

Protect! Resist! Transform!

# Coronavirus: solidarity update 31 March

Tuesday 31 March 2020, by [JOHNSON Mark](#) (Date first published: 31 March 2020).

## 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](#)

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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 \(EN, FR\)](#).