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Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus.

Most people infected with the COVID-19 virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment.  Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness.

The best way to prevent and slow down transmission is be well informed about the COVID-19 virus, the disease it causes and how it spreads. Protect yourself and others from infection by washing your hands or using an alcohol based rub frequently and not touching your face.

The COVID-19 virus spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes, so it’s important that you also practice respiratory etiquette (for example, by coughing into a flexed elbow).

At this time, there are no specific vaccines or treatments for COVID-19. However, there are many ongoing clinical trials evaluating potential treatments. WHO will continue to provide updated information as soon as clinical findings become available.

To prevent infection and to slow transmission of COVID-19, do the following:

* Wash your hands regularly with soap and water, or clean them with alcohol-based hand rub.
* Maintain at least 1 metre distance between you and people coughing or sneezing.
* Avoid touching your face.
* Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
* Stay home if you feel unwell.
* Refrain from smoking and other activities that weaken the lungs.
* Practice physical distancing by avoiding unnecessary travel and staying away from large groups of people.

he COVID-19 virus affects different people in different ways.  COVID-19 is a respiratory disease and most infected people will develop mild to moderate symptoms and recover without requiring special treatment.  People who have underlying medical conditions and those over 60 years old have a higher risk of developing severe disease and death.

Common symptoms include:

* fever
* tiredness
* dry cough.

Other symptoms include:

* shortness of breath
* aches and pains
* sore throat
* and very few people will report diarrhoea, nausea or a runny nose.

In any crisis of capitalism, the ruling class always acts in a way as to shift the burden of the crisis onto the working class, and this case is not going to be different. They again want the masses to pay for the mess. The toiling workers, whose sweat and labour create the wealth of the corporations, will not only be the first to be affected, but they will also be the ones that are hit hard, while top management and parasitic board members’ profits and privileges remain intact. This is the fate of working people even in Nigeria. While the ruling class uses the left side of their mouth to tell people to stay at home, they are equally busy using the right side to tell the workers to keep going to work: production must not stop. These workers are given no compensation for risking their lives; they are neither provided with personal protective materials, nor given easy access to COVID-19 tests.

The post-COVID-19 era is going to be tough on the Nigerian economy. The world economy, and by extension the Nigerian economy, is already in recession while the pandemic lasts, and would likely enter a full-blown depression thereafter. The capitalists and their hangers-on want us to believe that the recession was caused by the pandemic. This is absolutely untrue. In Nigeria and internationally, the capitalist system was already on the edge of a cliff; the pandemic only served as a catalyst that hastened the rate of collapse. The price of crude oil will not get significantly improve even after the pandemic. The impact of this drastic reduction of crude oil prices on the Nigerian economy will be far-reaching.

For starters, Nigeria has carried out a downward review of the budget benchmark of crude oil per barrel from $57 to $30. Budgeted revenue from the Nigeria Customs Service, has been reviewed downward to 40 per cent of the initial expectations from import duties, from N1.5trn to N943bn in anticipation of a reduction in trade volumes. Furthermore, a 50 per cent cut on privatisation proceeds from the sales of the Independent Power Projects and other assets has already been proposed by the Finance Minister as the best offer likely. This of course is bad business for Nigeria but good business for private entities (most often fronts for the thoroughly corrupt politicians and their cronies), who get to buy these facilities at ridiculously cheap rates. As Marxists, this underscores our timeless demand of a stop to all moves to privatise government companies and properties and our demand for the takeover of the previously sold ones, renationalising them under democratic control and management of the workers, for the interest of society as a whole.

In this period, in the offerings of the ruling class would be delays in salary payment, pay cuts, retrenchments and casualization on a scale which would make the experience of the 2016-17 recession seem like child’s play. These far-reaching effects would cut across both the public sector and the private sector. Thus, a cycle is about to be completed four years on. The trade unions, under the aegis of the central labour centres (NLC, TUC and ULC) at the national level, must come out decisively and mobilise their ranks against this threat to workers’ interests.

It is in this vein that the leadership of labour must come out in defence of the workers on the issue of lockdown. As parts of the efforts to curtail the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government ordered a lockdown on Lagos, Ogun and the FCT Abuja, for an initial period of two weeks starting 11:59pm, 30 March 2020, now extended by another 2 weeks from 13 April 2020. Many other states are already applying one stay-at-home rule or the other up to state boundaries closure.

However, locking people down at home in the Nigerian context is like asking people to go hungry for the duration of the lockdown. More than 60 per cent of Nigerians survive on daily pay from menial jobs and petty trading. A lockdown means their means of daily livelihood have been locked down. The plight of private sector employees is no better. Many private employers have maintained a ‘no salary during lockdown’ stance, or at best a 50 per cent pay cut. Some have even completely laid the workers off. Labour must agitate for full pay for workers, whether private or government employed, for as long as the lockdown lasts. Government must also distribute foodstuff and domestic essentials to the poor masses to cushion the effect of the lockdown.

Pangs of hunger will lead to widespread anger. Protests in different forms are already being seen within the communities. People are protesting against a lockdown without palliatives, against the high-handedness of law enforcement agents, and even rejecting all manner of palliatives that smack of insult to their intelligence, such as packs of food that are not enough to feed a family of six in 2 weeks being distributed to be shared among 60-80 families in a cluster. This protest mood that is brewing has the potential to transform into a movement that would pose a serious challenge to the lockdown if the hunger question is not resolved. It could also get a lot worse, as we are beginning to see in some places in Lagos and Ogun States where a layer of lumpen youth, pushed to extreme hunger by the lockdown, go on mass looting of shops and houses, carting away ordinary people’s food and belongings.

The necessity for the labour movement to be visible on issues that concern the workers and poor masses cannot be over-emphasized at this moment. Labour must organize and harness these pockets of protests and demand adequate food distribution to all households in need. In the same vein, labour must also expose the hypocrisy of the politicians in government and their deceitful billionaire cronies. Their donations of billions to the COVID-19 containment fund should be noted as deceitful; it is borne not so much out of altruism but as a way of paying back little from the multibillion naira milked off government in the past by way of inflated contracts, heavy tax holidays and other huge concessions that they have received in the past.

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