

A Letter of Resistance from the Magónista Women's Commission of the Popular Indigenous Council of Oaxaca

A report from Magónistas on the impact of COVID-19 in Mexico.

Anonymous

May 13 2020

We must bear in mind that no government, honest as it is, can decree the abolition of misery. It is the people themselves, the hungry, the disinherited, who have to abolish misery. – Ricardo Flores Magón (Regeneration, Nov. 19, 1910)

Once again, the indigenous peoples are forgotten in the oblivion; There is not a single security measure by governments to protect us, and the indigenous women are triple violated.

Both before COVID-19 and now, our battle as indigenous women continues to be for our rights, against violence, and for life. Our heartfelt claims have been for health, work, education, justice, and security, to which the governments have ignored. Health has been turned into merchandise, a great business, just like our territories, from which they loot our water, minerals, animals, plants, knowledge, traditions, and people. Indigenous peoples, and especially women, already have to suffer their greed, contempt, and death. And now we suffer another of their diseases created by this capitalist system: the global Coronavirus pandemic.

This year on March 8th, International Women's Day, hundreds of indigenous Magónista women took to the streets of Oaxaca City to denounce the terrible conditions in which we live in our communities: we live without security, without justice, without work, without basic services, without water, without electricity. We spent three days sleeping and demonstrating in the streets of Oaxaca City and blockading access to government offices. But even then, the government did not turn to see us as indigenous women.



Then this pandemic arrived in Mexico and the difficulty of our situation was multiplied. In our communities, there is no health system. You can only leave your community to receive medical attention if you have money. But if you don't have money, you just wait for death. Some illnesses we can cure with our traditional medicines, but we have no remedies for this new virus. If they infect us with COVID-19, what awaits us is death.

In our communities we're trying to organize ourselves as we best can. Meanwhile, the only thing the three levels of governments (municipal, state, and federal) have done is to tell us to lock ourselves in our houses. They want us locked up in our communities, but they don't ask us what is happening to us or how they could support solving the needs that this pandemic causes.

Instead, they announce their great support programs and the credits they're giving to their companies. The high level officials speak of the millions they will give to the most vulnerable. But for years they've abandoned the health system, polluted the lands, exploited the natural resources, and favored the richest, and now they want to cheat us with their programs. Their health system is in terrible condition because they fell silent while they were eating, dressing, and enjoying life on their official salary, silently complicit with those who made big profits. All the while, we have taken to the streets to demand better living conditions in the midst of repressions.

The governments and the rich are fighting amongst themselves in the name of our people's health and life, but nothing is being done about the companies that raise product prices and make a business out of everything. Small establishments in the community that supply everyday items and groceries have already started to raise the prices on basic products. In some places an egg costs 5 pesos, while in others it only costs 3 pesos for ten. Where the sugar was worth 14 pesos, it is now 24 pesos. The managers of these stores argue they have to raise prices because the shopping centers where they buy their products are increasing their prices and they have to pay more transportation charges than normal.

My compañeras and compañeros, we have to face the situation: most of us are in constant anguish. We already fear that the harvest will be affected by climate change. And now, because of COVID-19, even if our harvests are successful, there is still no way to sell them since the sale of our products requires us to leave our community in search of a market in other municipalities or regions or for buyers to come to our communities. The low payment for our products is consequence of the capital economy. Some of us dedicate ourselves to crafts, but we also can't go out to sell these goods nor is there a market for them now. In the tourist centers, like Huatulco, the bosses have fired our compañeras and compañeros. They send them home without a salary. They tell them to stay in their houses. But how are we going to feed our families while we also have to pay rent? In Huatulco, there is only land for the rich and the foreigners, while we, the indigenous to the land, have to continue to also pay for our electricity and water so they don't cut them off. If we don't have money, how can our children continue their online education? They say that educational programs continue, but in remote indigenous communities there is not even a telephone signal.



In other words, for the indigenous and the poor there is no justice. There is no equal opportunity. This is yet another form of extermination, because in the face of this Coronavirus pandemic those that are going to survive are those who have access to the health system, who can afford to stay home to protect themselves, who have the internet and electricity necessary to continue their education, and who have enough money to buy food, even if it's expensive. It is very clear to us, the exploited and poor people of Oaxaca, that governments and their policies will do nothing for us. The governments make the earth sick with viruses and diseases and aggravate our already precarious situation.

So today we call on the people to not just stay locked up in indigenous and non-indigenous communities, but to organize and unite ourselves and demand a true health policy for the peoples and that resources be given to support our access to health, food, and work, and not to megaprojects or the army.

We, from the sierras, mountains, and hills, have to prepare ourselves to be able to face the consequences of the policies of the bad governments. We are going to organize ourselves while we continue to sow our corn and beans with mutual support; the tequio (communal work) will be the force to face and solve the problem.

We will take to the streets of the city of Oaxaca to demonstrate and demand our rights. The indigenous women of the CIPO-RFM call on all older women, young people, girls, and adults to train in the place where they already are. By whatever means necessary, the Women's Council can find places to talk and share what we feel in our hearts and how we are suffering at this time. We can organize ourselves and together find the forms of struggle that allow us to maintain our health and the possibility of remaining alive with justice and without violence.

For the reconstitution and free association of our peoples,
Popular Indigenous Council of Oaxaca "Ricardo Flores Magón"
CIPO-RFM
Magónista Women's Commission.

Santa Lucia del Camino, Oaxaca. Mexico on April 29, 2020.

To support CIPO-RFM's communities' access basic survival necessities and ability to take care of themselves, donate to the ongoing CIPO-RFM Coronavirus Mutual Aid Fund. Donations will be sent monthly to CIPO-RFM.

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