

Protect! Resist! Transform!

# Coronavirus: solidarity update 3 April

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

### Contents

- [Impact on poor and social \(...\)](#)
- [How to resist](#)
- [In the long term](#)
- [Understanding the science](#)
- [We're also reading...](#)
- [We're also listening](#)
- [From our archives](#)
- [How to find Coronavirus \(...\)](#)

## Impact on poor and social movements

### Europe

[Jakub Schafer](#) reports on [government and labour union response](#) to Covid-19 in **Germany**.

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](#). See [here](#) for the government's latest social protection measures.

**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** financial relief programme [offers nothing](#) to the poor. Delhi's lockdown is [probably the most anti-poor in the world](#). Millions of workers are migrating hundreds of km on foot after their livelihoods were destroyed by government decree, as covered by [The Wire](#) and [The Hindu](#). [Food riots are likely](#) unless social welfare is provided. The 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](#). So is the peasant movement [Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee](#).

In **Sri Lanka**, FTZ workers are [returning to their villages](#), often without wages. Activists are calling for [release of vulnerable prisoners](#).

## South East Asia

ASEAN countries face a [collapse in public health and authoritarian moves](#) by the political elite, warns the Bangkok Post. Our in-depth reports from **Philippines** authors [Raymond da Silva](#) and [Herido CORAZON with Joshua SANTOS](#) identify 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** feminists have condemned government advice for women to wear makeup and talk cutely to their husbands during the lockdown, in the interest of 'Family Harmony.' The lockdown has led to increased [domestic violence](#). 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)

The Hong Kong government is using the crisis to [criminalise democratic activists](#). Opinion polls suggest that [support for democratic reform](#) is increasing.

[Kevin Lim](#) discusses how [rich and poor in China](#) experienced the pandemic. [Industrial production](#) is in recession [China Labour Bulletin](#) explains how women bear [most of the burden](#) of the country's 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](#). Labor Notes have published grassroots demands to ['Shut it all down!'](#) and drafted a [workers' agenda](#) for reform. [Nurse activists](#) have condemned state and private hospital crisis response. 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. [Amazon workers](#) and [Transport workers in Detroit](#) are striking for better protection. Communication workers have issued [this advice](#) on how to force management to provide protection.

## **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.

**South Africa:** [Patrick Bond](#) warns that the pandemic will hit [urban and rural poor](#) hardest. 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.

## **Pacific Islands**

[Nurses in PNG are striking](#) to demand personal protection equipment.

## **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**

Over 1,000 feminists from the global south and marginalised groups in the north have signed this [list of demands](#) for a women-focused crisis response. [Cedric Durand](#) and Razmig Keucheyan look at [the four interlocking crises: health, economy, ecology, finance](#). [Globalised logistics are collapsing](#) due to lack of solvent demand. [Neil Faulkner](#) (UK) predicts the Tory strategy to [use the epidemic](#) to force through unpopular reforms (16 March)

## **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**

Across 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

## **How to find Coronavirus articles on ESSF**

Click here for more information on [how to search for Coronavirus news and analysis](#) on ESSF.