

NAME: TAHIR FAISAL MUSA

MATRIC NO: 19/MHS01/404

DEPT: MBBS

CORONA VIRUS IN NIGERIA AND EFFECTS OF LOCKDOWN ON NIGERIANS.

Contrary to the many spurious unscientific explanations and conspiracy theories on the origin of the disease being peddled on social media and by some religious personalities – including the notion that the new non-ionisation radio wave 5G technology is linked to the origin of Coronavirus – the truth is that Coronaviruses are not strange to the medical world and they have been studied in the past. The name Corona has to do with its appearance under the electron microscope, it has a fat layer envelope which is shaped like a crown ('coronam' in Latin means 'crown'). It should be noted that one of the germs that cause the common cold (catarrh) is a type of Coronavirus which affects many people but soon resolves on its own.

In other instances coronaviruses have been known to jump from some animals and infect humans (a phenomenon called zoonotic infection) and then spread further via human to human transmission such as the case with the coronavirus that caused the 2012 Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS Coronavirus or MERS-CoV) and the one that caused the 2003 outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS Coronavirus or SARS-CoV), thought to have come from bats. The present pandemic is caused by a virus whose genetic content mapping is very close to the genetic map of the virus that caused the 2003 severe acute respiratory syndrome – it is this similarity that earned the new coronavirus similar nomenclature, SARS-CoV 2. It was also previously referred to as 2019-nCoV or Wuhan Coronavirus.

The truth however, as enunciated above, is that the science and manifestation of the new coronavirus disease is real, predictable and reproducible. Moreover, in other parts of the world where it has affected close to 2 million people and killed some 120,000, it is obvious now that COVID-19 does not discriminate; it affects the rich, the poor, workers, political leaders, whites, coloured people, blacks, the elderly and the young. 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.

In summary, this pandemic could turn out to be fatal for Nigerians if nothing is done about it. Plus the effect of the lockdown is proving monstrous in the life

of Nigerian citizens in ways mentioned above. We all need to band together if we wish to curb this pandemic and restore peace and order to the nation.