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#ZeroCovid

Statement (Germany): For a European shutdown in solidarity from below against the pandemic

Wednesday 27 January 2021, by [ISO \(Germany\)](#) (Date first published: 21 January 2021).

This [Statement](#) was issued by the Secretariat of the Internationale Sozialistische Organisation (ISO), German section of the Fourth International on 21 January 2021.

We support the [#ZeroCovid call](#) [1] and ask all comrades and all colleagues to sign it. It demands an immediate U-turn in the Corona policy of the federal and state governments, away from merely flattening the curve of infections to ending the pandemic.

The appeal says: “We need a common strategy in Europe immediately to fight the pandemic effectively. Vaccinations alone will not win the race against the mutated viral variant – even more so if the pandemic fight continues to consist of actionist restrictions on free time without a shutdown of the economy.” Similar initiatives emerged a few weeks ago in other countries, notably the UK and Ireland, see for example [Zero Covid The Campaign to Beat the Pandemic](#) or the article [“Covid is a Class Issue”](#) [2].

The appeal criticises the fact that the official Corona policy focuses solely on the vaccine and, when it comes to restrictions (or bans) on contact, only targets the leisure sector and not also those areas of the economy that are not urgently needed.

We can only agree with this criticism: Most of the hot spots that have come to light so far have been in businesses of all kinds, especially of course in old people’s and nursing homes.

Above all, the federal government complains that it has lost control over what is happening, but it does not give itself the means to regain it. These means consist, on the one hand, in a systematic collection of information on the development of the pandemic in all sectors of society through the introduction of compulsory reporting by all establishments, which is regularly queried if it does not come voluntarily -- only such a collection of information allows restrictive measures to be precisely targeted.

Secondly, in the proactive tracking and isolation of hotspots, but also of those who have tested positive. The latter are advised a 14-day quarantine, but they spend it at home, where they are in closest contact with other people, their family members. The government should not be surprised when virologists estimate that most infections occur in the private sphere. But it does nothing about this other than to drive people further into the private sphere through the contact restrictions it imposes.

Thirdly, it is a scandal that a poor country like Rwanda is able to test nationwide and free of charge,

but Germany is not.

The appeal does not enter into such concrete argumentations. It calls very energetically for “reducing contagions to zero”, but remains vague in naming the appropriate means. In doing so, it exposes itself to the accusation of approving authoritarian measures in case of doubt. That is not his intention, it is rather the development of a “solidarity-based perspective from below”, but unfortunately this is not substantiated.

The biggest shortcoming of the appeal from a socialist point of view is that it does not explicitly focus on the dependent workers in companies and offices as the acting subject and develop the necessary catalogue of measures from there. This would have prevented reservations and made the task of taking up the struggle for occupational health and safety in the workplaces easier. For this will continue to be central in the future.

It is precisely in this area that government and capital cynically violate the precepts of preventive health protection. Only this would open a way beyond the continued restrictions of fundamental rights by the ruling class.

In 1989, the “EC Framework Directive on Health and Safety at Work” (89/391/EEC) was passed for all states of the then European Community. In Germany, this binding directive was not implemented until 1996, when the Occupational Health and Safety Act (ArbSchG) was passed.

Scandalously, the Occupational Health and Safety Act is only implemented in very few workplaces. The federal and state governments therefore do not even get an overview of the epidemic situation in the workplaces. However, in the rare cases where it is taken seriously due to active works councils, effective infection protection against the coronavirus can be ensured. This is because more is done there than just complying with the AHA-L rules. In these cases the so-called TOP principle of health protection is implemented. This means that, in this order of priority, technical (e.g. partition walls), organisational (e.g. staggered working hours) and personal protective measures (e.g. FFP2 masks) must be taken.

Last but not least – and especially with regard to the necessary staying power – the appeal would have done well to include a sentence on the ecological and economic causes of the pandemic.

Nevertheless, its great merit is that it has obviously touched a nerve, as evidenced by the large and rapid influx of signatories. This can undoubtedly be used to develop a political campaign in the course of which the issues raised here can be discussed and addressed.

The paralysis that has afflicted the political and social left in the face of Corona can thus be overcome to some extent if appropriately coordinated activities are developed on the ground. This is what we are working for.

21 January 2021

Internationale Sozialistische Organisation (ISO)

P.S.

• Translation IVP. Tuesday 26 January 2021:

Footnotes

[1] On ESSF (article 56635), [Call: The aim is zero infections! For a European shutdown in solidarity](#).

[2] On ESSF (article 56447), [Britain: Covid is a Class Issue](#).