

# Covid-19, Statement: Let's build the transition to ecosocialism now!

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**This statement was issued by the Executive Bureau of the Fourth International on 16 April 2020.**

1 ► We are in a crisis full of dangers, a crisis of capitalist civilization, the most serious since the world wars of the twentieth century. We are combatting the coronavirus pandemic, which affects all peoples. Against it, there are (as of now) no vaccines or proven and safe antiviral treatment; today we can only resort to physical distancing to mitigate its impact, breaking the virus's chain of contagion. Our only protections, when we are forced into isolation, are public health systems, guarantees of income and rights, and solidarity. While many entrepreneurs are seeking only to secure their profits, amid a recession that is becoming a depression, the rulers of each country are attempting to secure their interests at the expense of their neighbours. But there is no way out of the long pandemic that we have ahead with inequality, xenophobia and racism, in the fight of all against all, in the search for scapegoats; we will only overcome this crisis by affirming the interests, the rights and the solidarity of human society as a whole. This is the time of internationalism, of social, racial, gender and environmental justice, of the defence of the communion of destiny of humanity.

2 ► COVID-19 is a pandemic of neoliberalism, a product of this globalized neoliberal phase of capitalism. Capitalism, driven by neoliberal globalization, has extended its mantle over the entire planet. Global production chains, which are provided for corporations to increase their profits, make each country vulnerable to the slightest crisis, and the hypermobility that sustains them has eliminated any health and ecological security mechanism. A predatory relationship with nature, based on the use of fossil fuels and large capitalist agriculture, with its green deserts, destroys both the balance of the fundamental cycles of the Earth system (carbon, water, nitrogen) and the relationship of human beings with the biosphere, with the web of life of which we are only a part. It is an unsustainable model, which aims for infinite growth on a finite planet, which goes beyond all the Earth's limits, creating an ecological alienation and a demand for consumption incompatible with the rational use of common goods.

3 ► If the so-called "natural" disasters are the consequence of the climate crisis, SARS-CoV-2 and its possible mutations are also the result of attacks on the Earth's biosphere. Deforestation, environmental degradation and commercial/"recreative" hunting of wild animals continuously creates conditions for new diseases against which there is no immunological resistance in humans. The accelerated increase of meat consumption is inextricably linked to most recent virus outbreaks as the meat industry involves the confinement of a huge number of genetically similar animals. It is also the major driver of deforestation and loss of genetic variability in many parts of the world: Agriculture occupies already half of the habitable land, and 77% of the agricultural area is dedicated to grazing land or arable land to produce animal food. A profound transformation in our food production system and diet is required to overcome this industry of pandemics!

4 ► All humankind is attacked by the virus. Exploited classes and oppressed sectors are the most affected. Families living in precarious housing, poor sanitation neighbourhoods, precarious workers, those who have hunger wages. Health workers (doctors, nurses), truckers and transporters who cannot stop the supply, and all those who must move the gears of the world for everyone to live, suffer. In other words, the pandemic affects everyone, but not in the same way, depending on their social class. But there is also a generational impact; it kills the elderly of all classes. In this range of all human society, the poor elderly are the ones who die the most. And the crisis is hitting women hard, who are responsible for most of the work of social reproduction, and who, confined in their homes, have an even greater burden of work and are suffering another epidemic, that of domestic violence.

5 ► Even more serious is the situation in the countries of the global south. Under different conditions and circumstances, the countries of Latin America, Africa and the Middle East, East Asia and the Indian sub-continent have been affected by the pandemic. Still at an early stage in these countries, everything demonstrates that the combination of the pandemic with the poor sanitary conditions, the absence of basic sanitation, extremely dense cities and neighbourhoods and local governments and ruling classes unwilling to take social security measures must cause a real humanitarian catastrophe with proportions still to come. not seen in this pandemic. The way in which the epidemic is expanding in some countries in Africa like Algeria, Egypt and South Africa, in Peru, Ecuador, India and especially over the favelas of large Brazilian cities demonstrates the much greater danger that non-white people are running, who are subordinated in multiple ways to the logic of capitalist domination which puts billions of people in poverty. It is now necessary to focus energies on a call for economic, social and humanitarian solidarity with the countries of the global south as a way of preventing the spread of racist genocide epicentres on indigenous people, peasants, poor workers, blacks, Dalits, all those who remain racialized. and ethnically excluded under modern neo-colonial forms.

6 ► Much attention is still needed to the authoritarian measures taken especially by far-right governments on the periphery of capitalism and the global south. The measures of repression and authoritarianism sponsored by the governments of India, the Philippines, Peru and Ecuador are examples of how the COVID pandemic is being used to deepen authoritarian measures and to further close political regimes. Duterte has been declaring that he will shoot those who do not comply with the quarantine, in Ecuador the homes of poor workers have been invaded by the police.

7 ► The virus highlights the contradictions and evils of the entire capitalist system and shows that the only way to solve them is with another system that establishes another relationship between people, and with nature. Everything is in question; the system is in question ...

→ In its neoliberal phase, capitalism abandoned the services that the State had to provide to guarantee the productive strength of workers, the social rights hard won by workers throughout the twentieth century. Neoliberalism privatized these services, made the state more unable to meet the human needs of the population. It is impossible to respond to this crisis without attacking the whole system and its behaviour.

→ The privatized health systems of neoliberalism that serve essentially those who can afford their services cannot meet the human needs of life. It is necessary to socialize health.

→ Neoliberalism disorganized labour relations and made them more precarious. So, mechanisms for guaranteeing the income of employees, as well as of self-employed people, those who work on their own, alongside the development of income redistribution mechanisms, are central demands today.

→ By making obvious the destructive character of globalization and the vulnerability of societies

hostage to companies and their global productive chains, the crisis reopens the possibility of questioning the general organization of the current international division of labour, which is socially and ecologically unsustainable.

→ Neoliberalism has deepened, through consumerism, individualist behaviour. But society is relearning, with the crisis, that social solidarity is necessary for its survival.

→ Anti-scientific ideologies, obscurantism and religious fundamentalism have resurfaced to justify and sustain this domination with the ideologues of Ronald Reagan and Bush and now continue with Trump, Bolsonaro, Duterte, Modi... But their denialist actions have clash more and more clearly with scientific assumptions, becoming demoralized. Governments have been forced, with different timescales and methods, to take measures to mitigate the crisis, sometimes combined with authoritarian actions. However, some leaders, like the presidents of Brazil, Bolsonaro, of Turkmenistan, Berdimuhamedov, and Belarus, Lukashenko, resist, sustaining obscurantism and denialism.

→ The crisis calls everything into question. The (often insufficient) emergency measures that governments are adopting to contain the pandemic have to objectively challenge the current format of capitalist society; to save lives we must attack the entire capitalist structure. Humanity and the planet will be saved if this is assumed with all energy.

8 ► Workers and people were facing this system with energy before the emergence of the pandemic. In Chile, Lebanon, the United States, India, Hong Kong and many other places, the masses rose throughout the year 2019. The movements of women, young people and the environment have been rebuilding a strong militant internationalism – it is, in fact, the strongest impulse to internationalism since the 1960s-1970s. They face increasingly authoritarian and totalitarian governments, products of the crisis of traditional bourgeois regimes and the need to establish an increasingly destructive capitalism, predator of lives and nature. It is such regimes who seek to lead the masses to trust not in their strength and solidarity, but in the saving messiahs who proclaim anti-science. At this very moment, these are those who want to take advantage of the pandemic to strengthen totalitarianism. Street action is now frozen, but the fight is not just on the streets. New forms of protests, the use of new methods to gain public opinion are growing in the context of a sense of solidarity.

9 ► In this situation, the vast majority of governments have been forced to take extreme measures. We must defend measures that attack the form and substance of neoliberalism and the capitalist system:

→ sanitary measures to address the pandemic and save health;

→ guaranteed work despite physical isolation: 100% assumption of responsibility by enterprises and/or the State for the wages of workers who have suspended their activity, including precarious workers, temporary workers, domestic workers, self-employed workers and seasonal workers, without any obligation to take days off or to subsequently recuperate the hours not worked;

→ for workers in the informal sector, for the unpaid unemployed, for students, for everyone who needs it, the state must provide a guaranteed minimum income which must be sufficient to live decently.

→ prohibition of all dismissals and the reinstatement of employees dismissed since the beginning of the pandemic,

→ refusal of any authoritarian and exceptional measures to suspend social rights, including the right to strike;

- right to information and communication;
- provision of adequate social care for the disabled, the elderly and all those socially isolated by lockdown,
- establishment, particularly in countries where confinement has been decided, of immediate emergency protection measures for women and children who are victims of violence, with rapid decisions to remove violent spouses or provide alternative housing for the victims,
- vulnerability aid
- equal treatment for the entire population
- immediate conversion of suitable industries (cars, aircrafts, weapons, ...) to productions helping society to handle the health crisis: ventilators, monitoring, intensive beds, protective equipment;
- free distribution of medicines, prevention supplies and price fixing
- better working conditions in essential areas
- socialization of the health services and their reconstruction, under the control of public interest, where they have been dismantled by neoliberalism;
- nationalization of the pharmaceutical industry;
- defence of the popular economy and housing;
- immediate suspension of the payment of public debt with audit of public debt with citizen participation, in the perspective of the repudiation/abolition of the illegitimate part;
- freeze bank debts of families, microcredit and rents, and ensure water, electricity, gas and internet for everyone;
- put the banking system under the control of public interest by the expropriation of the Banks with no compensation to the big shareholders and socialization of the banking system under citizen control
- tax the big fortunes.

10 ► We cannot wait with our arms crossed for governments to act, we must act collectively to develop self-managed initiatives of the working people, from the territories in resistance, in the countryside and in the cities. There are examples of these initiatives from the population or organized sectors, such as peasants, indigenous peoples, unemployed, people and communities on the outskirts of large cities, the networks of feminist solidarity, among others. These initiatives are forging very interesting alternatives, such as the collective manufacture of fabric masks to donate to the population in order to ensure the prevention of contagion, the donation and alternative production of food, the defence of the public health system and the demand to access it universally, the requirement of guaranteeing labour rights and the payment of wages, the denunciation of the increase in the escalation of violence against women and the gruelling work of care done by them during isolation at home, among others. Now, more than ever, we must generalize these initiatives and direct these daily alternatives of autonomous self-organization as part of the eco-socialism and well-being that we propose as concrete alternatives to capitalism that destroyed life and the planet, a genocidal and ecocidal system.

11 ► While respecting the necessary physical isolation, and the emergency measures creating the conditions to comply with it, workers and the mass of the population have the means to act, to fight. In Brazil, the “cacerolazos” and the petition with more than a million signatures for the impeachment of Bolsonaro, president of Brazil, are examples of the feeling of solidarity being transformed into a solidarity consciousness, which leads to the struggle for the necessary measures to be taken by the people. If food is not enough, we organize ourselves by neighbourhoods through the telephone and the internet, with crops in community gardens, conscious consumption of food produced by peasant cooperatives. In addition, popular restaurants can be turned into distribution centres for cooked or raw foods. If income guarantee policies are not enough, it is possible to require bonuses from municipalities. Popular creativity should be encouraged in all its forms.

12 ► Despite its severity, the Covid-19 pandemic is far from a “perfect storm”. Our food system and our predatory relationship with nature can eventually generate outbreaks from viruses that might be more contagious and/or lethal than SARS-CoV-2. In addition, violent outbreaks may occur concurrently with extreme events driven by climate chaos. The eventual occurrence of severe floods or intense hurricanes/typhoons that impose the sudden evacuation of thousands or even millions of people is able to totally disrupt the necessary social distancing/quarantine measures to fight a severe pandemic. The conjunction of sanitary and climate crisis can produce unprecedented humanitarian disasters. At the same time, pandemics and climate/ecological emergency have similarities: acting soon is crucial, exponential growth (both of contagion and emissions) must be harshly contained and only just, equitable, anticapitalist solutions serve as an alternative to save the largest number of lives.

13 ► There are giant geopolitical shifts in progress, which will reconfigure the face of the world. But now a demand is imposed: that of a truce in wars around the world. It is time to strengthen the solidarity of the peoples!

14 ► It has been noted that the crisis resulting from Covid-19 has had a positive impact on the environment. A reduction in the concentration of short-term air pollutants such as aerosols and nitrous oxides is observed, especially in metropolitan areas, which leads to better air quality, visibility, etc. But in terms of long-lasting pollutants such as CO<sub>2</sub>, the SARS-CoV-2 crisis just scratches the surface. More than half of international aviation is now grounded and decreased energy use, including electricity and transportation is estimated to reduce the global emissions by about 5%, the largest ever annual fall in global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. However, this is still below the annual reduction rate needed to keep the climate system in a trajectory in which global warming is limited to 1.5°C above pre-industrial global mean surface temperature (in order to halve the emissions by 2030, annual emission cuts of 6-7% would be necessary). But the expectations of capitalist corporations are to resume the previous situation and economic growth as soon as possible... Moreover, in some countries, such as Brazil, where the main source of CO<sub>2</sub> is the change in land use, there is evidence that the disarticulation of environmental surveillance during the SARS-CoV-2 crisis is leading to increased deforestation and emissions. Only a consistent and organized effort to reduce energy demand, protect forests and indigenous lands, and bring down emissions can be an appropriate response to the climate emergency. Illusions on possible “positive environmental effects” of the SARS-Cov-2 crisis are at best naive, at worst, they may open the door to misanthropic, eugenic, ecofascist discourses. A deep reorganization of human society is needed.

15 ► If in the beginnings of neoliberalism, there were aspirational movements and social sectors that came together to say, “another world is possible”, today we must unite to say, “another world is necessary and urgent”!

Through common internationalist action that points us towards paths towards a world where life is worth more than profit, where nature ceases to be a commodity. The current crisis shows clearly

that a significant part of capitalist production is purely predatory, totally superfluous and wasteful. The crises also shows that significantly decreased working hours can produce essential goods and that wage and income guarantee and universal access to health and educational systems are totally viable in a transitional regime, in which the energy and productive systems are totally replaced, and enormous contingents of workers are shifted to different economic sectors compatible with an ecosocialist transition; and that a massive industrial readjustment can be done in a relatively short timescale depending on political will.

***There is no future without a transition towards eco-socialism. Let's come together to build and conquer it.***

**Fourth International Bureau**

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• International Viewpoint. Thursday 16 April 2020:  
<http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article6532>