



# COVID-19: Position and proposals from the CGT

## Our country is being battered by the COVID-19.

Faced with a virus that spreads very fast, the priority must be to take all preventive measures to ensure the health and safety of the entire population. The current situation is generating a growing state of anxiety and panic for workers still present at their workplace.

This health crisis highlights the disastrous consequences of the austerity policies that have undermined health and social protection systems and all public services. For many months, the hospital and health sectors in general have mobilised to denounce the lack of staff and hospital beds in our country. Today, we witness the lack of protective clothing, virus screening and other equipment. The same is true for home carers or those employed in the social sector. This cannot continue!

The citizens of our country have now been "self-isolating" for a week. These measures decreed by the government go with a rather ambiguous narrative – to say the least – something between "self-isolate" and "go to work"! Indeed, the government refuses to give a clear definition of those "necessary activities" that must be maintained in order to meet citizens' and hospitals' vital needs to contain this health crisis. The double discourse "Stay at home, but the country's economic activity must continue" is intolerable!

In view of the worsening situation and the tension in hospitals, the CGT has asked from the government:

- The definition, together with trade unions and employers' organisations, of the list of sectors essential to the satisfaction of vital needs and a process of immediate shutdown for all other sectors;
- The withdrawal of all exemptions from the Labour Code provided for under the State Health Emergency Act, with regard to working hours, weekly or Sunday rest, imposed annual leave or extra days off, and so on;
- The provision of individual and collective protective clothing for all staff at work, lest they make use of their right to withdrawal if these conditions are not ratified by the establishment's or company's H&S committees;
- The cessation of activities for all digital platform workers and the implementation of pay compensation in line with other workers;

- The payment of salaries in full, through the introduction of a health disaster decree and the involvement of insurance groups, as is the case for natural disasters;
- The banning of all dismissals, for any reason whatsoever.

In the CGT, many initiatives are underway, and there are exchanges of views and discussions within companies or branches. Agreements have even been reached to stop or reduce activities, as in the building or public works sectors. Solidarity initiatives are being taken by organisations or works councils in terms of supplies, protection or accommodation for care workers. These must be made known to all and sundry.

We are also facing a paradox: companies on the verge of closure or already closed down, for reasons outside the health crisis, where CGT unions are calling for production to be maintained or resumed because it could be a major asset in the current health needs to combat the pandemic.

In this context, a meeting was held between the 5 trade union confederations and the 3 employers' organisations. It came out with a five-point statement, neither binding nor contractual in nature:

- Free will for each organisation;
- Responsibility for the government and companies to ensure H&S for employees who have to work;
- Recognition of the commitment by public service workers, particularly in essential services;
- Major role of our social protection system, as provider of solidarity for all;
- Reaffirmation of the essential role of social dialogue and collective bargaining.

We feel that during this period, there is a need to develop interventions with public authorities and companies at all levels, to provide concrete assistance to trade unions and workers, which requires a great deal of availability on the part of union leaders and activists.

Workers' H&S, as well as their rights, must in no way be sacrificed in this period of health crisis!

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