

Protect! Resist! Transform!

Coronavirus: solidarity update 31 March

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Mark Johnson's selection of news and analysis from around the world

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Impact on poor and social movements

Europe

Our editor [Pierre Rousset](#) presents an [overview of the crisis in France](#). We also report on President Macron's use of emergency powers to force through his [unpopular pension cuts](#). The New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) is calling for [resistance with physical distancing](#). We also have [this translated statement](#) from the SUD labour union

Italy is the European country hardest hit so far. Leopoldo Tartaglia of the international department of the CGIL, Italy's largest union federation presents '[Class Struggle in the Time of Coronavirus](#).' The SI COBAS labour union is [calling for widespread action](#). [Antonello Zecca](#), an organizer with the [Sinistra Anticapitalista](#) (Anticapitalist Left) provides an [overview of the crisis \(22 March\)](#), and [David Broder](#) reports on the [beginnings of a strike wave](#) demanding closing down of protection not essential for the population, and adequate protection for all those still working (12 March)

From **Spain** Dani Ramos reports on strike [protest at the Mercedes-Benz factory](#) in Vitoria-Gazteiz. [Laia Facet](#) explains how the [Socialist Party and Podemos government is handling the crisis](#).

Britain The government seems to be abandoning its '[mitigation](#)' strategy of letting the old and sick die, but this has cost valuable time and will cause extra deaths, says [Phil Hearse](#). The National Health Service was already [weakened by years of austerity and the reduced EU migration](#) following Brexit, explains Siva Anandaciva. The crisis also requires [nationalisation of empty houses](#) and a new commitment to state housing.

South Asia

India's Coalition for Environmental Justice is arguing for [limited and people-centred public health](#),

rather than the authoritarian and anti-science fumbling of the Hindu fundamentalist government. [Jean Drèze](#) analyses the [impact of the lockdown](#) on the poor. Statements have also been issued by People's Alliance for Democracy and Secularism ([PADS](#))

Pakistan [Ammar Ali Jan](#) and Zahid Ali propose a detailed [left strategy for fighting the pandemic](#). The [Haqooq-E-Khalq](#) movement is [calling for a people-centred response](#). Activists in **Sri Lanka** are calling for [release of vulnerable prisoners](#).

South East Asia

Our in-depth report from the **Philippines**: identifies the [weaknesses in health and social protection, militarisation of society and shameless profiteering crisis](#) as well as the opportunities for grass roots resistance. The National Union of Peoples' Lawyers (NUPL) warns that [President Duterte is claiming excessive emergency powers](#).

Malaysian activists are demanding [pro-poor emergency food delivery, social protection and support to micro- and small enterprises](#).

East Asia

From South Korea, the People's Health Movement explains the [success and limits of Covid-19 containment](#) and the challenges for labour and social movements on the peninsula. (19 March)

[China Labour Bulletin](#) explains how women in **China** bear [most of the burden](#) of pandemic response, in emergency services and on the home front.

Americas

Brazil's President Bolsonaro is a [dangerous liability](#), warn [Forrest Hylton](#) activists of the [PSOL](#). There is a [strong mobilisation](#) of social movements in **Chile** writes Javier Pineda of the Convergencia de 2 de Abril.

[Barry Sheppard](#) explains why private healthcare and low labour rights have made the **USA** the [new centre of Covid-19 infection](#). Low wage workers are [central to protection and supporting all those staying at home](#), but they are shamefully exposed to risks and lack health insurance. The [postal service](#) is breaking down. [Transport workers in Detroit are striking](#) for better protection, writes [Jane Slaughter](#)

Africa] Activists and researchers from **Kenya, South Africa, Burkina Faso and Nigeria and Zimbabwe** [speak about the impact of Covid-19 on their countries](#), how governments are using the virus as a cover for wider repression, and the broader context of capitalism, climate change and popular struggles for South Africa trade unions are demanding pro-people policies - see this [statement](#) by [SAFTU](#) and [this article](#) by NUMSA President Andrew Chirwa. [Community Health Workers](#) are also on the front line.

*Middle East & North Africa

No surprise that Israel is discriminating against Palestinians, and [dumping suspected Covid-19 carriers at the West Bank border](#) rather than providing care. In Algeria, the pandemic seems to be blocking the [weekly hirak protests](#) for justice and democracy.

How to resist

There are increasing strikes for worker safety and closing down non-essential production. This includes international coordination among [call centre workers](#) (see also this [declaration](#) of CGT (ES), SUD (FR) and other radical labour unions) and at [Amazon in Europe](#). and [in the USA](#).

In Canada, Gary Kinsman takes inspiration from the strategy and tactics of [AIDS activism](#).

In the long term

[Cedric Durand](#) and Razmig Keucheyan look at [the four interlocking crises: health, economy, ecology, finance](#). [Neil Faulkner](#) (UK) predicts the Tory strategy to [use the epidemic](#) to force through unpopular reforms (16 March)

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Understanding the science

[Daniel Tanuro summarises](#) the origin and impact of the pandemic and its implications for social movements.

Dr [Jeyakumar Devaraj](#) of the [Socialist Party Malaysia](#) explains the [difference](#) between the ultraliberal 'mitigation strategy' of letting the old and sick die, as opposed to the costly eradication strategy followed by China, South Korea and some other countries.

We're also reading...

[Peter Drucker reviews Ashley Bohrer's Marxism and Intersectionality](#): "indispensable reading for socialists trying to understand how class, race and gender mesh."

Steve Smith reviews [Greg Benson's authoritative historical study](#) of Trotskyists and other dissidents in the Chinese communist movement.

Free your mind from disempowering identity politics by [rereading feminist manifestos from the 70s and 80s](#).

A Dutch court has awarded [compensation to victims of colonial torturers](#) in Netherlands East Indies (Indonesia and West Papua).

[Namibia 30 years after independence](#): a series of articles commissioned by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (DE)

[Teivo Teivainen](#) and Pauli Huotari unpick the [prejudices and assumptions in 'western' thinking](#) about this global crisis.

[Ammar Ali Jan](#) identifies the [authoritarian mechanisms](#) that the capitalist elite uses in times of crisis.

We're also listening Accross Africa, activists are using music to spread public health messages. [Our favourites so far are 'Sensitise the masses to sanitise' by Ugandan opposition politician Bobi Wine, and 'Shield against Corona' by Senegalese progressive rappers Y En A Marre](#).

From our archives

Swee Kheng Khor identified the [negative impact of privatisation of health in South-East Asia](#) in January 2020.

Its worth re-reading these key articles on the [Ebola pandemic](#)

P.S.

Coronavirus/Covid-19: Find all relevant articles on ESSF using the keyword [Coronavirus/Covid-19 \(EN\)](#). To display English and French articles, use [Coronavirus / Covid-19 \(EN, FR\)](#).