



Tommy E. Remengesau Jr.  
*President*

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## Office of the President

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### **A Statement from the President Regarding COVID-19 and Social Media**

**April 1, 2020**

Dear fellow Palauans here at home and abroad, and all of our local residents:

On March 30, the Ministry of Health announced that an individual with a recent travel history reported experiencing symptoms that could be caused by COVID-19. The Ministry has now categorized this individual as a Person Under Investigation (PUI) and has implemented its established procedures for testing and case tracing. I would like to sincerely thank the Ministry of Health and the National Emergency Committee (NEC) for their hard work to keep all of Palau safe during this challenging time.

The Government's top priority continues to be the health, safety, and well-being of our community. The Ministry of Health is committed to providing the public with all significant information that is required to safeguard ourselves and our families. Its efforts are undermined, however, when members of the public take it upon themselves to spread rumors and unverified information through social media and otherwise. Such behavior may lead individuals to be afraid of reporting their symptoms, fearing that they or their families will be stigmatized and ostracized. Additionally, we must be mindful of everyone's right to privacy, especially when it comes to our medical information. I therefore again urge all Palauans, both here at home and abroad, to refrain from sharing rumors and gossip concerning COVID-19 and individuals with symptoms. The last thing we want is for people to refrain from reporting their symptoms out of fear for their safety or reputation. This is a time for us to work together as one community and as extended families to protect each other from the virus itself, as well as unnecessary stigmatization and fear mongering. Nothing good comes from the rampant spreading of misinformation and sensationalization during this crisis, and there is nothing meaningful to be gained from it.

In these coming months, as we hope for the best but prepare for the worst, we must abide by every recommendation that comes from the Ministry of Health and the NEC. The recommendations from the experts about how to prevent this virus have not changed: I ask everyone to continue to exercise social distancing and basic personal hygiene by covering your mouth with a clean tissue when you cough or sneeze, and to wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water or use a sanitizer that is at least 70% alcohol-based. If you begin to exhibit any of the symptoms the virus causes, contact your doctor or the hospital immediately.

Sincerely,

Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr.  
President of the Republic of Palau