



# ALL INDIA COORDINATION COMMITTEE OF COMMUNIST REVOLUTIONARIES (AICCCR)

PROLETARIANS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!

LONG LIVE THE REVOLUTION!

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## AN APPEAL TO ALL COMMUNIST ACTIVISTS AND SYMPATHIZERS

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Our society is in the middle of an unprecedented turmoil. The worst of this crisis is borne by the working class and labouring masses whose very life, livelihood and liberty are at peril. It is expected that the fall-out of the pandemic-cum-lockdown shall be felt for a much longer time to come. There are nevertheless specific immediate concerns of a grave nature. Whilst the working class and labouring masses are situated in heterogeneity of circumstances there is a similitude of experiences as well. The recent weeks have seen unprecedented suffering and hardship being borne by workers and the labouring masses. In turn, food riots, citizen-police conflicts, lightening protests, and assertions by migrant workers for their safe return to native villages are surfacing. The Central and State governments, who are current occupants of the politico-governance domain, have completely abdicated their responsibilities and are indulging merely in piecemeal relief measures. There is an institutional collapse of many organs of the state (sans the oppressive ones), and the working masses are restless.

The working class and labouring masses are reacting to the unfolding crisis of pandemic-cum-lockdown in no uncertain terms. There are several disjointed struggles erupting. Outstanding in their own right, these struggles however are falling short of becoming co-extensive with the territorial range of the supreme political power (the state), which labour must oppose for its survival and sustenance. While generations of revolutionaries have aspired for the revolution, in this time of unprecedented crisis they are finding themselves utterly unprepared to meet the challenges. From enacting the role of catalyst to coordinating the various disjointed struggles and setting the agenda for the 'national-popular' aspirations, there is a necessity for an organized power that can express the needs and general aspirations of the masses and represent the collective will of the multitude of oppressed and exploited. Here a missing link is clearly evident. Moreover, circumstances have proved time and again that a revolutionary situation by itself cannot spring up a revolution. Neither can a revolution be conjured up by raising far-fetched demands that overlook the immediate context of the working-class' conditions and needs.

Concerted practices that are capable of advancing the capacity of the working class to resist and advance its position in relation to the state and upper classes require immediate attention. As the Yechuris, Rajas and Bhattacharyas of the Indian Left relinquish the battlefield, party cadres have been left to take initiatives in ways that they deem fit. In most cases this has meant coordinating donations and other forms of charity that merely reinforce the class hegemony of the rich, absolving them of critiquing the system. Such charity merely reproduces docility in workers rather than instilling a sense of entitlement in them. Moreover, philanthropy and charity continue to postpone the need for promotion of workers' self-

organization, organized collective action and mutual aid during a crisis that has treacherously gripped the working class and labouring masses.

Across parties and groups there is an inability to comprehend the current conjuncture in its entirety, and from the perspective of much-needed capacity building of the working class to resist the combined onslaught of capital and state. Leaders have become habituated to think within the ideological coordinates of dominant ideas of the day. They tend to reproduce assessments of real or manufactured crises using the hegemonic lens of the dominant classes. Our ways of knowing and understanding things are consequently curtailed by the dominant ideology. In today's context, apart from failing to understand many other things, leaders have not been able to adequately expose the politics surrounding epidemics. Overlooking how class, region and other social dynamics influence 'scientific' research on disease, the organized Left has failed to expose the ways in which mainstream epidemiology continues to remain indifferent to several persistent and silent epidemics plaguing the working masses. There is an uncritical acceptance of 'information' disseminated by the disease surveillance system sponsored by governmental and global health agencies. Conversely, the adverse medical conditions prevalent among the labouring poor and poorer regions continue to be left *unidentified* by the lax disease surveillance system. Whilst some diseases are declared epidemics/pandemics by the scientific community, scores of infectious diseases and illnesses affecting largely the poor are brushed aside as 'ordinary'. This is due to the selective, biased approach of scientific research that is driven by the profits of private pharmaceutical companies, and is the fallout of the lack of priority that governments assign to general healthcare and diseases of the poor. In this way, the specific cause (aetiology) behind numerous diseases and ailments fail to be identified and differentiated as the variations in sub-groups, strains, etc. in the pathogens are not captured by existing classificatory schemes. Many ailments are then simply clubbed together under catch-all-categories like 'Respiratory Tract Infection', 'Urinary Tract Infection', 'Fever of Unknown Origin', etc. These disease are often more contagious and fatal than those which gain prominence. However, given the incomplete diagnosis, it is at most symptomatic treatment which is made available to the common masses; leading to persistent spread of the disease and continuous heavy loss of life. Ironically, ignoring persistent, more fatal and infectious diseases, we have seen the organized Left merely replicate the paranoia of the elites about the contagious disease, Covid-19, which has gained singular prominence.

At the level of biology we are clearly fighting more than the real or perceived threat of the novel Coronavirus. There is an urgent need to recognize the issue of comorbidity, i.e. a cocktail of contagious, communicable diseases and the possible combination of preexisting medical complications with diseases that plague the majority of Indian people. Indeed, ours is a population that is falling prey to the sinister synergy between declared and undeclared epidemics and the vulnerabilities fostered by the overall functioning of our socio-economic system.

The loss of ideological autonomy has led to a situation where we are increasingly unable to understand the needs and galvanize the aspirations of the masses into concrete struggles. Activism in this revolutionary situation has been limited to ritualistic activities, sporadic media statements and routinized campaigns that are completely out of sync with how the labouring masses are reacting.

In the current turbulent conjuncture, it has become imperative on us to call forth all activists and sympathizers who may be separated by their varied organizational affiliations but are nonetheless united in their fidelity to revolutionary ideology. While we are not asking everyone to proclaim an identity separate from their existing parties and organizations, we must put our allegiance to the need for revolutionary transformation first. Such allegiance to revolutionary transformation compels us to form a cohort whilst continuing working in our respective organizations. This is not an attempt to provide an

overall complete prognosis of the given conjuncture, which revolutionaries across the board must undertake in future. We must instead work towards addressing immediate concrete responsibilities at hand, and for this an initiative is urgently needed. Given that communist cadre of parties and organizations are spread across the country, their combined strength is still a formidable socio-political force. There is an urgent need for an initiative to galvanize them for reinvigorating and streamlining the struggles and campaigns of the masses. We must also unite with all the progressive and democratic sections of society who are genuinely concerned about the plight and predicament of the labouring masses and are committed to concerted struggles.

While we continue our protracted struggle against the system of oppression and exploitation, and formulate long-term strategies, we have very immediate and tangible tasks to accomplish. We put forward the following programmatic '10 points' so that we reposition ourselves vis-à-vis unfolding events and processes of the pandemic-cum-lockdown, and can streamline our immediate struggles. How this basic common minimum 10 points program will materialize into concrete demands and struggles is contingent upon the preparedness of communist activists and sympathizers, as well as the ground realities.

**1. Ensure Adequate Infrastructure and Proper Preparation for Medical Needs of the Masses:**

The current crisis has exposed the utter unpreparedness of the government, not only in terms of the lack of hospitals and health personnel, but lack of even the basic Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for medical practitioners and auxiliary staff. Further, there are many among the working masses who are battling various diseases but now have little access to major public hospitals in the wake of the lock-down. OPD services in public hospitals have been severely affected, and largely emergency cases are being entertained. The emergency ICUs, labour rooms, tuberculosis (TB) wards, etc. are not working at full capacity. In such circumstances we see an aggravation in the poor health conditions of many patients and exponential growth in fatality rates of other diseases. We must not allow the Government to ignore other diseases in the name of combatting Covid-19.

Moreover, in the wake of the spread of Covid-19, there is an urgent need to stop ignoring other diseases with which Covid-19 can easily combine to create conditions of comorbidity and thus much higher fatalities. In such circumstances, rather than curtailing the common people's access to public healthcare, the Government must be pressurized to immediately enlarge the public healthcare infrastructure and the number of health personnel (doctors, nurses and auxiliary health workers). In order to tide over the present health emergency, the Government should be compelled to also procure the services of private hospitals and hotels as emergency wards and quarantine centres. We must remain vigilant to ensure that in hospitals and quarantine centres, patients are not treated in a high-handed manner.

**2. Be Vigilant and Ensure Proper Functioning of Disease Surveillance Programs:** Even before the Covid-19 being declared a pandemic, known/unknown silent epidemics were raging in our country, killing lakhs each year. Thus, there is already a persistent health crisis in our country, which in the event of the spread of Covid-19 will create devastating consequences. Government experts, pharmaceutical companies and international health institutions have been neglectful of these raging epidemics which affect mostly the vulnerable strata of society, specifically because these do not have a signalling effect for them. It is in this context that we should assess the 'Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme' being run by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India. This programme is supposed to identify diseases prevalent among

the population and streamline research on them. There has been an overall failure in running the surveillance programme. In this context, we cannot simply rely on the so-called expertise of bourgeois system.

In this regard, there is an urgent need to form a task force or any other organizational forms that mobilize our cadres in students, youth, workers, peasants, women and other mass organizations for the monitoring of how poor patients are treated in healthcare institutions. Such organizational intervention shall work towards ensuring that the illnesses of the working masses are properly accounted as clinical cases, and that the required microbiological and cytological testing takes place. Through its vigilance and timely dissemination of information about diseases and illnesses that are widespread in the community, the task force of activists shall create the grounds on which campaigns and struggles can be launched. Only these campaigns and struggles can build constant pressure on the government agencies to take active cognizance of diseases and ailments that they have been neglectful of and for which adequate resources have not been channelized.

- 3. Ensure People's Control over Public Health Institutions:** There has been a criminal negligence of the government as far as the identification of diseases and their control is concerned. However, even known and treatable diseases such as Tuberculosis continue to wreak havoc in the lives of the labouring masses of the country. We must mobilize the common masses and form Public Health Monitoring Committees. These committees shall oversee the proper access of people to public healthcare institutions and ensure that they get timely and adequate medical attention. Campaigns and struggles must be led to ensure that the infrastructure needs of public healthcare institutions are fully met.

Such actions are necessary, considering the inequalities in accessibility to healthcare facilities. While the rich upper classes can afford large, expensive private hospitals in the country, as well as treatment abroad, the working class and labouring masses are dependent on public-funded hospitals. In the name of subsidized healthcare, the vast majority of people are meted out the most high-handed and apathetic treatment in public hospitals. Public healthcare institutions are reeling under the acute shortage of nurses and doctors. The examination and diagnosis of common patients' medical conditions often reflect ad-hocism and neglect. Negligence is manifested most undeniably in the filthy condition of public hospitals and the regular violation of hygiene protocols that ironically make such healthcare institutions hotbeds of transmission of new infections rather than healing per se. There is hardly any functional monitoring of the conditions in public hospitals as Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) and district health officers are embroiled in bureaucratic formalities and blinded by their class-backed apathy. Healthcare is also compromised by the nexus between pharmaceutical companies, medical representatives, and medical practitioners. This nexus facilitates ad-hoc experimentation with antibiotics and other medicines along the lines of symptomatic treatment. Often such practices do not actually cure the patients of their diseases but end up making them drug resistant. For some time the administration of certain medication helps the symptoms subside but the disease remains intact at the subterranean level. Many a times, the patient remains infectious and the disease easily bounces back, especially in conditions of low immunity, malnutrition, etc.

Hence, there is an urgent need for immediate campaigns and struggles that mobilize the masses in alliance with progressive doctors, nurses and public health workers. We need to also be in the

forefront of genuine struggles of healthcare staff. These struggles shall pave the way for our raising of a range of intermediate demands – from ‘health for all’ to nationalization of private hospitals. Essentially, we should work towards wresting the control and management of all healthcare institutions from the clutches of medical bureaucracies, and asserting people’s control on them instead.

- 4. Ensure Safe Return of Migrant Workers and Provision of Basic Income for All Labouring Masses:** Migrant workers have been stranded in various cities across the country during the lockdown. According to conservative estimates of the Ministry of Labour, Government of India, there are 10 crore inter-state and 10 crore inter-district migrant workers. It is this section of the working class that has been most severely affected by the pandemic-cum-lockdown. The uncertainty of survival and sustenance in alien, hostile cities compelled many migrant workers to try and return to their native places. However, no prior preparation was made for their transportation by the authorities. Threatened by the large-scale gathering of desperate workers in cities like Delhi, some hasty and inadequate transportation facilities were subsequently extended to a section of workers, while leaving many to fend for themselves in the bid to get home. Stories of workers dying of exhaustion and due to police brutalities are still trickling in. A large number of migrant workers have been prevented from crossing sealed state borders and have been shunted into overcrowded shelters with filthy toilets and grossly inadequate supply of food.

Likewise, for those workers who are still residing in rented tenements and shanties, there is a constant fear of getting infected. The average per capita space for an urban slum dweller in India is less than 42 sq. feet, which is way below even the 96 sq. feet recommended for a prisoner in jail! Moreover, there is a perpetual crowding for water, toilets and washrooms in places where workers reside. Thus, compelling migrant workers to resume work and remain in urban slums or congested shelters are measures far more dangerous than facilitating their return to native villages. In villages where there is a lower population density, migrant workers shall at least be living in less crowded conditions and will comparatively be more capable of maintaining physical distancing.

Considering all these points, we should wholeheartedly support workers’ struggles for their safe return to native villages. Further, we must undertake campaigns and struggles for the provision of minimum three-months Basic Income for all labouring poor so that they can tide over the immediate economic hardships. Moreover, there should be a moratorium of three months on the rent being paid by workers in cities. We must campaign and struggle to ensure that the Government provides additional fund to poor tenants to pay their rent and therefore prevent their harassment by landlords.

- 5. Expose Philanthrocapitalism and Piecemeal Charity and Escalate Struggles for Entitlement-based Redistribution of Wealth of the Country:** In name of dealing with the unprecedented crisis created by the lockdown, the current Central and State governments have shamefully appealed to the elites and corporates of the country to contribute to relief funds. Middle ranking social entrepreneurs are also undertaking charitable works. These measures only serve to strengthen the misconceived notion that the labouring poor owe gratitude to the elites for helping them tide over the crisis. This notion should be strongly contested by urgently demanding heavy taxation on the corporate houses and business establishments. We must campaign and struggle to pressurize the Government to reintroduce wealth and inheritance tax on them.

The situation of the labouring masses is dire and their destitution and starvation have forced them to even launch food riots at various places across the country. Amidst the increase in food riots, the middle-class social entrepreneurs have continued to undertake charity work in top-down fashion. The need of the hour is not leaving the whole society to the mercy of philanthropy, but fulfilling the minimum entitlement of the labouring masses who with their labour are the real creators of wealth. The granaries and warehouses of Food Corporation of India (FCI) are overflowing, and local provision stores continue to be well-stocked even amid lockdown. However, under the condition of lockdown the labouring masses are unable to earn, making it difficult for them to purchase basic necessities of life.

In this context, we must undertake concerted mass campaigns and struggles demanding that the Government make provisions for rations and other basic necessities as a matter of people's basic entitlement to the wealth of the country. Since the government has abdicated its responsibility of providing succour to the masses, we have seen food riot-like situations in many parts of the country. In such circumstances, the working masses must not be made to jostle with each other so as to grab a pittance in the form of charity that misguided activists and the guilt-ridden upper classes patronizingly extend. Such charity simply tends to evacuate the possibility of united action by the labouring masses. We must understand that such volatile situations and mass activities actually have tremendous capacity to force the Government to heed to the needs of the labouring masses.

- 6. Expose State's Continued Protection of the Rich and Fight for the Liberty of Labouring Masses:** The word 'quarantine', meaning 40 days of isolation, originated in Europe during Black Death epidemic in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The word denoted the number of days that sailors, suspected to be infected with contagious diseases, were required to stay offshore. In a completely irresponsible manner, the Government despite knowing about the foreign-returned elites as the carriers of the Covid-19, allowed them to freely enter the country, thereby putting the life, livelihood and liberty of a multitude of the labouring poor in peril. However, in a dramatic relaxation of lockdown, while the upper and middle strata of society continue to 'work' from the comfort of their homes and continue to procure surplus created by the toils of the past and present labour, the workers are being made to work in insecure workplaces. We must strongly oppose this measure through concerted campaigns and struggles, considering the otherwise rampant non-compliance of workplaces with safety protocols, the lax monitoring by a severely trimmed and overburdened labour inspectorate, and given the essential fact that workers in the domain of workplaces are under the authoritarian dominance of employers. There is an urgent need to rally our forces against the Government's connivance with private capital and its recent proclamation of not taking action against employers whose workers may contract the dreaded infection.

Clearly, all the worry of getting infected is reserved for the elites, while the lives of the labouring poor are treated as dispensable. Such double-standards of the Government in the name of easing lockdown should be rejected and exposed.

- 7. Reject Standard Operating Protocol (SOP) and other draconic measures:** While the lockdown has been extended to 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2020, on 19<sup>th</sup> April the Standard Operating Protocol (SOP) was released by the Government, allowing the movement of migrant labourers to workplaces within states whilst banning any inter-state travel. As per the SOP, migrant workers housed in shelters/relief camps in cities are to be screened for any symptoms and "skill-mapped" to enable their employment. Again, this measure exposes the Government's unwillingness to

provide workers, in a situation of lockdown, their due share for contributing to the economy. Consequently, workers are being faced with the predicament of either working and thereby exposing themselves to danger, or, having their access to otherwise truncated relief being curtailed. This simply amounts to coercive bondage work.

The Government's draconian measure of skill mapping and arbitrary allocation of work is directly in line with the 'necessity' and profit calculation of private capital. Ultimately, through the SOP the Government has shamelessly ended up playing the role of a jobber, leaving aside any pretension of being concerned about safeguarding workers' basic rights. Eroding any semblance of choice for workers, the SOP provides for workers to be moved as per the needs of employers' lobbies, but not for returning back to the security of their native place. To alleviate the 'burden' of making provisions for safe transportation of workers on a daily basis, it has even been advised that workers be made to reside within the premise of factories; thereby separating them from their kith and kin in the relief camps. We also see a slew of oppressive measures being adopted by different State governments. Using the emergency powers prescribed in the Factories Act and Industrial Disputes Act, various governments have enhanced the work-day to 12 hours, with the Gujarat Government even going to the extent of denying proper overtime wages. There is also the threat of the provisions of these Acts being invoked by State governments to declare establishments as a public utility; thus, criminalizing any act of workers' resistance, which shall further enhance the private power of employers. Moreover, with no concrete measures being enforced on the ground, the Central and State governments continue to pay mere lip-service to labour rights by asking employers not to fire their employees or cut their wages.

While arrangements have been made for pilgrims and students of rich families to be returned home, migrant workers are being held captive. And this has nothing to do with the concern for the health of workers, as for the sake of production and to generate profit they will be made to move from one district to another by the state-capital combine. This amounts to suspension of all liberties of the workers. We must campaign and struggle to facilitate the immediate withdrawal of the SOP and other draconic measures, and pave the way for immediate and safe return of migrant workers to their homes. Further, we must ensure that workers who are willing to work during the ensuing lockdown are provided all the necessary protection and basic rights.

8. **Reject the so-called Economic Relief Package and Demand a New Economic Policy:** Even before the coupled up phenomena of Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, there was an unprecedented economic crisis in the country. The rate of unemployment has been at an all-time high in 45 years. With the lockdown, the miserable conditions of the labouring masses have become desperate.

However, even this pandemic has been used by the corporate houses to assert the dictum of 'Profit First, Society Last'. The Government is totally apathetic to the misery of the masses, as the economic package which it has announced constitutes, to a significant extent, the mere re-packaging of earlier running schemes. This is especially shameful, as the package announced is dwarfed by the huge tax holiday given to the corporates in the current budget. We should reject the hoax economic package of the Government. Instead, we must campaign and struggle to force the Government to proclaim a New Economic Policy wherein health, livelihood and overall well-being of the people would not be compromised just to keep a minuscule number of elites and corporate houses contented. We must push for special provisions for the overexploited workers of the informal sector. We must ensure that special measures are taken to safeguard the interests of

the labouring masses in agriculture and within the tribal, nomadic and socially marginalized sections of society.

9. **Refuse to React to Right-wing Vitriol and Reassert Class Politics:** The ground of current debates on the pandemic is actively being shaped by the Right-wing vitriol, which seeks to divert the focus away from the ill-effects of lockdown by communalizing the issue of the spread of Covid-19 in India. The agenda of politics of Left-liberals is to a large extent laid by the Right-wing forces, and so most of the time their politics is about endless reacting/responding to the Right-wing by resorting to abstract constitutional morality. We should refuse to slide into a pseudo-secular engagement with the Right-wing narrative and instead continue to push to the forefront the rich/poor divide – an axis of politics which has greater potential to galvanize people who have otherwise become the social base of Right-wing politics. We should force the Right-wing to respond to the issue of contrast between the contented lives of the upper and middle classes, and the starvation of labouring poor during lockdown. By sticking close to the fundamental class contradictions of our society, the Revolutionary Left would be able to wean away the social base of the Right-wing politics, thereby isolating the Right-wing camp, and leading to their ultimate defeat.
10. **Intensify the Struggle against the Repression of Common People:** The working masses have been denied the basic rights of survival and sustenance, and thus the right to life with dignity. Consequently, the citizen–police conflict has increased manifold during the lockdown. We have witnessed heightened brutalities being unleashed by the police and larger state machinery. In fact, the lockdown has been used as a pretext to suppress even the basic constitutional rights of the common people and criminalize different acts of resistance. There has been a witch-hunt targeting a spectrum of progressive intellectuals, journalists, Left-wing and civil rights activists. The twin crises of pandemic and lockdown have also intensified oppression along the fault-lines of age, gender, caste, region, sexuality and community. Correspondingly, we must remain in the forefront of struggles to safeguard the rights of children, poor students, women, the disabled, and other socially oppressed and marginalized communities. We must stand against the curbing of democratic rights, and strengthen our united struggle against the repression of the common people.

**WE WILL NOT FORGET, WE WILL NOT FORGIVE!**

**INTENSIFY OUR STRUGGLE FOR LIFE, LIVELIHOOD AND LIBERTY OF  
WORKING CLASS AND LABOURING MASSES!!**

Revolutionary Solidarity.

Sd/-

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