

Covid-19

Healthcare workers, a global social resistance



EDITIONS
SYLLEPSE

The onslaught of the Covid-19 pandemic saw much social resistance to the conditions faced by so-called frontline workers during the period of containment. Among the various sectors of the workforce mobilised to defend their physical integrity in the face of the failure of their employers (private or state) to provide them with sufficient personal protective equipment, nurses (and orderlies) showed a high level of combativeness whether in New York, Johannesburg or Seoul. Everywhere, the same demands were put forward on their working and transport conditions, as well as the issue of wages and staff shortages. The modes of action have often been the same: rallies, demonstrations, right of withdrawal and even strikes. Sometimes trade union organisations have filed legal complaints against the authorities for endangering the lives of others. These movements were often violently repressed: threats, dismissals, lay-offs, brutal police interventions. In public or private hospitals, trade union organisations have been at the forefront of these struggles. In order to offer a panorama of these mobilisations we have extracted from the Social Ephemeris of a pandemic published in *Covid-19, a very political virus*¹, these social chronicles affecting the health sector, outside France, which we have updated to 8 June.

8 June 2020

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¹ *Covid-19, a very political virus*, Syllepse, 2020, published in electronic form as a free download on the publisher's website www.syllepse.net consisting of eight booklets or offered in paper form of a selection of texts of 314 pages, 20 euros. L'Ephéméride sociale d'une pandémie (The Social Ephemeris of a Pandemic) recounted on a day-to-day basis between 3 March and 18 May 2020, on an international scale and in all sectors of activity, the social mobilisations and resistance of workers faced with the consequences of the global health crisis.

Social ephemeris in the health sector

South Africa

April 29th. On Tuesday, more than 40 staff members went on strike at the Laetitia Bam Day Hospital in KwaNobuhle, Uitenhage, citing a lack of protective equipment. Carrying protest signs, nurses and other hospital staff sat in the courtyard. Dozens of patients stared through the palisade fence before being turned away by security guards who told them that Laetitia Bam was now "dangerous". "We now demand that we all be tested. Management wants to disinfect only the trauma section where the infected patient was treated, but we say the whole hospital must be disinfected," said Cakwebe of the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union.

April 1st. Two health care workers in Free State Province were injured after police fired rubber bullets and used sound grenades. The workers were protesting transport problems, which had been made difficult by the 21-day lockdown. After discussions with the Free State Ministry of Health and the hospital, the government has since organised transport to and from work.

April 22nd. Nurses from the isolation unit of The Young Nurses Indaba Trade Union (YNITU) held a press briefing to discuss the first case of coronavirus (Covid-19) at Tygerberg Hospital in the Western Cape on 11 March 2020. The Young Nurses Indaba Trade Union (YNITU), affiliated to the South African Federation of Trade Unions (Safu), says they feel neglected by the government, having raised issues of lack of personal protective equipment (PPE), expensive transport and "poverty level wages". The union representing about 15,000 nurses in public and private health institutions is threatening a mass withdrawal from May 1 if the government does not respond to their long-standing demands. However, Ministry of Health spokesman Popo Maja said that if the union called for a withdrawal, it would be "a criminal offence under the Disaster Management Act" that the police could investigate.

12 May. More than 100 health workers at Cape Town's Tygerberg Hospital, including nurses, demonstrated outside the hospital to mourn their plight during the Covid-19 pandemic and to mourn the death of their colleague, Ntombizakithi Ngidi, who died this weekend. They denounced that despite several positive tests at Covid-19, the hospital management has not managed to thoroughly clean the premises where staff work, nor to close down services and isolate those who had worked with Covid-19 victims. Amina Pinto, a nurse at Tygerberg Hospital and president of the Democratic Nursing Organization of SA (Denosa), said the nurses were in mourning because of the management's negligence.

7 May. Emergency doctors in Khayelitsha use plastic sheets, adhesive tape and bedspreads to protect themselves while transporting patients. By May 5, the Western Cape Province had registered 2,610 cases of Covid-19. Nomveliso Matiwane, shop steward of the National Union of Public Employees and Allied Workers, said paramedics did not feel safe. On Saturday, about 30 emergency workers went on strike, demanding adequate personal protective equipment. The group resumed work on Monday after meeting with management to negotiate their demands.

21 May. Doctors and nurses went on strike Wednesday at the Mpilisweni Hospital in Sterkspruit, Eastern Cape, demanding personal protective equipment (PPE). It was

the second demonstration by the hospital since the lockdown. Last month, nurses and doctors stopped working for a day to protest. They returned to work after management promised them PPE.

4 June. About 50 emergency medical workers at the KwaMashu Polyclinic north of Durban have refused to work since Tuesday because management does not want to test them at Covid-19. S'fiso Dlamini of the National Union of Public Service Workers said the union wants the health ministry to do more than just test symptomatic frontline workers. "We have a positive case of an asymptomatic ambulance worker. As we speak, we have no idea how many more people are infected because the management of the polyclinic is following the dangerous provisions of the Ministry of Health," Dlamini added.

8 June. The emergency unit at Livingstone Hospital in Port Elizabeth faces a severe shortage of staff. 52 staff members tested positive and one nurse died. The National Education Paramedics Union (NEHAWU) criticised the Eastern Cape Health Department over working conditions in the emergency unit. Sweetness Stokwe, NEHAWU Regional Secretary in Thabo Moshoeshoe Region, said: "Since 2018, the hospital has been facing a shortage of staff. Many senior staff have been suspended for fraud and corruption. While some positions were vacant due to retirement, death and promotions. We want the provincial management to find solutions ... Hospitals lack appropriate PPE [personal protective equipment]. Unnecessary aprons are being imposed on our members and this exposes them to Covid-19," Stokwe added.

Argentina

19 April. The workers of the central hospital of Mendoza (north-west) met in a general assembly. They demand health protection tools and an end to precarious pay for health care workers, an increase in their pay at the level of the basket of basic goods and permanent contracts for all. Despite last week's violent police repression, the 250 workers of the refrigeration company Penta demonstrated once again in front of their company premises. They have been denouncing the non-payment of wages for 24 days following the announcement of the confinement and are fighting against the employer's plan to take advantage of the crisis to dismiss 200 workers and restart production with a reduced workforce.

Australia

12 May. The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) has condemned the New South Wales government's plans to enact a public sector wage freeze. The union's general secretary, Brett Holmes, denounced the government's hypocrisy for hypocritically claiming to "always put people before numbers" and then denying workers on the Covid-19 front line, including nurses and midwives, a modest pay rise from 1 July.

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2 June. Paramedics, nurses and midwives take industrial action against the New South Wales government's planned 12-month wage freeze for the state's 400,000 civil servants. From Monday evening, New South Wales paramedics refused to charge patients, while nurses and midwives began to launch demonstrations outside the state parliament from Tuesday.

Belgium

3 March. In an open letter to the Ministers of Health, the Federation of Independent Nurses of Belgium is alarmed: "Every day we are at the bedside of patients and their families, the populations we meet have precarious health and are therefore at risk. The dispensaries no longer have any masks, gloves or disinfectant gel. How can we protect our patients, our families and ourselves? Because we can see that in countries where Covid-19 is more prevalent caregivers pay a heavy price for the disease that is transmitted. You talk about phase 1, 2 and 3, we have understood that this evolves according to a gradient of contaminated cases, but what are the measures adopted? Please be more communicative, or else the term empowerment



is just a "trend" because under the pretext of avoiding panic you are creating an unhealthy climate. The population and front-line carers are entitled to be better informed and better protected. It should be noted that a person infected with the virus must remain confined to his or her home to avoid the spread of the virus. What about the nursing staff who must treat the person without masks, disinfectant gel or gloves? You have taken measures for hospitals but nothing for outpatients and you are drastically reducing hospital beds! You had found communication channels to inform us about the obligation to read the identity card but when it comes to

protecting the home staff: nada. ».

Bolivia

9 April. The nursing sector of the Daniel Bracamonte hospital in Potosi organised a protest against the management. It demands maximum security conditions in the face of the indigence of the management and asks to be included in decisions taken at the highest level between doctors and state officials. How is it possible to exclude the most important sector of health workers: nurses? he asks. To remedy the situation, he asks that nurses' delegates be mandated to attend meetings of the Covid-19 plan.

Canada

March 24th. The minister, Danielle McCann, signed on Saturday afternoon a decree allowing hospital managers to revise working hours, to "have the necessary human resources" during the state of health emergency. "The regular working day may be modified, but may not exceed twelve hours," the ministerial order reads in particular. The president of the Fédération de la santé du Québec (FSQ-CSQ), Claire Montour, accuses political decision-makers of "cutting the wings" of health professionals: the "angels we said we wanted to take care of". "And this now translates into the suspension of all the clauses that guaranteed us a minimum of decency in our working conditions. This government has a strange way of taking care of us," she said.

14 April. According to an order signed by Health Minister Danielle McCann, the government can redeploy college teachers to the front line in the fight against coronavirus. For example, professors in nursing, social work or biomedical analysis could be forced to go to work in the health network, where the needs are great. We are putting the cart before the horse," said Caroline Quesnel, president of the Fédération nationale des enseignantes et enseignants du Québec (FNEEQ). Is it going to be mandatory or voluntary? It's confusing, and there's no shortage of them. »

26th May. Union health leaders in the Mauricie-Centre-du-Québec region call on the Minister of Justice, Sonia LeBel, to support their request for an independent enquiry into the management of the COVID-19 crisis in the region. In Trois-Rivières, where dozens of cars participating in a parade in support of health care personnel converged. The "Together, we're on the move" event was intended to demonstrate support for the region's health care workers.

South Korea

5 March. The KHMU (Korean Health Workers' Union) says: "Under these circumstances, the KHMU urges the government to take more active measures and actions. We also call for follow-up in the National Assembly and appeal to Korean citizens. Safety masks and gadgets should preferably be distributed to medical organizations and health and medical personnel. For the time being, as the problems with masks that wear out very quickly are not solved, the government should take special measures. The government should ensure that local suppliers produce protective masks, which have so far been imported from overseas countries. In

anticipation of accommodating a large number of confirmed patients, workers should also be prepared. In particular, an adequate level of training should also be provided to indirectly exposed workers such as those working in the sanitation and maintenance sectors. To this end, the government should not spare a budget. Special measures should be taken to protect socially marginalized groups of people. Care services should be provided for people with mental illness, the elderly and the disabled, as well as for infants and pre-school children, and the government should ensure that no one is neglected because of the lack of care services. In addition, paid leave for family care should also be provided. Active measures are needed, especially for pregnant women. Citizens should not hate, exclude or discriminate against persons in a particular condition. Citizens should actively participate in the donation of blood. The KHMU also joins this campaign. We ask all of you to encourage and support the health and medical personnel fighting against Covid-19 on the ground".

Ivory Coast

A coalition of trade unions of women health workers in Ivory Coast (doctors, nurses, midwives and laboratory technicians), denounced on Sunday 29 March 2020 the crying lack of basic equipment in hospitals to effectively fight against Covid-19. She also wondered: "Where have the billions gone for the management of the coronavirus crisis? ». As a result, the health unions are issuing a 72-hour ultimatum to the government, otherwise they threaten to reduce their services or even close everything, it has been learned. "The 72 hours is the time it takes for health centers to be massively supplied. Otherwise, we can operate at a minimum to reduce the exposure of health workers. If there are ten health workers in a center and there is enough material for one person, only one person will work. There's no point in having all ten people come in to expose themselves," said Dr. Seka, the spokesperson for the health professionals' coalition.

9 April. The platform of health unions and associated unions in Côte d'Ivoire expressed concern Wednesday in Abidjan about a "large-scale" contamination of the Ivorian medical corps at Covid-19, reserving the right to resort to "necessary actions if nothing is done". According to Dr. Séka Jean Didier, the general coordinator of this platform, the spread of coronavirus disease does not spare health workers who, according to him, are without working materials or personal protective equipment (PPE).

United States

6 March. Thousands of unionized nurses say that the lack of preparedness of their employers and hospitals is alarming and they fear that they are at risk for Covid-19. On Thursday, at a press conference in Oakland, California, the National Nurses United (NNU) released the results of a survey sent to union members asking them if they thought their employers were prepared for the ongoing epidemic. Based on recent responses from more than 6,500 nurses in 48 states, the NNU said that only 29 percent of nurses said their employers had a plan in place to isolate a patient with a possible Covid infection.¹⁹ Twenty-three percent said they "didn't know" if there was a plan in place at their hospital. "The results of our national survey of more than

6,500 nurses are really worrying," Thomas Thomason said Thursday for the union. "They show that large percentages of hospitals across the country are not prepared to safely treat Covid-19. Deborah Burger of the Northern California Kaiser read a letter from an anonymous nurse who works at a Northern California Kaiser facility currently under quarantine. The letter explained: "As a nurse, I am very concerned that not enough is being done to stop the spread of the coronavirus. I know this because I am currently ill in quarantine after treating a patient who has tested positive. I am waiting for permission from the federal government to allow my testing, even after my doctor and county health professional has ordered the test. I volunteered to be part of the care team for this patient we knew was positive. I did so because of all the recommended protective equipment and employer training. I thought it was provided. I did it under the assumption that if something happened to me, of course I would be treated. Then what was a small concern, after a few days of caring for this patient, became my reality. I got sick." The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, a federal health agency) did not allow him to be tested. According to their letter: "They said they wouldn't test me because if I wore the recommended protective equipment, I wouldn't get the coronavirus." "What kind of scientific answer is that?" wrote the nurse in her letter. "What a ridiculous and uneducated response from the department that is in charge of health in this country. On Wednesday, the NNU asked the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to adopt a temporary emergency measure to protect health workers and the public. The NNU is not the only union to denounce the poor institutional preparedness at Covid-19. The Service Employees International Union - United Healthcare Workers West (SEIU-UHW) - has also denounced the catastrophic situation in hospitals.



March 26th. The Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals (PASNAP), which represents 8,500 nurses and health care workers across Pennsylvania, released a report card on how hospitals are being prepared to manage

the coronavirus outbreak. The PASNAP report examines the policies and practices of nearly two dozen hospitals from the Philadelphia area to the suburbs of Pittsburgh. Do they have adequate protective supplies for workers? Is an isolated unit set up for Covid-19 patients? An outdoor triage tent? Adequate staffing? A quarantine policy for workers? The union interviewed its members to gather their answers to these questions and more. Although the newsletter does not reflect official policy statements from the hospitals interviewed, union president Maureen May says the information comes from people with the most direct knowledge. Union members rated their employer's preparedness through a rating system of "good", "fair" and "inadequate". Here are their main findings: Workers in 21 of the 23 hospitals surveyed expressed concern about the levels of PPE (personal protective equipment) for workers. Workers at St. Mary's in Bucks County and Wills Eye in Philly said that hospitals were not providing adequate N-95 masks at all. Ten of the 23 hospitals provided adequate outdoor tents or triage stations for Covid-19 patients. Only seven of the 23 hospitals had designated a separate unit at the hospital for Covid-19 patients. The union's membership survey also found that more than half of the hospitals surveyed had not established absence management for Covid-19 diagnoses among staff. Nine hospitals were classified as providing "inadequate" benefits to workers who have to remain in quarantine for 14 days. Of these hospitals, five of which are located in Philly, workers reported that they must use accumulated paid leave or sick leave - "or risk not being paid". Eight hospitals offered "adequate" paid administrative leaves, or the local county government offered to pay leaves for employees in quarantined hospitals.

29 March. A union representing nurses in Los Angeles County argued that specialized N95 respirators should be made widely available to Covid-19 frontline health care workers. Nurses are encouraged to reuse the masks and are denied access to N95 respirators prescribed by a state standard for infectious diseases, according to Service Employees International Union Local 721. "Our union's position is that much is still unclear about this virus and that LA County (Department of Health Services) should exercise caution in ensuring that essential nursing staff are protected so that they can stay healthy and care for thousands of patients in the coming weeks, when the public will need nurses more than ever," the union statement said. Coral Itzcalli, a spokesperson for SEIU Local 721, told the City News Service that the union met with county officials on March 11 and was told not to worry because plenty of personal protective equipment was available. SEIU Local 721 accused county hospital administrators of stockpiling N95 respirators and filed a complaint with the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health. The union demanded that the county immediately investigate the risk to health care workers. "It's very disappointing that LA County would put front-line health care workers like me in this kind of danger when it's precisely at times like these that we desperately need all medical personnel in perfect condition," said Cynthia Mitchel, a nurse at LAC+. USC. Until the county provides what it considers to be appropriate personal protective equipment, the union has advised individual medical professionals that they can choose to decline assignments they deem unsafe.

3 April. Local health care workers gathered Thursday in downtown Buffalo to urge federal authorities to do more to ensure that those on the front lines have sufficient safety equipment during the Covid-19 crisis. They demanded that President Trump

force companies to convert factories to manufacture more fans, N95 respirators and other personal protective equipment, a power granted by the Defense Protection Act." The fear is that when the wave hits and the situation is disastrous, we will burn out," said Patrick Weisansal, a hospital radiology technician who wore a garbage bag on his clothes to show solidarity with New York-area hospital workers who wore garbage bags to work. Two unions with large numbers of members in the health care sector - the Communications Workers of America and the New York State Nurses Association - organized the rally. Health care workers in the region, along with the CWA, CSEA and Teamsters unions, mobilized for better access to personal protective equipment such as masks and gloves in Niagara Square.

7 April. A coalition of nurses' unions on Monday demanded that their members be protected in the fight against the coronavirus epidemic threatening to overwhelm the US health care system, describing a dysfunctional approach to the pandemic that endangers the lives of frontline health care workers. "What nurses are seeing is that all hospitals are malfunctioning," said Rose Roach, executive director of the Minnesota Nurses Association, in a statement. "No two hospitals use the same protocols. No two hospitals maintain the same procedures. They operate differently, from day to day, and even from shift to shift." "Instead of responding to the demands that nurses have been making for months to their employers and elected officials to ensure safe workplaces to protect themselves, their patients and the public, hospitals have instead sent nurses to the front lines of the Covid-19 pandemic with bandanas, scarves and garbage bags for protection," said Bonnie Castillo of the National Nurses United (NNU). NNU and the Minnesota Nurses Association joined the request by the DC Nurses Association, the National Nurses Organizing Committee, the New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA), the Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA) and the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals (PASNAP). "We are now bearing the brunt of a health system that has become dysfunctional after years of relentless public health budget cuts, while generating obscene profits for corporate interests. How many more nurses have to die?" asked Sheridan-González.

19 April. Ten nurses at Santa Monica Hospital in Los Angeles were suspended because they refused to work without masks. "I've been a nurse for 25 years; I don't need the Center for Disease Control (CDC) to tell me when I need an N95 mask," said Cline, one of the nurses. "When I have a patient coughing in my face... I won't go to that room unless they provide me with one.

12 April. Public sector collective bargaining agreements covering more than 18,000 hospital workers, police and other government employees were affected by the coronavirus outbreak in Nevada. In the Las Vegas Valley, local governments have suspended more than 25 such agreements since mid-March. This decision stems from a rarely invoked section of Nevada law that allows local governments to suspend contracts in an emergency. According to a labour lawyer, it is virtually guaranteed that private sector unions will not face similar action, they are covered by federal legislation prohibiting the suspension of agreements. These suspensions affect all unionised employees in Clark County, Las Vegas, North Las Vegas, the University Medical Center and the Metropolitan Police Department. Government officials said the decision is necessary to quickly adjust employees' schedules in response to the coronavirus outbreak, which has infected more than 2,600 people in Nevada and killed more than 80. But for the time being, officials from some of the region's largest

public unions are not rushing to challenge the suspensions as long as the only changes are to schedules.

18th April. The hospital staff of St. Joseph's Hospital in Providence purchased stocks of vinyl sheeting and industrial tape to make masks and overshirts.

12 April. Nurses' unions and other front-line workers in the United States express outrage at new guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that allow essential employees who have been exposed to the new coronavirus to return to work more quickly. "The relaxed guidelines are dangerous and risk exposing other workers and the public to infection, with supposed mitigation measures that are far less effective in reducing the threat of the virus spreading," Bonnie Castillo, head of the National Nurses United union, said Friday. These reckless guidelines were not issued to protect workers, but rather to ensure the continuity of corporate profits," added Richard Trumka, leader of the AFL-CIO. The new CDC guidelines, published on the agency's website on Wednesday, state that "critical infrastructure workers may be allowed to continue working after a potential exposure to Covid-19, provided they remain asymptomatic and additional precautions are implemented to protect them and the community.

21 April. The 42,000-member New York State Nurses Association filed a complaint against the state health department and two hospitals on Monday, claiming the entities failed in their "fundamental duty to protect health care workers and the general public. The state's largest nurses' union says the Department of Health issued directives ordering health care workers who contracted Covid-19 to return to work after seven days, despite emergency regulations that allow them to stay home for a fortnight. Nurses and other front-line workers said that unless they could prove they had the virus with an actual test, some hospitals were forcing them to use their accumulated paid leave during those seven days. The union denounces the lack of protection. At least 84 nurses who are union members have been hospitalised with the virus, and at least 6 nurses have died.

April 27th. Not having obtained the installation of Plexiglas screens for the counters (reception, cash desks...) by the management, the unions of the three Washington University Hospitals decided to make their own screens and install them themselves: "We went to buy Plexiglas and PVC, made the screens, installed them and showed the employers' negligence", explains Leanne Kunze.

April 29th. A union representing more than 4,000 nurses at the Wexner Medical Center in Ohio State said thousands of workers had been exposed to a risk of coronavirus in a complaint filed with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Ohio Division of Safety and Hygiene on Tuesday. The complaint details 14 cases in which it says workers have not received adequate training or protection. Affected areas of the medical centre include the correctional services unit, the fourth floor of the Dodd Rehabilitation Center that resulted in the quarantine of nurses, a unit on the fifth floor of Ross Heart Hospital that closed to quarantine staff, and the delivery unit that had at least 12 members testing positive at Covid-19, the complaint explains.

April 29th. Nursing home workers at Rockford's Alden Debes Rehabilitation and Health Care Centre are planning a statewide strike on May 8. They claim that the owners "have refused to provide personal protective equipment (PPE), improved safety protocols, appropriate hazard pay and basic compensation". The strike,

scheduled for May 8, will impact 40 nursing homes in Illinois. SEIU Healthcare, the union of health care and nursing home workers that called the strike call, is also demanding a one-year contract that sets a minimum wage of \$15 for all workers.

1st May. The National Nurses United, a national nurses' union, called for a demonstration in front of 139 hospitals in 13 states. The union is calling for more personal protective equipment when nurses treat patients with Covid-19. More than 60 nurses across the country have died from the virus, according to the NNU. The union says, however, that this number is probably higher due to a lack of testing. "Nurses are committed to caring for their patients. They have not committed themselves to sacrificing their lives on the front lines of the Covid-19 pandemic," said Bonnie Castillo, executive officer of the NNU.

17 April United States. Nurses at Providence Saint John's Health Center declared victory today after hospital management announced that health care workers throughout the Providence system will receive N95 respirator masks to wear when caring for Covid-19 patients. In the past week, at least 15 nurses have refused to take patient assignments unless they received N95 masks and 10 of those nurses have been suspended and sent home. The hospital had N95 masks in its possession but refused to provide them to the nurses. On Saturday, more than 50 nurses staged a socially distant demonstration outside the facility to protest the hospital's infection control policies. "This is a victory," said Chelsea Halmy, a medical-surgical nurse who works on the Covid-19 unit and is one of the suspended nurses. To date, the other 10 nurses remain suspended pending investigation hearings. The Saint John's nurses, with the support of their union, the CNA, are calling on management to immediately reinstate the nurses without disciplinary action and to resolve the outstanding safety issues.

5 May. The SEIU Healthcare Workers Union of Ontario, representing more than 60,000 healthcare workers, is calling for public enquiries and criminal investigations into coronavirus-related deaths in long-term care facilities across the state. Union president Sharleen Stewart said Tuesday the union sent letters to the Toronto Regional Police and Peel, urging them to begin criminal negligence investigations into the deaths of three health care workers that Stewart said were preventable. "Were these people adequately protected? I don't think they did everything they could to prevent these three deaths," she said. The union also wants the chief coroner's office to carry out autopsies.

7 May. America's largest hospital corporation, HCA Healthcare (184 facilities in the U.S. and the U.K.) uses the coronavirus pandemic to delay and undermine union elections for 1,600 nurses in North Carolina. It has hired anti-union advocates at \$400 an hour to organize meetings at Asheville's Mission Hospital, urging them not to join a union. But 70% of the nurses said they were in favour of the union. Only 37 of HCA's 184 hospitals are unionized. While the company is expected to pocket \$4.7 billion in health care benefits, the number of coronavirus cases in North Carolina continues to rise, and nurses say they have had to fight for basic personal protective equipment.

12 May. An estimated 1.4 million women health care workers lost their jobs in April. Fae-Marie Donathan, a 42-year-old nurse who was laid off, said: "A spokesperson for her hospital said they were experiencing financial difficulties as a result of the pandemic. The American Hospital Association said hospitals would lose up to \$200 billion by June. Most of this loss of revenue is due to the fact that hospitals are no longer performing scheduled operations. And because hospitals don't make a lot of

money, they say they can't afford to keep all the staff."

12 May. At the call of the National Nurses United (NNU), a thousand nurses lit candles in streaming to pay tribute to the hundred or so nurses who lost their lives. The NNU denounces the management "for failing to protect the nursing staff by not providing the necessary protective equipment".

14 May. Staff at Lawrence Memorial Hospital in New London, Connecticut, participated in a "solemn solidarity rally" along Montauk Avenue on Wednesday, organized by a health care workers' union. Debbie Wyzacecki, one of the presidents of AFT Local 5,049, the Lawrence Memorial union representing professional nurses, said the event was aimed at supporting anyone who has the coronavirus, but especially their peers. "We just want to ask for proper PPE so that we don't all get sick, or worse," she said.

8 May. Nurses in the state of Illinois claim victory following the signing of a new collective agreement. They had threatened a strike on Friday. The two-year agreement covers the 10,000 members of SEIU Healthcare Illinois who work in 100 nursing homes across the state. The agreement provides for a basic wage of at least \$15 per hour for all employees, extended sick leave, and an additional \$2 per hour for working during the pandemic, union officials said. The agreement also includes a provision that employees should not work without adequate protective equipment. Lavern Johnson, a 65-year-old laundress at the Wentworth Rehabilitation and Health Care Center in Chicago, said she was pleased that the agreement would allow her to retire soon.

12 May. After threatening to strike, the Illinois Association of Health Care Facilities (IACHF) achieves "the largest wage increases ever in the industry.

5 May. Nurses and other front-line health care workers at one of Denver's largest hospitals announced May 5 that they have formed a union to seek better pay and protections as they continue to fight the coronavirus pandemic. "Today we are announcing the formation of Denver Health Workers United, an independent voice for frontline health workers, a union open to all employees," the new union members said in a letter to hospital CEO Robin Wittenstein. "In the midst of the Covid-19 crisis, we saw the urgent need for an organization to stand up for us".

21 May. Ten unions representing health care workers at McLaren Hospitals (Flint, Michigan) say leaders are not transparent about finances and personal protective equipment during the COVID-19 pandemic. The unions announced in a May 21 press release that members had filed a complaint against McLaren, claiming that the health care system violated federal labour laws by withholding information. According to them, McLaren denied the unions on 15 May the requested information on the amount of subsidies the hospital had received for the pandemic and details of the PPE inventory.

15 May. Nursing home workers from 36 long-term care facilities in New York State held rallies and demonstrations on Thursday, expressing their grief for their colleagues who died during the VIDOC pandemic.¹⁹ The workers were also called to the streets to express their grief for their colleagues who died during the VIDOC pandemic. The members of 1199 SEIU, some of whom work in the largest for-profit nursing home networks on the East Coast, say they continue to face staff shortages, lack of proper PPE, refusal by corporate employers to recognize the risks and sacrifices made during the COVID-19 crisis.

31 May. 200 health care workers gathered Saturday in New London, Connecticut, to protest the shortage of personal protective equipment and to pay tribute to a nursing assistant who died earlier this month after contracting Covid-19. Union officials said nurses, orderlies and other health care workers risked their lives caring for Covid-19 patients while lacking sufficient protective equipment such as masks and gowns to ensure their safety.

2 June. The medical group Essentia announced that it was going to lay off 900 people due to the drop in revenues following the pandemic and the fall in its turnover. A caravan of cars honking "No Layoffs at Essentia" and "Horn for Health Care" signs to protest the hundreds of job losses at the region's largest employer circulated around Duluth's downtown campus. "We don't want to see any layoffs, especially since the [Covid-19] outbreak hasn't hit our area yet," said USW Local 9460 President Deanna Hughes, who was on site.

Spanish State

April 29th. Temporary workers from the Severo Ochoa Hospital in Madrid organized a rally in front of the regional health secretariat demanding their integration and threatening to stop signing month-to-month contracts. In fact, only 12% of the 802 emergency doctors in the Madrid community have permanent contracts. The majority are women. One of the interns, Angeles Martín, testified: six years in the emergency room and 40 fixed-term contracts in chains. Irene Cabrera, who has been working on fixed-term contracts for three years, has been affected by Covid-19 and does not know what will happen to her when she starts again in May. They will not sign a contract of less than six months: "We are not in reinforcement. We are part of the service's workforce. "Despite this, they ensured the epidemic peaked in March: "There are 800 beds in this hospital, 80-90 of which are in the emergency room: I've taken care of 350 patients at a time, up to four times our capacity. "The 25 doctors on permanent contracts in Severo Ochoa support them.

Hong Kong

2 May. Pro-democracy activists in the health sector founded a new union, the Hospital Authority Employees Alliance, or HAEA, which has become one of the largest in the city, with 20,000 members or 25% of the hospital authority employees. At the start of the coronavirus epidemic, HAEA launched an unprecedented strike that urged the government to close the city's border with mainland China to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. More than 8,000 doctors and nurses joined the movement, which affected the emergency services of public hospitals. The strike ended 5 days later after the government announced the closure of some border points and forced all visitors from the mainland to quarantine themselves.

12 May. More than 3,000 hospital workers voted in favour of a strike that could begin as early as Monday to pressure the Hong Kong government to close its borders with mainland China. The workers are members of the Hospital Authority Employees Alliance, formed in December and made up of 18,000 doctors, nurses and other hospital employees. More than 9,000 medical workers signed a petition pledging to join the potential strike. Non-essential hospital workers are expected to strike on

Monday, with the rest of the workers starting to strike for the rest of next week. The Hong Kong Hospital Authority recalled that hospitals have a total of about 77,000 workers, including 6,500 doctors and 27,000 nurses.

India

7 April. The United Nurses Association (UNA) is one of the largest nurses' unions with 380,000 members. A large number of health care workers, including nurses, doctors and other staff members are infected in various states such as Maharashtra, Kerala, Delhi, Karnataka etc. The union has been active in the field of health care for over a decade. In a statement the union denounces, among other things, "the insufficient number of Covid-19 tests, the poor quality of personal protective equipment" and "harassment in the form of forced overtime" and "wage deductions" imposed. He announced that he would file a complaint with the Supreme Court to demand a "protocol" defining the good working conditions necessary to combat Covid-19.

27 May. Medical staff and employees of the KEM hospital run by the Mumbai municipality protested Tuesday against their working conditions after the death of one of their colleagues and the guarding of his body in the morgue for two days. Members of the hospital employees' union organised a demonstration from 7 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. on the hospital premises and urged the authorities to provide them with better working conditions. The demonstrators expressed concern about the increasing number of infections and said that patients' bodies were becoming difficult for hospitals to handle.

4 June. Nurses working at AIIMS (New Delhi) demonstrated Wednesday for the third consecutive day, demanding that the hours of work on COVID-19 duty wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) be reduced to four hours from the current six hours. The President of the Nurses Union AIIMS, Harish Kajla, said that during those six hours the nurses were sweating profusely, causing weight loss, vomiting and added that many of them had even fainted. The union warned with a strike threat for 10 June if the administration does not accept their demand and an indefinite strike from 15 June, Kajla said. More than 500 nurses work at AIIMS.

Indonesia

March 28th. The Indonesian Medical Association (IDI) and many other professional groups protested to the government over the lack of personal protective equipment for doctors, nurses and medical workers involved in the management of the coronavirus outbreak. They have even threatened to strike if the government does not meet their needs. "Every health care worker is at risk of contracting the coronavirus or Covid-19 infection. We therefore demand an adequate supply of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) for all medical staff" as stated in the written statement signed by IDI President Daeng M. Faqih on Friday 27 March 2020.

Ireland

6 May. In the midst of the pandemic, according to the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO), more than 10,000 nurses have yet to receive thousands of

euros in pay and allowances owed to them since last March. Wage settlements of up to €5,500 per year in bonuses for around 30,000 nurses and midwives were reached last March following the nurses' strike in early 2019. Only a small number of hospitals have fully implemented the agreements on pay and benefits.

Kenya

9 April. "What we are hearing from the field is that [the provision] of personal protective equipment (PPE) remains a challenge in health facilities in most counties," Seth Panyako, secretary general of the Kenya National Union of Nurses (KNUN), told local media. The union has more than 30,000 nurses in Kenya, where the number of Covid-19 cases currently stands at 172, with six deaths. "We are not in crisis in Kenya yet, but we will have one within the next month if we continue like this. The minister [of health] has said there could be 10,000 cases in the country; we are not ready to deal with such a serious epidemic," Panyako said.



April 29th. The impending strike by health workers, who are demanding better working conditions, could paralyse operations in hospitals and quarantine centres at a time when the country is struggling with the pandemic. Nurses, clinicians, and other categories of health workers are calling on the government and counties to improve their safety. The Kenya Health Professionals Society (KHPS) is expected to issue a strike notice tomorrow as a last resort. Yesterday, workers' representatives accused the government of taking their safety lightly. About ten health workers contracted the virus and four are still fighting for their lives. Spanish state.

8 June. Health workers in Kisumu announced that they would continue their strike on Tuesday after the county assembly failed to reach an agreement. Maurice Opetu,

secretary of the Kisumu branch of the National Nurses Union of Kenya, told reporters that they did not trust the executive, which they accused of not respecting the negotiating agreement. "Our strike is going on until all our demands are met, as ruled by the court. Nurses, laboratory and other health care workers are demanding promotions, an end to the chronic late payment of salaries and Covid-19 benefits.

Lesotho

8 April. Health professionals in Lesotho protest following their unsuccessful attempts to debate with the government on how to manage the health crisis. They want protective equipment, training, that their members be paid if they contract Covid-19 and a risk allowance. They had given the Ministry of Health until Friday to respond to their grievances, but there is still no response. Their associations have come together in a coalition which said that as of today its members would provide emergency services but would not participate in any suspected coronavirus emergencies. Lesotho has no confirmed cases of Covid-19 and has sent 10 suspected cases to the NICD, which have tested negative

Malaysia

June. After failing to secure a five-day pre-trial detention for five trade unionist employees of the Raja Permaisuri Bainun Hospital (HRPB) arrested on 2 June 2020, Malaysian police now want to charge them. The feminist coalition Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) calls on the Malaysian police to stop its persecution of the five trade unionists who were claiming their rights on a picket line in front of the hospital on 2 June. The National Union of Hospital Support and Allied Services Workers (NUWHSAS) explained that its decision to hold a peaceful picket was due to the failure of negotiations with hospital management and that the safety of its members remained at risk due to the pandemic.

Malawi

15 April. Dozens of health workers in Malawi's commercial capital, Blantyre, staged a sit-in to protest against working conditions during the coronavirus pandemic and denounce a "critical" shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) needed to treat patients. Images circulating on social networks on Tuesday show doctors and nurses in uniform outside Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital carrying placards with slogans such as "We are not going on a suicide mission" and "Should my family suffer because of my appeal? ».

Mali

April 27th. For failure to respect the government's commitments, health personnel in Bamako and Kati plan a 192-hour strike. According to the trade union leaders, it was at the end of the general assemblies of the workers convened for this purpose in the various structures during March and April 2020 that the activists demanded the satisfaction of their demands. The unions demand, among other things, the full

payment of their wage arrears, free medical care for social and health workers; the improvement of working conditions in the CHU and hospitals concerned through the recruitment of qualified staff; the improvement and adaptation of technical platforms in view of new health challenges as well as the granting and substantial increase of special function bonuses, on-call bonuses, etc.

Nigeria

June 1st. The fight against the spread of the coronavirus pandemic in the country faces a new challenge, following the threat by the Nigerian Association of Resident Doctors (NARD) to call its members to an indefinite strike. Doctors have accused the government of failing to resolve issues related to their welfare and safety and want the issue resolved within 14 days. The association is also calling for the reinstatement of its 26 members who were "illegally" dismissed in Jos (capital of Plateau State, central Nigeria).

Uganda

21 May. The departure of the first COVID-19 patient from Jinja hospital was marked on Thursday by a strike organized by 40 health workers demanding their unpaid daily allowances. They say they were supposed to receive 95,000 shillings a day, but some of the money has not been paid to them since 23 March.

Pakistan

18th March. Dozens of students from Sheikh Zayed Nursing College (SZNC, Rahim Yar Khan, Punjab) refused to work and organized a demonstration against the administration of Shaikh Zayed Medical College Hospital (SZMCH) for forcing them to perform their duties at the hospital without taking all precautionary measures to protect them from the virus.

April 26th. Health workers complained for weeks that hospitals in the country suffer from a chronic shortage of security equipment, leading to the arrest of more than 50 doctors who demanded more supplies in the city of Quetta earlier this month. Demonstrators continued to work in their hospitals while taking turns protesting outside the offices of the health authorities in Lahore, the provincial capital. Dozens of Pakistani doctors and nurses went on hunger strike demanding adequate protective equipment for frontline staff treating patients with coronavirus, a protest leader said Saturday. The Grand Health Alliance said about 30 doctors and nurses were on hunger strike, with up to 200 medical staff joining them every day for demonstrations. The Punjab health workers' union supports the Alliance and is also demanding adequate quarantine conditions for medical staff.

April 27th. Dozens of doctors and health workers have been on hunger strike for ten days in Lahore to protest against the lack of protective equipment against the new coronavirus. "We have no intention of stopping until the government hears from us," said Dr Salman Haseeb, who has stopped eating since 16 April. "We are at the forefront of the virus. And if we are not protected, then the whole population is at risk," added the leader of the Grand Alliance for Health, the medical union behind the

movement. According to this organisation, around 30 people are currently on hunger strike at the Punjab provincial health department. Up to 200 demonstrators take turns every day to support the strikers. Punjab, whose capital is Lahore, is the most populous province in the country, with more than 100 million inhabitants.



Quebec

13 April. Employees of the CHSLD du Manoir-de-Verdun (Centre d'hébergement et de soins de longue durée), in the southwestern part of the island of Montreal, were forced to stay in the facility to extend their shift. The manager of the residential centre allegedly ordered the doors to be locked to prevent staff from leaving the premises. "This was predictable. The nursing home has been operating at the limit of what is bearable since well before the pandemic," explains Françoise Ramel, president of the FIQ-SPSS union of health care professionals, which represents the nurses on site. The union also denounces the intimidation of the staff. Françoise Ramel maintains that nurses have been threatened with sanctions or reassignment if they refuse to extend their shifts.

28th May. The syndicat des professionnelles en soins de la Mauricie et du Centre-du-Québec (SPSMCQ) is part of the solidarity movement launched today by the Fédération interprofessionnelle de la santé du Québec (FIQ). A visibility action with the theme "Death by fatigue" was therefore organized yesterday afternoon in front of Trois-Rivières. "Professionals are already out of breath and we are receiving calls daily. They are being denied holidays, and often even time off. People are out of breath and have difficulty reconciling work and family. They need to rest and recharge their batteries. Many have fallen ill and others have even resigned," hammered Nathalie Perron, president of the syndicat des professionnelles en soins (SPSMCQ).

Swaziland.

4 May. The Swaziland Democratic Nurses Union (Swadnu) has declared its intention to bring the Eswatini government to justice for gross negligence. The Nurses Union has consulted its lawyers and intends to file an urgent request for a court to order the government to provide adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) to all health care workers. A nurse at Raleigh Fitkin Memorial Hospital tested positive for Covid-19 and ten other nurses have been placed in isolation. Swadnu President Mamba said the infected nurse would not have contracted the virus if the ministers had accepted the professional health advice provided to them.

Chad

May. According to Younouss Mahadjir, the president of the Health Workers' Union, the health authorities seem to be overwhelmed by the situation. "The Covid-19 surprised everyone, especially in countries like ours where disorder is organised right up to the top of the state. People are confused. We made pleas to the Minister of Health but nobody answered us. In the end, we have reached the stage where there is a multitude of workers who have tested positive, there are even deaths among the staff. It's getting serious".

Zimbabwe

March 26th. Thousands of hospital nurses in Zimbabwe went on strike on Wednesday over the lack of protective equipment and water shortages just days after the country reported its first cases of coronavirus, their union said. In a notice to the government, the nurses demanded personal protective equipment, water and a coronavirus risk allowance. "We treat so many people, some of whom may be infected, so our chances of contracting the disease are very high," Zimbabwe Nurses Association president Enock Dongo told AFP. The president of the Zimbabwe Hospital Doctors Association, Tawanda Zvakada, in a note to senior hospital officials at one of the country's largest hospitals, Harare Central Hospital, said the doctors would not come forward until they were fitted with protective equipment.

30 March. Working conditions for health workers are already disastrous, with a shortage of resources and medical supplies. In times of global pandemic, the collapse of the health system - and the economy in general - is a legitimate fear. The Zimbabwe Nurses Association (ZINA) has gone on strike, along with doctors and customs officials, to demand personal protective equipment (PPE) - health workers do not have personal protective equipment and without it, they are at greatly increased risk of infection - and access to a constant supply of water - in some hospitals, the water supply is irregular. Hygiene is paramount in the fight against Covid-19. Without access to water, health workers are at higher risk of infection. On 17 March, the Swaziland Democratic Nurses Union (SWADNU) organized a march, with many hospitals holding sit-ins to demand PPE (Personal Protective Equipment). Although the government has responded by providing PPE, there are not enough of them and nurses fear they will have to take further action if the equipment runs out. In general, unions are concerned about the lack of PPE and test kits.

19 April. The Zimbabwe Urban and Rural Council Nurses' Union denounced the lack of protective clothing. "Our members are severely handicapped in terms of protective equipment, so they also fear for their lives," writes the union, which is threatening to strike, in a letter dated 10 April.

Some trade union organizations quoted

South Africa

The National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU) has 235,000 members and is the largest public sector union in the country. It organizes government, health, education and social welfare workers.

<https://www.nehawu.org.za/>

The Young Nurses Indaba Trade Union (YNITU)

<http://ynitu.org.za/about-us/>

Democratic Nursing Organization of SA (Denosa)

<https://www.denosa.org.za/>

Australia.

The New South Wales Nurses and Midwives Association is a union representing nurses and midwives in the public and private sectors in New South Wales, Australia. It was formed in 1931 and has 61,000 members.

<https://www.nswnma.asn.au/covid-19-information/>

Belgium.

Federation of Independent Nurses of Belgium

<https://fnib.be/>

Canada

Quebec Health Federation (FSQ-CSQ)

The FSQ-CSQ brings together regional unions of nursing and cardio-respiratory staff. It is affiliated to the Centrale des syndicats du Québec (CSQ).

<https://fsq.lacsq.org/>

South Korea.

KHMU (Korean Women Health Workers' Union)

<http://bogun.nodong.org/english/>

United States

National Nurses United (NNU)

National Nurses United (NNU) is the largest nursing organization in the United States with nearly 185,000 members nationwide.

On its website, the Media / news coverage section offers an updated press review of various nursing struggles around the world.

<https://www.nationalnursesunited.org/>

Service Employees International Union - United Healthcare Workers West

SEIU United Healthcare Workers West (SEIU UHW) is a statewide union of Service Employees International in California. In 2020, it had 97,000 members.

<https://www.seiu-uhw.org/>

Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals

The Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals is a trade union in Pennsylvania that represents approximately 8,800 nurses and allied health professionals.

<https://www.pasnap.com/>

New York State Nurses Association

The New York State Nurses Association is a nurses' union that claims 42,000 members.

<https://www.nysna.org/>

Minnesota Nurses Association

A union dedicated to defending nurses, patients and quality care in Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota and Iowa.

<https://mnnurses.org/>

SEIU Healthcare

Services Employees International Union Healthcare (SEIU Healthcare) is a Canadian union representing more than 60,000 workers in Ontario and the United States

<https://seiuhealthcare.ca/whoweare/>

India

The United Nurses Association, is a professional association of nurses in the Indian state of Kerala.

<http://www.unaworld.org/#>

Ireland.

Irish Nurses and Midwives Organization (INMO)

The Irish Nurses and Midwives Organization is Ireland's largest nurses and midwives union with 35,000 members.

<https://www.inmo.ie/>

Kenya.

The National Union of Nurses (KNUN) has more than 30,000 nurses.

<https://twitter.com/knunofficial>

Quebec.

The Fédération interprofessionnelle de la santé du Québec - FIQ is a union organization with close to 75,000 members who are nurses, nursing assistants, respiratory therapists and clinical perfusionists working in health care institutions across Quebec. More than 90% of FIQ members are women,

<http://www.fiqsante.qc.ca/>

Union of Care Professionals (SPSMCQ)

<http://www.fiqsante.qc.ca/mauricie-centre-du-quebec/>

Swaziland.

Swaziland Democratic Nurses Union (Swadnu)

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