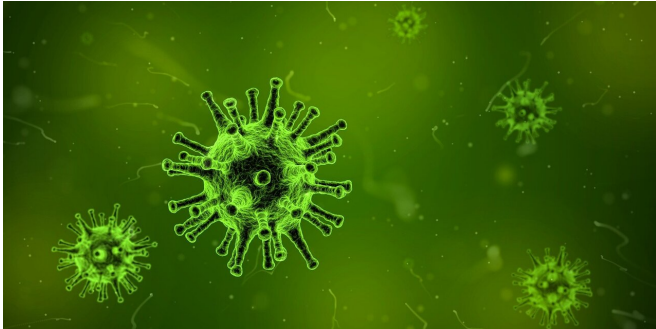


# Don't squander sacrifices of 2020: WHO chief

25 December 2020



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The sacrifices made to protect people during the coronavirus pandemic must not be squandered over the festive period, the World Health Organization's chief said in a Christmas message.

Millions were making "heart-wrenching sacrifices" by staying away from loved ones on Christmas Day, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a video clip posted to Twitter late Thursday, while others will have a missing face at the family table.

He said vaccines, now beginning to be deployed in countries around the world, were starting to offer a way out of the crisis that has engulfed the planet this year.

"As 2020 draws to an end, a pandemic of historic proportions is preventing many of us from celebrating in the ways we would like," Tedros said.

"Instead, hundreds of millions of people are today making great, heart-wrenching sacrifices by staying apart to stay safe.

"But in doing so, they are giving the most precious gifts: the gifts of life and health."

The novel [coronavirus](#) has killed at least 1.7 million people since the outbreak emerged in China last December, while almost 78.7 million cases have been registered, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP.

"All around the world, throughout this most trying of years, we have seen over and over again the sacrifices of so many people to protect and preserve life," said Tedros.

"We must not squander their sacrifices, nor those made by so many families who, this [holiday season](#), will sit at family tables missing a familiar face.

"Despite so much loss, we have built so much hope. Vaccines are offering the world a way out of this tragedy. But it will take time for the whole world to be vaccinated."

According to the WHO's overview of different candidate vaccines, 61 have entered [human trials](#), 16 of which have reached final-stage mass testing.

A further 172 candidate vaccines are being developed in laboratories with a view to eventual human testing.

Tedros said: "We must continue taking comfort in the fact that by caring for others, through acts of solidarity and safety, we can share the greatest gift of all: the gift of life."

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