

Mexico: Political statement on the COVID-19 pandemic emergency

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Humanity is facing a catastrophe of planetary dimensions that currently combines the COVID-19 pandemic with an economic crisis of capitalism, all framed in the geopolitical chaos caused by inter-imperialist conflicts and the ecological crisis, whose most sinister expression is climate change.

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The civilizational crisis caused by capitalism, which has worsened in recent years, has shown us another of its fatal faces with the appearance and subsequent expansion of COVID-19, the first cases of which were detected in the last days of 2019 in Wuhan, China. Promoted through the various vehicles of capitalist globalization itself, in which only the health of Capital matters and not that of human beings, this disease is now classified by the World Health Organization (WHO) as the most serious pandemic of recent times.

Beyond the debate on the origins of this pandemic, COVID-19 has put the entire world on alert for its rapid and easy spread as well as its mortality rate. Expert epidemiologists and WHO advisers estimate that a high percentage of the world population will become infected with this virus, between 40% and 70%, of which 4% will face the possibility of losing their lives, thus imposing an indelible mark of suffering and death on humanity.

Although COVID-19 has impacted the entire planet, its rapid and massive spread is not only a phenomenon of globalization or the result of the lack of timely attention at the start of outbreaks (starting with China), but is the expression of the current state of the public health and social protection systems that, during the disastrous neoliberal period, have been dismantled, if not privatized, to favour the interests of capitalists who promote the commercialization of all health system services (prevention, treatment, care and so on) to make a profit through hospitals and insurers, as well as pharmaceutical companies or laboratories that seek to patent medicines and then sell them at high prices. All of this denies, of course, the human right to health of millions of people who suffer from chronic or degenerative diseases, in many cases more lethal and extensive than COVID-19 itself.

Lacking public health prevention policies and adequate vaccines or medicines, many governments took hasty measures, such as border closures, social isolation and the stoppage of economic activities, regardless of the social costs for workers or the most vulnerable social groups (the poor, migrants, racialized populations, indigenous peoples, the elderly or the sick, girls and boys). For example, in northern Italy, the most seriously infected area of that country, workers are forced to attend factories despite their risks and protests. In Brazil, the nefarious President Jair Bolsonaro

tried to legitimize the dismissal of workers, something that the no less infamous President Piñera plans to do in Chile. In the United States, the lieutenant governor of Texas suggested the sacrifice of older people for the good of the economy while President Trump acts with that logic. Capital's voice is heard through its most cynical personifications.

These measures, which have stimulated a further contraction in economic activity, accompanied by the global drop in oil prices, also fuelled by geostrategic conflicts, have caused a severe and profound economic crisis, with serious implications for the entire world population and for all workers.

A contractionary strategy in an economy that works for the profit of a few without securing employment rights, without attending to those who dedicate themselves to the informal economy, the poorest and those who have had to migrate, is to condemn millions of people to misery and death. The ILO has estimated that almost 25 million jobs will be lost worldwide due to this pandemic. Without a massive global rebellion of workers, the failed and discredited neoliberal economic policies will reign with the mechanism of increasing debt and imposing structural economic and social adjustments, which imply more misery, precariousness, dispossession, disease and death.

Mexico faces COVID-19

In the case of Mexico, a country with a dependent economy, neo-colonized and fully integrated into the imperialist economy of the United States, which does not have the same socioeconomic conditions as the most affected countries in Europe, COVID 19 not only represents a mortal danger for the elderly, with previous conditions, or for pregnant women, it can also be this for the 60 million poor who suffer from hunger, lack of basic services (drinking water, drainage, electricity, health), and malnutrition, as well as many diseases that make them more vulnerable to this virus.

The measures adopted by the Mexican government contrast with those of other European and Latin American countries, in which, with manifestly political intentions, quarantines or states of emergency have been declared, establishing temporary curfews, measures that limit or cancel individual and collective guarantees, limiting the activities of all social life and militarizing territories, thus trying new forms of social control and discipline.

In Mexico, a gradual social isolation has been chosen, starting with the suspension of classes at all educational levels, as well as massive events for up to a month. Likewise, it has been attempted to minimise the impact of COVID-19 on economic activity, but without guaranteeing the employment rights of workers, or the needs of migrants, precarious workers and those who work in the informal economy.

Now we are already entering the second phase of the health emergency, this means that the cases of contagion will multiply and there will be no certainty of its source, which will lead the authorities to tighten health security measures and implement the Plan DN-III, headed by the Ministry of National Defence (SEDENA) and the Navy (SEMAR), militarizing the country and limiting individual and collective rights. In the next few weeks, thousands of workers are very likely to lose their jobs, health and even lives.

In this context, the opportunist right-wing opposition to the AMLO government calls for tougher measures to halt all economic and social activity, accuses it of negligence and, through pressure on public opinion and its media, encourages a deepening of the economic and governance crisis to prepare the ground for them to return to power at the expense of the health of the population or the

worsening of their social situation

The interests of the working class and women at the centre

Our position goes beyond this polarization between those who defend this government and the right that attacks it, because we place at the centre the interests of the people, women and the working class, which at the moment means the unrestricted defence of life against the effects of the pandemic and the economic crisis that are already affecting the country. Although self-care, class solidarity and mutual support are measures that can prevent and mitigate some effects of this pandemic, it is necessary to analyse this social problem as a political problem, with its challenges and tasks.

For us and us it is of vital importance to guarantee free and quality access to health services for all the population that is in the national territory. For this, it is necessary to reorganize and strengthen the health system, increasing its budget, acquiring medical equipment, medications and tests to detect the disease, incorporating all the installed capacity, public or private, for free care.

Faced with the possibility of reducing economic activities, it becomes essential to defend employment rights, demanding full payment of wages and respect for union organizations and benefits while the stoppages caused by the health emergency.

For all in “informal employment” we demand that they be given an extraordinary income that is borne by the government and that does not represent the acquisition of loans or credits. It will also be essential to demand shelters, food and, where appropriate, care services for impoverished people and migrants who live from day to day.

A radical measure to obtain the necessary resources to face this national emergency is the immediate suspension of the payment of the foreign debt indefinitely, as well as the repudiation of illegitimate debt.

During the emergency, it is necessary to allocate sufficient resources to guarantee the right of women to a life free of violence and all their human rights. Recall that the “Fourth Transformation”, in the current legislature, eliminated or reduced the budget in at least 20 national programs to support girls, adolescents and women, such as children’s stays; and it has not yet released the indicative budget for shelters and care services against gender violence, which represents a greater risk in this quarantine.

As the past 8 March revealed on the streets, violence against women is a serious public and social health problem, to which the state has been unable to respond as a priority or eradicate. For this reason, in the face of this double pandemic (femicidal violence and the coronavirus), in addition to the option of calling 911, Planificatel, Maternal Line, Life Line or psychological line, in case of violence or emergency, public policies are urged with a budget to really prevent, attend to, sanction and eradicate all types and modalities of violence. This becomes more pressing because the isolation and social confinement (gradual or forced) brought about by the pandemic can exacerbate and put women, adolescents and girls at even greater risk of experiencing violence within their homes by their partners and/or family members. . It should be remembered that the home is one of the spaces where a high degree of violence is exercised against women and girls, including sexual violence and femicide (93% of cases of violence against women have a family member as an aggressor).

It is essential that in this emergency situation our care system does not fall on women and girls, who have historically served as caregivers, free of charge and precariously, by whom crises are

cushioned at the cost of their physical, emotional and psychological health, deepening gender inequalities. We demand that the state and all levels of government promote the collective distribution of the tasks of social reproduction, housework and care of girls, boys, adults and the sick.

We reject the presidential discourse that stigmatizes and re-replaces the burden of social reproduction and care on women and girls. We demand that the state be responsible for guaranteeing measures to care for the population at this time, but we also call on society to commit to collective and fair care. It is urgent that the federal government's plan to deal with the COVID-19 emergency contains a specific gender perspective, since confinement measures will bring women a greater burden of work at home and care for sick people and a greater risk of losing employment or income due to their precarious, informal and unequal conditions, which is why public policies are urgently needed that truly respond to the problem of thousands of women being left without income, facing unemployment and extreme poverty.

The appeal to the employers' conscience to support women workers is insufficient, because we know that their economic interests and earnings are above our lives. In addition to the fact that a large part of the working population in precarious conditions, like domestic workers or those who live from informal or underemployed work, cannot protect themselves and stay at home, since they have to go out every day to earn a living, putting their health and life at risk. There are also no government programs to protect those living on the streets, or people affected by the 2017 earthquakes who have been living in overcrowding and homelessness for 30 months.

In other times of emergency, such as earthquakes, solidarity, fraternity and sorority organized from below has been presented as the way in which we recognize ourselves as equals, helping each other to get out of catastrophes. Now more than ever, we must prevent imposed social isolation from preventing this from flourishing.

The fight is against capitalism

Imperialism, business and right-wing groups are only concerned that, despite the health crisis, this economic system continues to benefit a few (less than 1% of the population) and see the rest of the people as expendable and expendable. However, it is the workers who produce all the economic wealth, and satisfy our needs, social reproduction and the care that maintains social life. The working class is the productive force of society and we should not allow a few, taking advantage of this pandemic, to try to sacrifice us so that they continue living from our jobs and our lives. It is necessary to defend our lives, jobs and all our rights. No person should be left without a livelihood, suffer hunger, or be helpless, and that women and girls should not suffer more macho violence in the midst of this pandemic.

It is essential to maintain solidarity among the working class. In this economic and health crisis we must fight for a free public health system for all people, as well as for social justice against the inequality that prevails socially. If businessmen intend to continue expropriating the wealth we produce and take away our jobs, let us fight to expropriate the expropriators to organize an economy and a society that does not work for the profits of a few but to preserve and improve the lives of all.

Let's reject the classist, sexist, colonial, xenophobic, homophobic and racist discourses that recirculate social Darwinism or eugenics to strengthen authoritarian and fascist groups. Our fight to save and care for our lives is a fight to defend and improve our living conditions without inequality, exploitation or oppression.

If capitalism is attempting a planetary restructuring in the face of the current crisis, it is urgent to develop an anti-capitalist strategy, that is, a feminist, ecosocialist, anti-racist and anti-imperialist alternative.

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P.S.

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