Preventing the COVID-19 virus being brought into prisons and other places of detention is essential to avoid the occurrence of infection and serious outbreaks, or to minimize the risk of these occurring. So – in these exceptional circumstances – your help and understanding are urgently required as new rules for visitors and other essential measures are introduced.

A fabric mask can act as a barrier to prevent the spread of the virus where there are many cases of COVID-19 in the community, and physical distancing of at least 1 metre is not possible. But if you are aged 60 or over or having an underlying health condition such as heart or lung diseases, cancer, diabetes, cerebrovascular disease, or immunosuppression you are advised to wear a medical mask. In any case, combine the use of mask with other important preventive measures, such as hand washing and physical distancing.

It may be necessary to temporarily restrict visits of family and friends. Such rules will be kept in place only as long as is necessary to prevent the virus from entering the prison, spreading within the prison, and to spread outside the prison. Restrictions of this kind have been shown to be highly effective in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, keeping you and your loved ones safe. To stay in touch with your relative or friend in prison, you may (for a limited period) have to use remote contact alternatives (e.g. phone or Skype).

Please note that if your family member or friend in prison is suspected of having COVID-19 disease, they will be put into quarantine until there can be further medical evaluation and testing. If any specialized care is required, be assured that they will be transferred to the appropriate units.

**What is COVID-19?**
Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases. The novel coronavirus responsible for the current pandemic is called severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) and it causes coronavirus disease COVID-19.

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 infection are fever, tiredness and a dry cough. Some people may also have aches and pains, nasal congestion, a runny nose, a sore throat and/or diarrhoea. Others may become infected and exhibit mild symptoms or no symptoms.

You can become infected by breathing in exhaled/coughed-out droplets from a nearby person who has the virus; or by touching contaminated surfaces and objects or shaking hands with an infected person, and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

To stay safe and healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic, remember to:
- wash your hands frequently with soap and water and dry with single-use towels;
- use alcohol hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol if your hands are not visibly dirty;
- avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth if you are not sure that your hands are clean;
- keep a distance of at least 1 metre between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing;
- use a disposable tissue (or your bent elbow) to cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, then throw the tissue in a bin with a lid and wash your hands.

Use the “five moments” approach to hand hygiene when visiting people in prison. Wash your hands with water and soap or use alcohol hand sanitizer (minimum duration of the entire procedure: 40 seconds for hand washing and 20 seconds for hand rubbing):
- before touching a person in prison
- after touching a person in prison
- after exposure to body fluids of a person in prison
- after touching surfaces and objects in prison
- before and after using the toilet.

See on the side the procedure to wash your hands correctly.

Remember:
- if you feel unwell, don’t come to visit;
- if you have travelled from or lived in a high-risk area or had contact with a known case of COVID-19, stay self-isolated for 14 days from the date of travel or last possible day of contact;
- if you have a fever, a cough and/or difficulty breathing, seek medical assistance straightaway and don’t forget to use a medical mask to protect people around you.