

Reject capitalist xenophobia! For international socialist solidarity in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic!

19 March 2020

In yet another display of his ignorance, sociopathic viciousness and fascistic chauvinism, Donald Trump, whose administration's belated and incompetent response to the pandemic has placed millions of lives at risk, has publicly labeled COVID-19 the "Chinese Virus."

Trump's words not only recall the old racist imperialist invocation of a "Yellow Peril" and incite violence against Asian Americans. They undermine critical efforts to develop within the population a scientific and fact-based understanding of the coronavirus and the measures that must be taken to stop the spread of the disease. "There is no blame in this," said World Health Organization (WHO) spokesperson Dr. Mike Ryan. "This is a time for solidarity, this is a time for facts, this is a time to move forward together."

The Trump administration, accentuating its nationalistic focus, has urged a German biotechnology firm developing a coronavirus vaccine to relocate to the United States, raising the prospect that "any inoculation would be available first, and perhaps exclusively, in the United States," as the *New York Times* reported.

The invocation of nationalism confuses, undermines, and serves as a barrier to the fight against the disease. Trump's statement is only the most grotesque expression of efforts to impart the fight against the pandemic with a false and disorienting nationalist agenda. Utilizing as a cover measures that are necessary to block the spread of the pandemic, governments are seeking to promote nationalism and political reaction.

The global pandemic is impervious to national borders. The coronavirus does not distinguish between ethnicities, nationalities or genders.

For years, scientists have warned of the mounting threat of global pandemics as cities grew and the global population became more interconnected. In 2018, the World Health Organization warned of an unknown "Disease X" that would result "from a virus originating in animals and would emerge somewhere on the planet where economic development drives people and wildlife together," recalled disease ecologist Peter Daszak.

"Exploiting networks of human travel and trade, it would reach multiple countries and thwart containment. Disease X would have a mortality rate higher than a seasonal flu but would spread as easily as the flu. It would shake financial markets even before it achieved pandemic status."

Throughout Western Europe and the United States, governments have refused to provide adequate testing and medical care, instead adopting, whether explicitly or implicitly, the position of the UK government that it would be "desirable" for a substantial portion of their population to be infected. This is a death sentence for millions of people.

Even as the United States and Western Europe have failed to provide adequate testing and medical care—by far the most effective way to combat the virus—they have locked down millions of people and imposed draconian travel restrictions.

On March 17, the European Union closed its external borders and, one after another, its member states have sealed off their own borders. On Wednesday, the United States and Canada said they would close their land border and the United States announced that it would prevent all migrants and refugees from entering the country.

The WHO has repeatedly and vocally criticized these

priorities. While quarantines and travel restrictions are necessary, they are inadequate. The WHO has made clear over and over that the expansion of the resources allocated to testing for the disease, tracking those in danger, and caring for the ill is the only way to contain the pandemic.

As Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the Director-General of the WHO, stated, “We have seen a rapid escalation in social distancing measures, like closing schools and cancelling events and other gatherings. BUT we haven’t seen enough escalation in testing, isolation and contact tracing, which is the backbone of the COVID-19 response.”

Dr. Michael Ryan added, “Countries who rely on travel measures as a way of blocking the virus are just not going to succeed.”

Workers must demand a massive program of testing and treatment, with appropriate facilities to humanely house all of those who have been diagnosed while they are recovering.

The past four years have made clear the need for an internationally coordinated, collaborative response. Fighting the pandemic is impossible on a national basis. The response to the disease requires the mobilization of all the medical, scientific and social resources of humanity on the basis of shared human solidarity.

Scientists from all over the world must be allowed to share their research and technology, unencumbered by the “national interests” and geopolitical conflicts that serve only to delay the development of effective countermeasures to contain, cure and ultimately eradicate the coronavirus.

The development of vaccines, therapeutics and best practices for combatting the pandemic cannot be encumbered by national borders. Chinese medical workers, who heroically tamed the pandemic in their country, must be brought to other countries to share their knowledge and experience.

There must be international cooperation in the production of facemasks, respirators and ventilators, and their allocation based on social needs.

A successful effort to combat the pandemic is incompatible with imperialist geopolitics and all forms of national conflicts. Regardless of its initial point of origin, the outbreak of a pandemic in any country is a global event. The fact that the strategists of American

imperialism have been chortling over the impact of COVID-19 testifies not only to their inhumanity but also their appalling ignorance of the global potential of human-to-human viral transmission.

It is essential that all trade war measures and economic sanctions, such as those imposed on Iran, must be immediately lifted. Also, hospitals, properly staffed and equipped with all essential instruments necessary to treat patients, must be constructed to treat refugees and migrants. No human being should be denied urgently needed medical treatment.

Among the many tragic elements of the pandemic is the impotent role of the United Nations World Health Organization itself, whose dedicated scientists, doctors, and public health experts—many of them veterans of the fight to eradicate Ebola—have pleaded with governments to take a rational and humane approach to the crisis.

The WHO, vastly under-funded even before the pandemic, has been starved of resources, leading to what internal audits called an “unacceptable” level of hazard to the organization. It has been forced to beg for scraps from governments, raising less than \$30 million of its \$675 million goal so far—even as governments hand out trillions to the banks.

If millions of lives are to be saved, workers must fight for socialist internationalism—that is, international unity based on the common interests and solidarity of all workers. It is this international solidarity that will sustain medical workers, scientists and all progressive elements in society in their fight against the pandemic.

In the struggle against the pandemic, the working people of the world must view all manifestations of national chauvinism as no less a threat to humanity than the coronavirus itself.

Andre Damon and David North

To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>