

# Coronavirus and capitalism in the world

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The outbreak of the deadly Coronavirus has completely disrupted social life in over 170 countries; in many, it has practically stopped it. Work, sports, arts, entertainment, travel, and any kind of gatherings and activities have been suspended. People have been confined to their homes and no-one knows for how long the situation will last. A health-medical crisis has quickly turned into a full-blown economic, political and social crisis, plunging the entire world into turmoil. The word of the day is: stay at home, isolate yourself, don't meet up, don't touch, don't hug, don't travel. The more isolated and distanced, the better!

To survive, the human being, that is born out of social life, living together and togetherness, has been forced to keep its distance from the others, stay at home, avoid visiting friends and family, even observe 'social distancing'. In one word, for its survival, society must give up being a society! Where has this contradiction come from? Apparently, a novel, unknown virus and a fatal and highly contagious disease is responsible for this situation. However, that's only the appearance; it's not the root of the problem.

The human being is a social being. Not only its work and production and individual survival, but even its physiology emerges from its social life; not just its social identity, but its biological existence too. Humankind is born out of society and depends on society. The ability of the human being to confront natural disasters, fires, floods, earthquakes, plague, cholera and other deadly epidemics is also a result of its social efforts and activities and its social life. So, when, like today, it is forced to stop social life in the face a natural disaster, it gets anxious, panics, writhes in pain and wonders what the problem is. Something, somewhere, must be basically anti-social, and, therefore, inhuman, for us to have to stop social life in order to survive. As if, not just a contagious disease, but the entire social system is alien to us and wrapped up in mystery. Something in the very existing political, economic and social systems must be incompatible with human social life to force society to shut itself down in the face of a disease outbreak.

The truth is that human society hasn't run into a contradiction with itself, and by definition it cannot. The root of the problem is to be found in the fact that the existing society is a class society. It is not an equal and free human society that has been brought to its knees by the Coronavirus, but a class society, organised on the basis of profitability for capital and wealth accumulation by a capital-owning parasitic minority. It is such a society that collapses in the face of an outbreak of a contagious disease. It is not a society of equal humans, but a class system that has to force people to stay at home in order to survive. The Coronavirus crisis is the crisis of the capitalist system, not of human society.

A society is 'caught off-guard' by the outbreak of a disease that has been organised not on the basis of meeting the needs of its citizens, but on profit-making; a system that attends to healthcare only so far as it is profitable.

They say it's an extraordinary situation; we don't have the necessary medical resources; we don't have enough hospitals, doctors and nurses; that masks, gloves and ventilators are scarce, and so on. But they don't say that for years they have been cutting the budget for public services and increasing the military's budget; that year on year they have been cutting social security and health care, giving tax breaks to the wealthy, generalising austerity, poverty and misery, leaving everything at the mercy of the free market and the golden rule of profit, and turning health care into a commodity. And now they whine that they were unprepared!

The Governor of New York yesterday (19 March 2020) announced that in two weeks' time they will run out of medical resources, and that if they don't urgently come up with a solution, they will have to choose from among patients, as is being done in Italy, and leave the rest to die. In the United States, the world's richest and largest economy, even masks, gloves and surgical gowns have become scarce. They say the situation was unpredictable and they have been caught off-guard. But apart from the fact that epidemics such as AIDS, SARS and Ebola, just in the past few decades, should have sounded the alarm bells and left little room for surprise, the question is why, despite the staggering growth of production technology, on the back of an electronic revolution, i.e. the fourth industrial revolution, even the richest country in the world should lack the necessary funding and resources for emergencies?

They spend trillions of dollars on nuclear, as well as non-nuclear, weapons for wars that may happen, but they don't have enough resources when it comes to the health of the citizens. They have stockpiled enough weapons to destroy the Earth many times over, but they don't have sufficient means to save humanity from the spread of a virus! Their war technology, their garrisons, military bases and military personnel are going through the roof, but medical research, hospitals and the number of doctors and nurses are in decline each year.

Even before the Coronavirus crisis, the capitalist world had a medical crisis and a shortage of doctors, hospitals and medicines. The Coronavirus outbreak merely made the problem more conspicuous and urgent. Could they not, instead of expanding the stockpiles of weapons and the garrisons and the military bases, or even along with them, have built more hospitals, and stored the required medical supplies and treatment facilities for emergencies like today? In the US, for example, wouldn't a fraction of over \$2 trillion that was spent on the invasion of Iraq have been enough to prevent the Coronavirus from turning into a crisis?

However, not just for the US government, but for all governments, what they call 'national security', which in reality is nothing other than the preservation of the power and domination of the capitalist class, has priority over everything else. Health care, education, welfare and social services, in a word, human needs of the people everywhere, are overshadowed by the requirements of the profitability of capital and the interests and needs of the ruling 1%. The Coronavirus crisis is not a natural disaster; it is a class disaster.

The Islamic Republic has an entirely special position among the states. In Iran, the interests of the capitalist class require severe exploitation, lack of rights for workers and the masses, and an open and violent dictatorship. For the last 40 years, this dictatorship has been represented by an ultra-reactionary, criminal and

deeply corrupt Islamic regime. The difference between the Islamic Republic and other governments, even in the neighbouring countries, is that for years it has been grappling with an all-round crisis in the face of the protest of a people who have repeatedly and loudly called for its destruction. In these circumstances, the regime's entire strategy and political aim is mere survival. This government, not even in words, takes any responsibility towards society; it explicitly and publicly calls people 'the enemy', and the substance and purpose of all of its policies, positions and actions are nothing but confronting this 'enemy'. The Islamic Republic's strategy can be summarised in two words: kill and survive.

The attitude of the Islamic Republic towards the Coronavirus crisis is the same. The Islamic Republic is the only government in the world that not only conceals the true figures of the number of those infected and the victims, it persecutes, in the name of 'acts against national security', doctors and anyone who tells the truth. It's the only government to siphon off received aid to combat the Coronavirus towards the black market or to the accounts of terrorist organisations in Lebanon and Iraq; and the only government to call the Coronavirus outbreak 'a biological attack on the pillars of Islam', prescribing a prayer for it. In their fight against the Coronavirus, the people of Iran have to also engage with the ruling criminals. And that fight has already begun.

Going back to the question posed at the beginning: Why do we have to shut down the society in order to preserve the society? Where has this contradiction come from? Now the answer must be clear: To overcome the Coronavirus crisis and similar natural disasters, it's not human society, but class society that has to be negated. In a system that is caught off-guard by a predictable and controllable crisis there is no option but to stay at home and shut down the society and social activities. In today's given circumstances, this is the only way to survive the spectre of death that is haunting the world. This is the only way to combat the deadly Coronavirus disease in the present world. But these conditions could be fundamentally different. Humanity that is captive to the capitalist system could be living in a society whose foundation, philosophy and political and economic strategy are geared towards meeting the needs of all. With a virus outbreak, such a society would not even face a crisis to have to resort to isolation to protect itself.

The Coronavirus crisis will give rise to far deeper economic, political and social crises; crises that will profoundly question not only the economic system, but also the thinking, doctrine, political philosophy, logic and worldview of the capitalist world. Just as the economic crisis of 2008 forced even the bourgeois media to admit that Marx was right, so the present crisis will once again draw the attention of the world to Marx and the socialism of Marx. Once again it will be evident that only a socialist system, a system organised on the basis of meeting the needs of all citizens, can resolve such crises forever. We must strive and be hopeful that in the post-Coronavirus world, Marx's socialism, the socialism that is based on the human being and humanity, will rise and become an influential movement.

As far as the Iranian society is concerned, it should not be forgotten that in terms of mass struggles and protests too, the society under the Islamic Republic is in a special situation. The Coronavirus crisis in Iran took place in the context of a mass uprising to overthrow the criminal regime. This movement will rise again, even more powerfully, in the wake of the Coronavirus crisis, proceeding right up to overthrowing the murderous regime and dismantling the inhumane capitalist

system in Iran. The triumphant revolution in Iran can be the prelude to the overthrow of the system of capital around the world.

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