

Unprecedented: Our 2020 In Review

Unprecedented was a commonly used word to describe 2020. From university lecturers to big employers, it was widely communicated that 2020 was a time of unprecedented adversity, unprecedented hardship, and unprecedented sacrifice. The special rhetorical treatment the year 2020 got begs the question: was it the year that was cursed or what is the world?

Our views of 2020 were mostly shaped by our pain and frustration. From the COVID-19 pandemic to the worsening of the climate crisis, people around the world had to endure a lot of senseless atrocities. Even though 2020 was full of catastrophe, we have also shared the good news and felt some relief from time to time as well. Here are some of the good and bad news we broke in 2020 we think you should look back on:

The COVID-19 pandemic started in China's eastern city of Wuhan in 2019. Despite the concerns raised by the international community, global health authorities were late in responding to the emergency when the time was right. Soon the outbreak in Wuhan spread, infecting people in almost every country and taking more than 1.8 million lives [\(1\)](#) by the end of 2020. Due to strict lockdowns and social distancing measures the world ground to a screeching halt and shut normal life down. Despite this, countries around the world ignored continued alarms on a potential "second wave" of COVID infections and opened up activities they deemed were safe. The main reasoning for this was the economy. To save the crashing economy, lockdowns had to be stopped and people had to go back to work. By ending lockdowns countries only spread the pandemic into the winter and actually ended up worse than what would happen if a longer, initial lockdown could have been implemented [\(2\)](#). Nowadays most of us wait for vaccines to save us from the grips of the virus while a handful of countries who cared enough to listen to the science are living a COVID-free life and have saved plenty of people's lives.

Despite the COVID pandemic, 2020 saw some might call the beginning of the downfall of authoritarianism. People in Hong Kong, Belarus, and the United States stood up and took action to reclaim power from authoritarian powers. Belarusians took to the streets to protest their 26-year president Alexander Lukashenko after a sham presidential election, causing uproar in the country and giving hope to the pro-democracy opposition [\(3\)](#). Americans rose up in protest to the murder of George Floyd by the police in Minnesota, sparking a wave of riots across the US with the Black Lives Matter movement gaining heaps of popularity among the general public. George Floyd's city decided to disband its police department and lawmakers and politicians in many states and local governments put either police abolition or reform on their agenda. One politician that lost his job was Donald Trump, who lost to Joe Biden in the presidential election in November, becoming a rare president that lost

reelection. Trump's campaign relied heavily on racist stereotypes, downplaying of the COVID-19 pandemic, and silencing the Black Lives Matter movement while offering no real agenda to the voters. Joe Biden's campaign was also the recipient of heavy criticism for having no real and substantial change and offering no real vision for the country moving forward from Trumpism. Nevertheless, people coalesced behind Biden to defeat Trump, as they saw the election as a referendum on Trump's authoritarian qualities rather than a choice between Biden's and Trump's agendas. Following the election defined by a historic turnout, Trump lost both the popular vote and the Electoral College. Trump spent the last quarter of his presidency challenging the vote; demanding states recount their votes, cancel Biden's votes and send Trump's electors to the Electoral College while sending dozens of frivolous lawsuits to swing states to win the election in court. Despite all that, the Electoral College affirmed Biden's win in December and Congress will certify the election results within the first week of January. Abortion was legalized in Argentina in 2020 after its Senate blocked similar legislation in previous years, the news was met with cheers around the world but especially in predominantly Catholic countries as the country follows a string of Catholic countries accepting social changes such as Ireland's referenda that legalized same-sex marriages and abortion.

2020 was not short of natural disasters. Turkey suffered two devastating earthquakes, one in Elazığ and one in İzmir, in which 41 and 119 people died respectively. The pain caused by these earthquakes has reverberated in calls for stricter building codes and more orderly planning for earthquakes by emergency authorities. At least 7 people died in a flood in Turkey's Black Sea city of Giresun with the response being met with criticism as the rebuilding efforts in the city didn't focus on preventing further floods.

There are many more stories, voices, and thoughts we want to give the spotlight here but we only have so much space to allow a few of these. To gain a balanced, in-depth, and independent view on what happened in 2020 please read our work on 2020's events. To gain a balanced, in-depth, and independent view on what will happen in 2021, please keep reading our work here and share our articles with loved ones who you think will benefit from reading our stories.

Thank you for sticking with us through 2020, our debut year, and we hope to see all of you and your support through 2020. I on behalf of every single one of my friends in PRESENT wish you a happy, healthy, and most importantly free year.