

Xenophobia and racism spread as coronavirus outbreak continues



Beijing, February 4 (RHC)-- As the coronavirus grabs headlines and countries set up preventive measures, Chinese migrants and of Asian descent have denounced a rapid increase in racist and xenophobic attacks against them across Europe, America and even certain countries in Asia.

"I had a group of mindless teenagers shout 'coronavirus' at me on the bus. If you don't think that's racist, you are part of the problem," Michele Li, a young Asian social media user tweeted over the weekend.

The chairman of Asian-American Studies at San Francisco State University Russell Jeung told USA Today that "if you look at social media and some of the news, it's fear of the 'Yellow Peril' all over again," referring to a term after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in 1941.

The hysteria has mainly come from the rapid spread of the 2019-nCoV coronavirus, whose cluster was initially reported on December 31st has been linked to Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market in the central Chinese city of Wuhan. Authorities linked wild animals sold at the market as the likely source of the virus.

Since then, and as of Monday, there are nearly 20,000 confirmed cases and 426 deaths, all but one which has happened in China and the virus has spread to over 23 countries. On Thursday last week, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared it an international public health emergency.

However, for the Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry, the U.S. has played a major role in caused fears over the spread of the virus by imposing travel restrictions and evacuations from China.

Washington has “unceasingly manufactured and spread panic”, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told reporters, noting that the WHO said on Monday there was no need for measures that “unnecessarily interfere with international travel and trade” in trying to halt the spread of novel coronavirus outbreak in China.

“Coughing while Asian’ is like ‘driving while Black,’ something you get stereotyped for,” the chairman of Asian-American Studies at San Francisco State University added.

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