all regions of the Kingdom,
	Fine ranging from JOD 100 to JOD 500 for a first violation;
	Imprisonment for a period not exceeding one year or a fine ranging from JOD 100 and JOD 500, or both penalties, any for repeated violation; seizure of any vehicle used during the 30-day curfew period
	Any person not authorized to open their business, but who opens it regardless, is subject to imprisonment for a period not greater than three months or a fine equivalent to JOD 3,000, or both
Defense Order No. 4 (March 20, 2020)	
Logic	The creation of the national support fund collecting aid to combat the spread of the virus
Emotion	Addressing the instincts of security and hunger to

	collect donations for affected and poor families suffering from the pandemic's effects
Ethics	Attempting to show honesty to gain public confidence by promising to form committees of reputed people to supervise these funds and the means and mechanisms for spending them;
	Linking the decision and previous decisions to the Kingdom's economic and social conditions due to the pandemic
Fear	-
Defense Order No.5 (March, 30 2020)	
Logic	-
Emotion	By showing a set of procedures that stop the validity of all periods and dates stipulated in the legislation in force and the dates for taking any action by institutions and government departments and social security, as well as submitting tax and other declarations to gain the cooperation and sympathy of the people
Ethics	-
Fear	By affirming what was stated in the previous defense orders and imposing penalties on violators
Defense Order No. 6 (April 8, 2020)	
Logic	The defense order was prepared by clarifying that the aim of the curfew is to protect the lives and health of Jordanians, and to make all possible efforts to reduce the economic effects of the pandemic
Emotion	Through extravagant promises to workers in the private sector and providing incentives to them
Ethics	The remote work mechanism regulates wages within these circumstances and situations
Fear	By linking the opening and operation of the economic sectors to safety and public health controls and national priorities
Defense order No. 7 (April 15, 2020)	

Logic	<p>The regulation of distance learning in schools and universities;</p> <p>Remote vocational training;</p> <p>Student evaluation mechanisms</p>	-
Emotion	<p>Stop working with the previously applied texts related to absence, deprivation or dismissal of the student due to the low grades of the student;</p> <p>The Higher Education Council is authorized to take any decision it deems appropriate on extending the term of each student;</p> <p>Adopting the principle of 'successful fail' in the disciplines whose nature allows for this, provided it is chosen and approved by the student</p>	<p>All individuals must adhere to the decisions, measures and procedures laid out by the competent authorities and the Epidemic Investigation Committee, including medical quarantine and home lockdown</p>
Defense Order No. 9 (April 17, 2020)		
Logic		<p>The government introduces measures to safeguard the economy and alike workers through symbiotic programs;</p> <p>This order clarified the following programs: Tadamun 1, Tadamun 2, Musaned 1, Musaned 2 and Musaned 3, their similarities and differences; the elements of these programs and their conditions; their beneficiaries and implementers; and, the general provisions for each</p>
Ethics	<p>Non-traditional educational methods and various forms of assessment of student achievement carried out by electronic means, or distance education, are the approved methods in all state and private educational institutions within the Kingdom in accordance with the provisions of the Education Law</p>	
Emotion		<p>The order is linked to ensuring workers' livelihoods and employment stability, sustaining the work of the private sector, and protecting the national economy</p>
Fear	<p>Disrupting educational institutions, until they start working hours and returning to study in them as usual, according to the decisions issued by the official authorities</p>	
Defense Order No. 8 (April 15, 2020)		
Logic	<p>Taking this decision was linked to preserving the safety of society and the promise of endangering it, as well as limiting the spread of the virus;</p> <p>The provisions of this order apply to every Jordanian or foreigner residing or present on the territory of the Kingdom;</p> <p>Describing the procedures and the method of disclosing the injury to the competent authorities, specifying the implementation procedures and details of the instructions related to this</p>	<p>Reliance on authority by relying on the provisions of Articles 3 and 10 of the Defense Law as a justification for issuing this order</p>
Ethics		-
Emotion		-
Ethics		<p>By confirming what is stated in the Income Tax Law, especially those procedures related to submitting tax declarations</p>
Fear		-
Defense Order No. 10 (April 30, 2020)		
Logic		
Ethics		
Emotion		
Fear		
Defense Order No. 11 (May 5, 2020)		
Logic		<p>Every person must adhere to the established spacing</p>
Emotion	-	

	<p>distances, and the obligation to wear a mask and wear gloves before entering public places, including ministries, government departments, official and public institutions, or places where direct services are provided to the public, including companies, institutions, establishments, malls, shopping centers, shops, medical clinics and health centers;</p>	<p>first time, and no prosecution will take place if the violator pays the minimum amount of the fine within a week from the date of the violation;</p>
	<p>Health and other service providers in the places referred to in Paragraph (1) of this clause, their workers, and those working in delivery services are obligated to wear masks, wear gloves, and not allow visitors to these sites to enter without wearing masks or gloves</p>	<p>A fine of not less than (200) dinars and not more than (1000) dinars in case of repetition;</p> <p>Personal undertaking from the vehicle owner or violator of 500 dinars to ensure that the violation will not be repeated</p>
<p>Defense Order No. 12 (May 20, 2020)</p>		
Emotion	-	
Ethics	-	
Fear	<p>Whoever violates the provisions of Paragraph 1 of Clause (First) shall be punished with a fine of not less than (20) dinars and not more than (50) dinars;</p>	
	<p>Whoever violates the provisions of Paragraph (2) of Clause (First) is punished with a fine of not less than (100) dinars and not more than (200) Dinars, and the place where the violation occurred is closed for a period of (14) days;</p>	
	<p>The application of the penalty stipulated in this clause does not preclude the application of any more severe punishment and its stipulation in any other legislation</p>	
<p>Defense Order No. 13 (June 14, 2020)</p>		
Logic		<p>Detail about the nature of the bank facilities and the mechanism for using it;</p> <p>Emphasis and clarification of the terms of the facilities;</p> <p>Linking the decision to government support for the sectors affected by the pandemic, especially the tourism sector</p>
Emotion		Through the bank facilities provided to tourism companies
Ethics		-
Fear		-
<p>Defense Order No. 14 (June 16, 2020)</p>		
Logic		Emphasis on the positive programs identified through the Protection Program, Economic Empowerment Program 1, and Economic Empowerment Program 2;
Emotion		Emphasis on certain elements of support that came in the previous defense orders
Ethics		-
Fear		-
<p>Defense Order No. 15 (March 20, 2020)</p>		
Logic		<p>This appears to follow-up of the orders on economic support;</p> <p>Commitment to specific and clear positive programs set this decision aside;</p> <p>Mentioning the details and provisions of the institutions benefiting from the exemptions for delay benefits and fines</p>
Emotion		-
Ethics		-
Fear		-
<p>Table 4. Defense order in detail.</p>		
	<p>The penalty stipulated in Defense Order No. 3 on prohibiting the movement and wandering of persons and seizing vehicles shall be amended as follows:</p>	
	<p>A fine of not less than (100) dinars and not more than (500) dinars if the violation is for the</p>	

Discussion

Timing and justification for applying the defense law from the perspective of the focus group

Article 124 of the Jordanian Constitution states that: "If something happens that calls for the defense of the homeland in the event of an emergency, a law is issued in the name of the defense law, according to which the authority is given to the person designated by the law to take the necessary measures, including the suspension of the state's ordinary laws". To secure the defense of the homeland, the Defense Law will take effect when it is announced by a Royal Decree issued upon a decision of the Council of Ministers. Regarding the timing of, and justification for, the defense orders, the views of the focus group were varied. First, the defense orders resulted from the severe repercussions of the pandemic and the escalation of disease incidence and death. This was particularly true following the declaration by the WHO of COVID-19 being a pandemic, threatening security, health and public safety due to the alarming levels of its spread, severity, and lack of measures taken in defense [10]. Second, the focus group members agreed that the virus is correctly labelled a pandemic. In this regard, they stated that it was imperative to appeal to all countries to take urgent and strong measures to confront the virus, and to recognize that the virus is not a health crisis specific to countries or sectors, but rather a global crisis. Third, others reported that the circumstances change with the times. Defense Order No. 1 was on March 19, 2020 and this is the first date on which the Kingdom took action to address the pandemic. Other defense orders came later because the pandemic was and is ongoing and the circumstances need to be addressed at the time. Fourth, some focus group members emphasized that the timing of the Defense Orders was appropriate and coincided well with the start of the pandemic. Their message was very clear in that the goal was to fight the pandemic and limit its repercussions. The timing of defense orders 1-15 was appropriate to the epidemiological circumstances but the actions taken were minimal, on the basis that the requirements were estimated and that the circumstances of the pandemic were confusing to all, including the decision makers.

The messages in the defense orders considered in this study were deemed to be clear and aimed at protecting the Kingdom from the pandemic. Some of the messages were the systems for stopping work, total and near-total closures, opening and closure of ports, borders, and airports, restrictions on the movement of people and vehicles, protective measures, social mixing, the wearing of masks and gloves, and physical distancing, among others [11]. The orders included a message that focused on imposing the power of the state to contain the pandemic, consolidating the principle of firmness in dealing with violations, and trying to contain the effects of epidemiological developments while addressing the worst-case scenario. However, although the general message was clear, the government was confused about its justification, and this confusion was revealed when the government was unable to answer directly and transparently many of the questions posed by the public and journalists. The main message in the defense orders is to oblige citizens to adhere to public safety measures to ensure that the pandemic was controlled, and this was evident in the defense orders for curfews, or remote work in institutions, schools and universities, or

messages to citizens notifying that the government was keen to address the effects of the crisis economically [12]. This included defense orders on social security or employer protection.

Positive effects of defense orders from the perspective of the focus group

A number of the focus group members indicated that the 15 defense orders have positives and negatives. As for the positives, these were mainly represented by limiting the spread of the pandemic between March and April, 2020 as the incidence of infection remained under control in terms of spread. As for the negatives, it was evident at the stage of opening the economic sector, especially after September when the authorities applied the so-called sector balance approach that this led to an increase in the spread of the pandemic and a sudden rise in deaths.

Conclusion

The 15 defense orders related to the pandemic can be considered an urgent necessity, and a solution to the resulting and expected problems of the pandemic, without which chaos would have prevailed and the health system as a whole would have collapsed. However, it was noticed that some measures were less adhered to by citizens, as seen in their failure to adhere to preventive measures and the timing of the ban, despite the fact that persuasive appeals were used to encourage them. In addition, the authors noted that this behavior did not halt or reduce the daily incidence or death rates, resulting in a major crisis of confidence in the government, as expressed by most of the focus group members. The authors also concluded that the implementation of the 15 defense orders and the various appeals they contained restored respect for the state because of the strict implementation of these orders, but their application was also accompanied by some confusion in efforts to manage the crisis as there was no single official who spoke on behalf of the government or the Crisis Management Center, which was directly supervising the management of the pandemic.

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