

Maryland grocery worker who wanted to help seniors dies of Covid-19

written by Struggle - La Lucha

April 8, 2020



Leilani Jordan

Twenty-seven-year-old Leilani Jordan told her mother, Zenobia Shepard, "Mommy, I'm going to work because no one else is going to help the senior citizens get their groceries."

Jordan worked at the Giant Food at the Campus Way South store. She was a greeter. Her mother described to local TV station WUSA9 how Jordan had worked at the Giant store for six years as part of a disability program. "She loved her little job," and "She did whatever they needed to help people."

In late March, Leilani Jordan became ill, was eventually diagnosed as being positive for Covid-19 and was hospitalized at Walter Reed Medical Center. Before she was

placed on a ventilator, she called her mother, telling her, "Mommy, I can barely breathe." On April 1 she died.

In a recent article, published in the Atlantic magazine, [Ibram X Kendi](#) documents how the virus has disproportionately impacted Black and Brown people.



Zenobia Shepard shared these photos with WUSA9 news as a reminder of how horrible this virus can be.

Jordan is not the only grocery and retail worker to die.

Walmart workers' rights group, United for Respect, reported that in Illinois, Walmart workers Phillip Thomas, 48, and Wando Evans, 51, both of whom worked at a store in Evergreen Park near Chicago, died in late March. In addition, a Trader Joe's worker in Scarsdale, N.Y., died.

The United Food and Commercial Workers Union has been demanding that Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan designate grocery workers as first responders so that they can receive personal protective equipment.

In Maryland, two Amazon warehouses have already reported positive cases of coronavirus, one at the Baltimore location and two other cases at the Sparrow's Point warehouse. Baltimore and Maryland Amazon workers have initiated a [petition](#) and Amazon has responded, but on a scale that workers describe as being far too limited.

The company is now doing temperature checks. But in one case, a worker reported that the company distributed cleaning supplies and some masks for the first floor of the building, where management resides, but on the second, third and fourth floor, no one has received supplies.

Workers have also developed the hashtag #STRIKEdontdie, which expresses their sentiments at being unrecognized front-line workers whose lives are being sacrificed to preserve the profits of the companies they work for without adequate hazard pay or the power to control their working conditions



Maryland prisoners contact community group about denial of proper care amid pandemic

written by Struggle - La Lucha
April 8, 2020



Prisoners Solidarity Committee/Peoples Power Assembly

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 4, 2020

Contact Person: Attorney Alec Summerfield

Phone: 443-324-8644

Email: asummerfield@protonmail.com

Maryland prisoners contact community group about denial of proper care amid pandemic

Baltimore — Multiple individuals currently incarcerated at North Branch Correctional Facility in Cumberland, Md., have contacted activists with the People's

Power Assembly regarding conditions within the prison amidst the deadly Covid-19 pandemic. As the death count increases nationally and the U.S. health care system struggles to deal with the crisis, NBCI prisoners are calling for solidarity and support.

According to these individuals, the conditions they are currently experiencing at NBI are no less than horrific. Accounts detail the complete failure of the Maryland Department of Corrections to adequately test for Covid-19, treat individuals with symptoms, provide proper protective equipment or install handwashing stations. Furthermore, prisoners at NBCI are being denied soap, showers and access to the outdoors.

James Young III has been incarcerated at NBCI for almost 7 years. For the past week, he has been experiencing severe symptoms typical of confirmed Covid-19 cases. James has experienced fever, chills and respiratory distress. Correctional officers stationed at the prison have consistently denied James entrance to the prison's infirmary. Through a friend inside the prison, James communicated, "Yeah man, I haven't been given any medicine or treatment. They won't even let me have soap. They have just been keeping me in my cell as I feel worse and worse."

Terrance Mahogany is a prisoner in the cell next to James. Attorney Alec Summerfield, a PPA organizer, spoke directly to him via phone. He stated, "I am experiencing the same symptoms as James. It is getting real bad in here. The prison is making sure the guards have masks, soap, hand sanitizer and everything else ... but not us." He continued, "They don't care about the inmates. We can't get any treatment. No handwashing stations, no shower access, no nothing. We are just being left in our cells to suffer."

Another prisoner, Eric Tate, called his grandmother, PPA activist the Rev. Annie Chambers, to discuss his condition. Tate told Rev. Annie that he and other members of their family at NBCI had been experiencing symptoms but were nonetheless being

denied any medical care. It seems that prison officials have made no effort to quarantine patients, treat those who are sick or stop the spread of the virus. These reports from inside NBCI come just weeks after the Baltimore Sun reported on the dangers of a [potential Covid-19 outbreak](#) inside Maryland prisons.

Furthermore, family members of prisoners are facing difficulty when trying to obtain information on their incarcerated loved one's condition. Ms. Merry Rogers has a son currently incarcerated at NBCI. When she learned that other inmates were experiencing symptoms, she contacted the prison to ask about her son, Kenneth. Prison officials denied her any information about his medical condition. Ms. Rogers learned that her son had been moved from his usual cell block, but prison officials refused to tell her where or why.

The complete failure of the Maryland Department of Corrections to adequately prepare its facilities or protect its inmates from the deadly ongoing pandemic is an utter disgrace. The conditions at NBCI are unacceptable and nothing less than a violation of basic human rights. The PPA, Rev. Annie Chambers and the families of multiple individuals incarcerated in Maryland prisons demand that the DOC adopt new prevention and treatment practices in its facilities immediately.



Car rally: Stop sentencing incarcerated people to death by Covid-19

written by Struggle - La Lucha

April 8, 2020

April 6 — The New Orleans Workers Group called a car rally today in solidarity with all incarcerated people. While we practiced social distancing rules, our motorcade was over 70 cars long and drove several times around the Juvenile Justice Court, the Orleans Parish Prison, the New Orleans Immigration and Customs Enforcement Office and City Hall. This effort was to demand the immediate release of all people in ICE detention centers, jails and prisons who are not convicted of violent crimes.

We know that the inhumane conditions in these institutions are ripe for death and horror, all the worse with Covid-19 ravaging the state of Louisiana. We are also calling for an immediate moratorium on all arrests, deportations and ICE raids. The Orleans Parish Prison Reform Coalition, VOTE Louisiana and the New Orleans Center for Racial Justice also participated in the rally.



[Free the Prisoners - Workers Group Motorcade April 6 2020 - #freethemall](#) from [Marion Hill](#) on [Vimeo](#).

Yesterday, the Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office confirmed that 15 incarcerated people have tested positive for the coronavirus. We also know that the numbers of positive cases are quickly rising in youth detention, ICE detention and prisons all over the state. We cannot let this happen to our community members.

While the state government has no shortage of prison beds, there are shortages of hospital beds and ventilators during the Covid-19 crisis. Year in and year out, our local and state budgets reflect the priorities of the government: mass incarceration and violent policing of our communities. Instead of wasting millions of our tax dollars on prisons, detention centers (concentration camps) and police, these funds should be used to fulfill the needs of the people, especially during the pandemic.

Containment of this virus and survival are of top importance to us, and we know that this is impossible as long as there are people locked in prisons.

[#FreeThemAll!](#)

Source: [New Orleans Workers Group](#)

Photos: NOWG



In response to President Maduro's letter to the people of the United States

written by Struggle - La Lucha
April 8, 2020

■ INTELLECTUALS
■ and ARTISTS
in DEFENSE
of HUMANITY
UNITED STATES



The Network in Defense of Humanity - U.S. Chapter expresses our heartfelt solidarity with the people of Venezuela and its only legitimate President Nicolas Maduro Moros in this hour of danger.

The U.S. administration is creating more conflict and aggression against Venezuela, while people all over the world are fighting a dangerous virus pandemic.

Two weeks ago, the Trump administration filed bogus criminal charges against the elected Venezuelan President and thirteen other Venezuelan officials including the chief justice of their Supreme Court.

A few days ago, on April 2nd, the U.S. deployed naval ships off the coast of Venezuela, the largest U.S. military deployment since the 1989 invasion of Panama.

This comes on top of ever increasing economic sanctions intended to increase the people's suffering and strangle the Venezuelan economy.

It is outrageous that the U.S. Administration is sending resources against Venezuela for war while being disorganized and inept at getting lifesaving equipment such as ventilators, beds, and even facemasks to its own population and medical workers on the frontlines.

President Maduro spoke to the common interests of people from both the United States and Venezuela. "The peoples of the United States and Venezuela are not as different as their lies try to make us believe." He spoke to the common dreams of a "more just, free and compassionate society."

President Maduro implored U.S. citizens "to not allow your country to be dragged once again into another unending conflict, another Vietnam, another Iraq, but this time closer to home."

While other countries such as Cuba, Russia and China are sending medical workers

and equipment to assist internationally in the common fight against Covid-19, the Trump administration is sowing conflict and threatening war.

We demand an end to the U.S. policy of threats, sanctions and aggression.

We stand in solidarity with the people of Venezuela and the world.

[Network in Defense of Humanity, U.S. Chapter](#)

April 6, 2020



Carta del presidente Nicolás Maduro al pueblo estadounidense

written by Struggle - La Lucha

April 8, 2020



Caracas, 3 de abril de 2020

Al Pueblo de los Estados Unidos de América:

Desde hace semanas, el mundo está paralizado, intentando controlar una pandemia que sin duda es el desafío más grande que hemos enfrentado juntos como sociedad y comunidad internacional. Al igual que para el pueblo de Estados Unidos, confrontarla es nuestra prioridad.

Afortunadamente, en Venezuela hemos contado con algunas ventajas. Tomamos medidas muy tempranas de aislamiento y el despistaje ampliado, apoyándonos en nuestro sistema público y gratuito de salud, que cuenta con médicos de familia alrededor de todo el país. Contamos también con la invaluable organización comunitaria para ayudar a elevar la conciencia social y brindar apoyo a los más vulnerables. Igualmente, la solidaridad de Cuba, China, Rusia y el apoyo de la Organización Mundial de la Salud, nos ha permitido obtener insumos médicos necesarios, a pesar de las sanciones ilegales de Donald Trump.

Al expresarles mi solidaridad ante este importante desafío histórico y nuestra consternación y dolor por las consecuencias de la pandemia en EEUU, me veo obligado a también alertarles que, mientras el mundo se enfoca en atender la emergencia del COVID-19, **el gobierno de Trump, instrumentalizando una vez más las instituciones para alcanzar sus objetivos electorales y basándose en infamias bajo pretexto de la lucha contra las drogas, ha ordenado el despliegue militar más grande de Estados Unidos hacia nuestra región en 30 años, con el fin de amenazar a Venezuela y de llevar a nuestra región a un conflicto bélico costoso, sangriento y de duración indefinida.**

Como antecedente a esta maniobra falaz, el pasado 26 de marzo, William Barr, un Fiscal General de cuestionable independencia (quien recomendó la invasión de 1989 a Panamá contra Noriega y ayudó a encubrir las irregularidades del escándalo Irán-Contra), presentó, **sin mostrar prueba alguna**, acusaciones de narcotráfico hacia los Estados Unidos contra mí y contra altos funcionarios del Estado venezolano, a pesar de que la información del propio Departamento de Defensa demuestra que **Venezuela no es un país de tránsito primario de drogas hacia los Estados Unidos**, como sí lo son países aliados de Washington como Colombia u Honduras.

Es claro, que la administración Trump construye una cortina de humo para ocultar el improvisado y errático manejo de la pandemia en Estados Unidos. Desde un principio Donald Trump le restó importancia y la negó, tal como ha hecho con el cambio climático. Hoy la crisis se agrava simplemente porque, pese a contar con recursos, no está dispuesto a transformar el sistema de salud en uno que priorice el cuidado pleno de la población y no el lucro de ganancias de la medicina privada, las compañías de seguros y las farmacéuticas.

Nosotros en Venezuela no queremos un conflicto armado en nuestra región. Queremos relaciones fraternales, de cooperación, de intercambio y de respeto.

No podemos aceptar amenazas bélicas, ni bloqueos, ni tampoco la intención de instalar un tutelaje internacional que viola nuestra soberanía y desconoce los avances del último año en el diálogo político sincero entre el gobierno y gran parte de la oposición venezolana, que desea soluciones políticas, y no guerras por petróleo.

Por todo lo anterior, hago un llamado al pueblo de los Estados Unidos para que ponga freno a esta locura, para que responsabilice a sus gobernantes y los obligue a enfocar su atención y sus recursos en la atención urgente de la pandemia. Pido, junto al cese de las amenazas militares, el fin de las sanciones ilegales y el bloqueo que restringe el acceso a insumos humanitarios, tan necesarios hoy en el país. Les pido, con el corazón en la mano, que no permitan que su país se vea arrastrado, una vez más, a otro conflicto interminable, otro Vietnam u otro Irak, pero esta vez más cerca de casa.

No somos tan diferentes, como nos quieren hacer creer con infamias. Somos pueblos buscando una sociedad más justa, libre y compasiva. No dejemos que los intereses particulares de minorías cegadas por ambición nos separen. Nosotros, como dijo una vez nuestro líder Hugo Chávez, compartimos el mismo sueño. El sueño de Martin Luther King es también el sueño de Venezuela y de su gobierno revolucionario. Los invito a luchar juntos por hacer realidad ese sueño.

No a la guerra de Estados Unidos contra Venezuela

No más sanciones criminales

Queremos Paz

Nicolás Maduro Moros

Fuente: [El Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela](https://www.struggle-la-lucha.org/2020/04/page/7/)



On the anniversary of Dr. King Jr's assassination - fighting racism during the coronavirus crisis

written by Struggle - La Lucha
April 8, 2020



On the anniversary of Rev. Dr. King Jr's Assassination -

“Fighting racism during the coronavirus crisis”

Speakers include: Rebecka Jackson and John Parker, Harriet Tubman Center for Social Justice; Jasmine Johnson, youth activist and recent high school graduate; Lee Siu Hin, National Immigrant Solidarity; Attorney Roger Wareham, December 12 Movement; Gloria Verdieu, Coalition to Free Mumia and All Political Prisoners; Rev. Annie Chambers, Baltimore housing activist, Peoples Power Assembly; Nana Gyamfi, Black Alliance for Just Immigration; Lizz Toledo, Latinx LGBTQ2S activist, Atlanta Socialist Unity Party



Webinar unites groups to fight capitalism's coronavirus crisis

written by Struggle - La Lucha
April 8, 2020



At the national webinar “Defending People During the Coronavirus Crisis” on March 28, organizers from across the U.S. spoke about their struggle on the front lines of a humanitarian catastrophe magnified by the capitalist response to Covid-19.

Health care workers, delivery drivers, Amazon workers, housing representatives and advocates in defense of prisoners and migrants joined activists fighting against racism and repression to discuss steps to defend their communities and build unity.

The event was initiated by the Baltimore Peoples Power Assembly and the Harriet Tubman Center for Social Justice in Los Angeles. More than a hundred people attended, representing diverse communities and sectors of the working class across the U.S.

Besides sharing experiences and perspectives, organizers aimed to begin building a national people’s defense network to support the struggles that are sure to emerge in the weeks and months ahead. People have begun taking action in response to the lack of adequate health care and job safety, and an economic crisis that has already thrown millions out of work.

Mahtowin Munro of United American Indians of New England opened the webinar with a land acknowledgement, urging attendees to remember that we live on stolen Indigenous lands. Government officials are “exploiting the land, and they’re handing out lands and contracts as favors to all their capitalist corporate allies.”

Munro reported that the Trump regime’s Interior Department had just informed the

Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe that their reservation land would be “taken back from them in the middle of this unprecedented pandemic.”

This crisis “has completely washed the makeup off of the decayed face of capitalism,” she said. “It is clear to thousands more every day that capitalism considers all of our communities utterly expendable and wants to kill us, just as it has been clear to Indigenous people for centuries that settler colonialism considers us expendable.”

Frank Chapman of the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression spoke of “the crisis before the crisis.” He said, “The pandemic crisis did not create the crisis we have in the health system. It was there when it came. We already had over 140 million people living in poverty. We already had 500,000 people who are homeless, including children.

“The prisons are going to be turned into death camps for our people unless we unite and organize a very intense struggle to get people out,” Chapman explained. “This should be a period in which we demand and insist on the depopulation of the prison population. We must demand that everybody be let out, not based on what their criteria is, but based on our criteria.”

He concluded: “The coronavirus has no prejudice. It has no class outlook. It has no race. It has no nationality. It infects and kills human beings. But those who make policies in our country — they do have prejudices, and they do have a class interest.”

New challenges for worker organizers

Speakers acknowledged the challenges of organizing in the new conditions created by the pandemic. In many places it is now impossible to organize protests or mass meetings. Much of the work must be educational and preparatory in character, to get ready for the day when it is possible for the people to take to the streets again.

In the meantime, maximum creativity is needed to find other ways to struggle.

Meg Maloney of the New Orleans Hospitality Workers Alliance said, “The closures are necessary to stop the spread of the virus, but we can’t leave workers in the dust.” She explained that her group is building a coalition of workers and organizations around a series of popular demands to local government, such as the expansion of unemployment benefits to migrant workers and gig workers.

“All workers, whether in health care or in food delivery, need PPE [personal protective equipment]. Whatever solutions are going to come forth are going to come from the people, from the workers.”

Rasika Ruwanpathirana, an Amazon warehouse worker in Baltimore, drew on his own experience as an immigrant, explaining that his family in Sri Lanka is under quarantine, meaning people are not even allowed to leave their houses. He has no choice but to keep working here to support them.

Baltimore and Maryland Amazon workers have drawn up a [list of five demands](#) and launched a [petition campaign](#), he reported. Some of those demands were won during the first week of April as Amazon and Whole Foods workers from Staten Island, N.Y., to Detroit staged protests and walkouts.

Fernando Figueroa, a UPS Teamster in Jacksonville, Fla., explained, “People are getting sick at various UPS facilities around the country. Believe it or not, we have no personal protective equipment available for workers even though we’re handling thousands of boxes every day, and hundreds of drivers are driving all over the city.

“There are four main demands that we’re pushing,” Figueroa said. “We think that all nonessential businesses should be closed immediately. We think that no workers should lose income as a result of this crisis. We think that every worker who has to work needs to be kept as safe as possible. We also think that every person should

get hazard pay if you're still being forced to work through this crisis.

"The only people that are going to liberate us, who're going to improve our lives, are ourselves, banding together. And we're really trying to push that message."

Mutual aid and political pressure

The Rev. Annie Chambers of the Peoples Power Assembly, and tenant representative at the Baltimore Douglas Homes public housing development, explained that "I have been distributing food and asking organizations to help me. We have got no relief from the city or the state." Providing food and water, milk and baby formula for the residents of public housing is a constant fight, she said, and caregivers and family members are prevented from visiting elders who live in highrise buildings.

"Residents are having trouble even trying to get their medications," Rev. Chambers said, "because they don't have their copayment or because they are not even allowing us into the hospital now. They've got the National Guard guarding the hospitals, so if you don't go in by ambulance you don't get in. And they're picking and choosing who they take, and if they don't pick you, you don't get health care."

Ron Gochez of Unión del Barrio said: "About a year and a half ago or so, the mayor in Oakland, [Calif.,] warned the people when they found out that ICE raids were going to happen. So that's something we want the mayor here in Los Angeles to do. If there's any kind of confirmed ICE activity within the city boundaries, then the city itself should alert the residents. That's something we can put pressure on officials all over the country to do as well."

Gochez said his group was producing informational videos to counter misinformation. "We want to inform the community not only with the attacks of coronavirus, but also the attacks of capitalism on our communities," he concluded.

Nana Gyamfi of the Black Alliance for Just Immigration spoke about the importance of freeing migrants in detention centers, pointing out that 20 percent of those in detention are Black people, many hailing from the Caribbean. “Nothing will move unless we make it move,” she said.

Pam Africa of MOVE and International Concerned Family & Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal spoke about RAPP (Release Aging People in Prison), which has been successful in getting prisoners released — including political prisoners — based on health issues of older people. “That’s a strategy we can use,” she said.

Terri Kay of the People’s Alliance reported on an array of actions in the Bay Area, including a victorious struggle in Oakland for a moratorium on evictions. “People have very understandable concerns about the deployment of the National Guard across the country and the possibility of martial law, as well as abuse of voting rights.”

Irving McQueen of Pan African Community Action in Washington, D.C., drew attention to the plight of Black and Brown workers in the capital: “Public transit is shut down. People are unable to move around the city for groceries or to seek medical care.” He explained that there are survival programs in the Parkland Heights area to help distribute resources and necessities, but that it is crucial that these efforts be accompanied by education to explain to our communities that the capitalist class can’t meet our needs. “Only we can, through socialism.”

Crisis of imperialism and neoliberalism

Bernadette Ellorin of BAYAN USA said capitalist governments around the world are using the pandemic “as an opportunity to advance a fascist agenda.” In the Philippines, U.S.-backed President Rodrigo Duterte imposed a mandatory quarantine and curfew. To suppress the mass movement, Duterte is charging government critics with curfew violations and other trumped-up charges, “taking a militarist approach

rather than a medical approach."

"Disease and illness are a fact of life, but imperialism and neoliberalism — those are the real crises," said Ellorin.

Berta Joubert-Ceci of the Puerto Rico Tribunal and Struggle-La Lucha newspaper was on the line from Puerto Rico: "We have had two natural disasters, with two unnatural, terrible responses from the government," she said. Puerto Rico, a U.S. colony, has yet to recover from Washington's negligent response after hurricanes and earthquakes ravaged the country's people and infrastructure.

"Like the Philippines and all over the world, more skilled workers and professionals migrate out of the country to escape the despondent living conditions created by imperialism, leaving behind few skilled workers to complete the work of recovery. Skilled workers like nurses are an 'export,'" Joubert-Ceci explained. Test kits and treatments from nearby Cuba are blocked in Puerto Rico, as they are in the U.S.

Lucy Pagoada of Departamento 19, North American chapter of the Popular National Liberation Front (FNRP) of Honduras, and a public school teacher, described Honduras as a "narco colony" of Washington, where the head of state, illegally installed through U.S. intervention, is a drug trafficker whose brother is being tried in New York for smuggling. Bringing attention to the bogus drug charges that Trump has levelled against Venezuelan officials, including President Nicolás Maduro, Pagoada charged: "The U.S. sets up its own narco states, then projects its crimes onto anti-imperialist countries to justify intervention."

The webinar was co-chaired by **John Parker** of the Harriet Tubman Center and **Sharon Black** of the PPA. Participants agreed to continue sharing information, support each others' local efforts and build events together, starting with a national webinar and press conference on April 4, the 52nd anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination. The focus will be on fighting racism during the coronavirus

crisis, from attacks on Asian Americans to repression of Black and Brown communities.

Pam Africa summed up the success of the webinar. She exclaimed, "This is really a great call! I've been taking notes and got a lot of great ideas. It came to my head that I need to organize my block. We have to get to know people and get them involved in the movement. I want to be a person who can direct them to different things."



Turkey: Leftist musician dies after 288-day hunger strike against repression

written by Struggle - La Lucha
April 8, 2020



Helin Bölek
*a musician who died just to freely
sing her songs.*

**We will never forget!
We will never forgive!**

By New Solution editor in chief

On Friday, April 3, Helin Bölek, a member of the famous leftist music band Grup Yorum, died on the 288th day of the hunger strike till death (Death Fast) which she was conducting in order to protest against the repressions of the fascist oligarchy in Turkey.

What happened from June 2019 until now

Helin Bölek, along with four other members of Grup Yorum, went on a hunger strike in June 2019, while all five musicians who participated in the action were still in prison, to protest several years of ongoing repression against their band. After more than two years in prison, Helin Bölek and Bahar Kurt, another musician from the band who also took part in the hunger strike, were released at the end of November 2019, which was one of the small victories won by the hunger strike. The two continued their hunger strike at the House of Resistance, located in Istanbul's Küçük Armutlu neighborhood.

Here we would like to remind you once again of the demands of Grup Yorum that were declared at the beginning of the hunger strike:

- Stop raiding the Idil Cultural Centre.
- Remove the concert bans.
- Release our imprisoned members.
- Remove the arrest warrants.
- Drop the lawsuits filed against Grup Yorum members.

At the beginning of January 2020, Ibrahim Gökçek, another member of the group, announced that he was turning his indefinite hunger strike into a hunger strike till death (Death Fast), saying he would continue his hunger strike until the demands of Grup Yorum were accepted by the government. At the end of the same month, in a

video published on Twitter, Helin Bölek stated that she was also turning her indefinite hunger strike into a hunger strike till death.

In the middle of February, after another hearing in one of the court cases against Grup Yorum, the band's guitarist Ibrahim Gökçek was released from prison. At the same hearing the court decided to release the group's drummer Barış Yüksel, who is also an engineer, who was developing various projects for the benefit of the poor people in the neighborhoods of Istanbul and other parts of Turkey, under house arrest. This was interpreted as a step towards victory of the hunger strike.

Almost a month later, on the night of March 11, the House of Resistance, where Helin and Ibrahim continued their hunger strike, was raided by heavily armed SWAT teams and agents of the political police, who forcibly took the two members of the Grup Yorum to the state hospital located in Istanbul's Umraniye district in the eastern part of the city. For six hours they were missing, and were found only after their parents and lawyers searched for them at all the hospitals in Istanbul.

At the hospital in Umraniye, the two were held against their will for a week after the Istanbul Civil Court issued a ruling on a complaint filed by the Turkish Interior Ministry for the musicians to be forcibly "treated" at the hospital. This court decision, in fact, opened the way for Helin and Ibrahim to be subjected to forced medical intervention — forced feeding, an act that put their health and lives in serious danger, with the real risk of being mutilated or even killed during the intervention.

After a week of multiple attempts by the lawyers of the two musicians to appeal against the civil court's decision and bring them back to the House of Resistance, this happened in the late afternoon of March 16, when the court of appeal in Istanbul issued a decision overturning the district civil court's decision for forced detention of the two musicians at the hospital. So late in the evening, after hours of disputes between the lawyers and the police and intense waiting, Helin and Ibrahim

were released from the hospital and returned together with their relatives to the House of Resistance, where they continued the hunger strike.

The stress and strain they were subjected to at the hospital affected their already poor health in an extremely bad way, given the advanced phase of the hunger strike. We can say that this stress is also one of the direct causes that led to Helin's untimely death.

The fascist oligarchy in Turkey is responsible for Helin's death

The government has refused to accept the demands of the hunger strike until the last possible moment before Helin's death. Just a week before the death of Helin, a delegation of intellectuals, human rights defenders and relatives of members of Grup Yorum, political prisoner Mustafa Koçak, who is also on hunger strike till death (Death Fast) against the injustices he faces, and lawyers from the Association of Progressive Lawyers and People's Law Bureau, who began a hunger strike earlier this year against Turkey's completely degraded justice system, met with representatives of the Turkish Interior Ministry. At the meeting, the demands of both Helin and Ibrahim and the other hunger strikers were discussed. Ministry officials said, "First, they must end the hunger strikes, and then we'll see if we can discuss their demands."

Thus, the fascist government in Turkey is responsible through its actions for the death of Helin Bolek. If the demands had been accepted at this meeting held on March 28, perhaps today Helin would be among us, and we would not have to mourn her loss.

Who is Helin Bölek?

When Helin Bölek was martyred, she was 28 years old. In this relatively short period of time she has managed to fill her life with many events. She initially participated in

the youth struggle for free and accessible education in her hometown of Çanakkale, in western Turkey. Later, she joined the popular choir of Grup Yorum, which educates new musicians for the band. In the summer of 2014, she, along with other group members and revolutionaries from Turkey, participated in the "Human Shield" campaign to support the struggle of the Palestinian people against the Zionist regime in Israel. In this way, she and her comrades expressed their solidarity with the Palestinian people's struggle against the attacks of imperialism and its collaborators. In 2016, she joined the Grup Yorum and participated in the band's concerts.

For all these years, while she was part of the struggle for art for the benefit of the people, she has been imprisoned several times for various periods of time. Her youth passed in the struggle for the people in the name of independence, democracy and socialism. She gave her life for this cause, did not surrender her honor, did not betray her ideals. Now, whatever we write would not be enough to tell her story.

She was not alone in her struggle

Of course, it should be noted here that during all these months of fighting the famine, death and repression of the fascist oligarchy, the members of Grup Yorum were not alone. Both their parents and their comrades were side by side with them and supported them with numerous protest actions in Turkey and across Europe. Almost every day since last summer, despite the repression, numerous protest actions and various events have been held to draw public attention to the hunger strike of Grup Yorum and its demands. This is precisely the purpose of the hunger strike, to draw the public's attention to a problem, to injustice, and it is also the last possible means by which people in the position of members of Grup Yorum, and not only them, can resist fascism and imperialism.

An interesting fact is that Grup Yorum's struggle was supported by almost all leftist organizations in Turkey, as well as the Kurdish nationalist movement, whose

relations had previously been particularly strained with Grup Yorum because of its stance on events in Syria and the Middle East. Many progressive journalists, writers, musicians and intellectuals have also expressed their support for the demands of Grup Yorum.

It is still not too late. We can still do something for Grup Yorum. It is up to all of us now whether Ibrahim Gökçek, who is on the verge of death, and political prisoner Mustafa Koçak, who is on hunger strike against his life sentence, will live or die like Helin. Their lives are in our hands, let their blood not be on our hands. ...

People of Küçük Armutlu and her comrades paid tribute to Helin

Shortly after the death of Helin Bölek, her comrades from Grup Yorum and her relatives began preparations for the funeral ceremony in Küçük Armutlu, where the House of Resistance is located, in which she and Ibrahim Gökçek continued their hunger strike. In the afternoon, Helin's body was wrapped in red fabric and covered with carnations. The choice of colors and flowers is not accidental. Red carnations are a symbol of the Resistance and often, in case of martyrdom of a revolutionary during a hunger strike, they are laid on his/her body.

Throughout the afternoon, Helin's body was left in the House of Resistance for those who wanted to pay tribute to her for the last time. In the late afternoon, her body was moved to a coffin, with which she was carried by her comrades in the streets of Küçük Armutlu, as tradition in the lands of Anatolia dictates. When a person dies, the relatives are obliged to carry the body from the home where the person died and with the ark to walk on the streets of the neighborhood or the settlement where the person died. Of course this ritual is done when it is possible.

After walking on the streets of Küçük Armutlu with Helin's coffin, her comrades put her in the place for ritual ceremonies, in the courtyard of the local Alevite house of worship (Cemevi). Here, her comrade Ibrahim Gökçek made a short speech in which

he said:

"Dear friends, dear friends of Grup Yorum ... Dear Helin ... Today a musician, today a singer of the people, was killed so she could make her art. They killed a singer. Either I would die or she. There is no other way in the situation in which we are now. She is dead now and I will die. What will happen? Murderers! Are you satisfied? Whatever you do, sooner or later victory will be ours. The victory will sooner or later be with Grup Yorum. We will win!"

After Ibrahim Gökçek, a speech was also delivered by Bahar Kurt, who also took part in the hunger strike for a long time. She said the following about the meeting at the Interior Ministry that took place at the end of March:

"The delegation who met with ministry representatives made a statement. Ministry officials have stepped up to discuss demands (of the hunger strike). Even this is a sign that the demands are legitimate and completely legal. If they can discuss the acceptance of the demands, then why have they done nothing to this day? We are being told to end the Death Fast (hunger strike), but this cannot be bargained for."

Bahar Kurt went on to say: "Helin increased our anger. We have to break the chains now. No one lives peacefully and happily in this country."

Bahar Kurt also spoke of the days when Helin and Ibrahim were held forcibly in the hospital in the middle of March.

"An artist of the people, a musician, died for the right to perform concerts. This is a precedent in the history of the world and Turkey. The government must be called to account for the death of Helin. While in the hospital, both Helin and Ibrahim lost much of their energy. They were taken away from here in ambulances, it was a big shock for them. During the time they were in the hospital, they did not allow them to have companions. At a time when we were afraid to touch them so as not to hurt

them, when we dared not touch our comrades, when even her mother dared not kiss her daughter, they (police agents and doctors), touched the bodies of our comrades multiple times. There were doctors and nurses who did not respect the will of Helin and Ibrahim about how they should be taken care of, what liquids they should take.

"They were exhausted psychologically, they were very angry. Yes, we took and brought our friends back to the House of Resistance, but this week at the hospital caused permanent damage to their health, which accelerated the death of Helin. If she hadn't been taken to the hospital in this one week, maybe Hellin would have been alive now."

After the end of the speeches, in accordance with Helin's testament, her comrades danced the traditional folk dance, halay, around her coffin.

After paying tribute to her, the coffin with Helin's body was left in the morgue of the House of Worship in Küçük Armutlu, where she remained until the next morning. In the evening and throughout the night, members of Grup Yorum, local people, and fans of the band stood vigil in the courtyard of the House of Worship, in order to be ready to respond and prevent a possible attack of the fascist police against the House of Worship to abduct Helin's body. Something that has become a common practice of fascist oligarchy in Turkey for the funerals of revolutionaries is for their bodies to be abducted to be buried in secret locations without any rituals, without their relatives being informed. Therefore, when it is possible to do so, the comrades of the fallen revolutionaries remain on duty in the place where their coffins are until the funeral period is completed.

The fascist oligarchy fears even Helin's body.

Police attacked Helin Bölek's funeral

On Saturday, April 4, the funeral of Helin Bolek took place in Istanbul. Around 11

a.m. local time, a column of vehicles accompanying the hearse transporting her body to the Alevite House of Worship in Istanbul's Okmeydani neighborhood was stopped by police. Fascist police forced Helin's relatives to carry her body to Ferikoy Cemetery, not far from Okmeydani, blocking the road to the neighborhood. After disputes with police, threats, insults and swearing, the drivers of the hearse and the van in which Helin's relatives were riding were detained by police. Officers threatened Helin's relatives with abducting her body and burying her in a secret location. Again, after disputes between lawyers, relatives and police officers, the two drivers were released and the convoy continued on its way to Ferikoy Cemetery. Police prevented the convoy from entering the Okmeydani neighborhood.

In the early morning hours, the streets of the Okmeydani neighborhood, as well as the roads leading to it, were blocked by armored police vehicles. The blockade around the House of Worship in the neighborhood and the area around the Ferikoy Cemetery was most intense. Multiple armored police vehicles also blocked the area around the Ayçe Idil Erkmen Cultural Center, which is operated by Grup Yorum. In the morning, police tried to close down the café which is part of the cultural center. During an attempt to prevent this attack, Grup Yorum musician Meral Hur was detained by police and taken in an armored vehicle in an unknown direction. She was released late in the evening. Police deployed a dozen water cannons, and dozens of armored vehicles, buses and vans, while thousands of riot police squads and agents of the political police were deployed into the area.

At the same time, people gathered at the local House of Worship to attend Helin's funeral were threatened by police and ordered to disperse. A little later, when the crowds headed for Ferikoy Cemetery, the police blocked their way, and in turn, people began a protest to open the road, but the police attacked them by arresting people, dragging them on the ground, kicking and striking them with sticks.

About one hour later, groups of people started heading to Ferikoy Cemetery to

attend Helin Bölek's funeral. The area was blocked by police and initially the convoy with Helin's body was not allowed to enter the cemetery. Following disputes with police officers, Helin's lawyers and her relatives were allowed to enter the cemetery. Since there was no room here for the ritual washing of the body, which is part of the funeral rituals, Helin's relatives had to call a mobile facility on site to perform the ritual.

While Helin's relatives were waiting for a mobile facility to arrive, police in the area were attacking all those who were attempting to enter the cemetery. With water cannons, tear gas grenades, rubber cartridges and batons, the police tried to disperse the groups of people who wanted to honor Helin one last time. During these intensive attacks, more than 20 people were detained and were taken in armored buses to the Istanbul police department's headquarters. They were kept there for hours and subjected to various tortures.

Despite attacks by the fascist police, several groups of people managed to enter the cemetery and attend the funeral.

Following the rituals, at about 2:20 p.m. local time, the next part of Helin's funeral began. She was laid in the grave, after which her relatives poured water on the soil of the grave. They left behind a bridal gown and numerous carnations. After Helin's death, some people called her "The Bride of Our People" because Helin was martyred in a hunger strike till death, just like Ayçe İdil Erkmen, a theater actress, writer, journalist and musician who was martyred in 1996 in a hunger strike till death (Death Fast) against isolation prisons and the repressions of the fascist oligarchy. This is probably the reason for the laying of the bridal gown on Helin's grave.

Shortly after the end of the funeral, fascist police attacked the participants with tear gas grenades. Yes, you have read correctly, the mourners for Helin's death were attacked with tear gas grenades at the cemetery. Fascism has no respect even for

the sorrow of the people.

Those arrested in police attacks before Helin's funeral were released late at night, many of whom said they had been subjected to various tortures by the fascist police. Among the detainees were members of the People's Front-Turkey (Halk Cephesi), the Maoist magazine Partizan (Partizan dergisi), and the Socialist Party of the Oppressed (Ezilenlerin Sosyalist Partisi).

Her voice went beyond the seas, oceans and mountains...

The news about Helin's death has been widespread in Turkey and around the world. On Friday, the hashtag #HelinBölek topped the trends for Turkey on Twitter. So far, over 50,000 posts have been made with this hashtag. Internationally, even mainstream media such as the New York Times, the Guardian, the Washington Post and the Associated Press have covered the news of the death of Helin Bölek. Media (both websites and newspapers) in Italy, Germany, France, Spain, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and many other countries have also covered the news about her death. Leftist organizations, as well as many people, from Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, Italy, Spain, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, Netherlands, France, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, England, Ireland, India, Malaysia, the U.S., Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, Syria, Morocco, Bangladesh and many other countries have expressed their condolences to Helin Bölek's relatives and comrades and have expressed their support for the demands of Grup Yorum.

We have a question for all critics

As the hunger strike continued, "opinions" and "comments" appeared that it was a "wrong tactic," that "it made no sense," and some even went further, stating that they were "dying in vain." We would like to ask a few questions to all these people who wrote their "opinions" and "comments." What did they do during all these 10 months while Helin was slowly melting before their eyes? What did you ladies and

gentlemen do? At least once, while Helin was still alive, did you express your support for the demands for which she sacrificed her life? Did you pay attention to her protest? Did you at least try to find out what she was fighting for?

And the lack of information in no way justifies you. Because this time there was enough information in English, German, Russian, Italian. You cannot justify yourself by not being informed. Yes, we are aware that there are numerous topics on the agenda that affect each country and everyone in the world, but we just want a few minutes of your time, or a maximum of 10-15 minutes, to do something to express your support for the demands of Grup Yorum and Mustafa Koçak. We do not expect you to understand them, because many of you would never do this, you can do nothing but justify yourself with words like: "I do not support this political movement," "I am against hunger strikes," "this is pointless action!"

You will never understand Helin and people like her, because for you "human life is priceless," "it's not worth dying for anything in this world!" Perhaps some of you will ask, "And would you, who wrote this, sacrifice in the name of something?" I most responsibly state that I would have taken that step. Yes, I know, and Helin knew, it is better to live, to enjoy life, but when your life is turned into a prison, when you are faced with the choice of bowing your head to a tyrant you are fighting or continuing to fight, sacrificing your life, then resistance by all means and resources is a must. Therefore, you ladies and gentlemen, you'd better be silent now; be silent because this is the best thing that you can do.

Source: [New Solution](#)



Letter from Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro to the American people

written by Struggle - La Lucha
April 8, 2020



Caracas, April 3, 2020

To the People of the United States of America:

For weeks now, the world stands still, trying to control a pandemic that, without any doubt, is the greatest challenge we have faced together as a society and as an international community. Our priority is confronting it, as is the priority of the people of the United States.

Fortunately, in Venezuela, we have been able to count on some advantages. We took very early measures of social distancing and amplified testing, relying on our free and public healthcare system that counts doctors throughout the country with what we call family. We also rely on the invaluable community-based organizations to help raise social awareness and support the most vulnerable sectors. The solidarity of Cuba, China, and Russia, and the support of the World Health Organization has likewise allowed us to obtain necessary medical supplies despite Donald Trump's illegal sanctions.

In expressing my solidarity to you in this important historic challenge, as well as our consternation and grief for the consequences of the pandemic in the U.S., I also have the obligation to make you aware that as the world focuses on dealing with the COVID-19 emergency, the Trump Administration, once again is instrumentalizing institutions in order to fulfill electoral objectives, and based on infamies under the pretext of the War on Drugs, has ordered the largest U.S. military deployment in our region in the last 30 years, with the purpose of threatening Venezuela and bringing to our region a costly, bloody, military conflict of indefinite duration.

In the run-up to this fallacious maneuver, on March 26, William Barr, an Attorney General of questionable independence (who recommended the 1989 invasion of Panama against Noriega and helped cover up the irregularities of the Iran-Contra scandal) filed, without showing any evidence whatsoever, accusations of drug trafficking towards the United States against myself and against senior Venezuelan State officials, even though data from the Department of Defense itself show that, unlike Colombia and Honduras, two of Washington's allied countries, Venezuela is not a primary transit country towards the United States.

It is clear that the Trump Administration is creating a smokescreen to cloud the improvised and erratic handling of the pandemic in the United States. The most optimistic forecast shows that close to 240,000 souls will be lost in the United States. From the beginning, Donald Trump downplayed and even denied it, the same way he has done with climate change. Today, the crisis in the United States aggravates simply because, despite having the resources, he is not willing to transform the healthcare system to prioritize full care for the population instead of profit-based private medicine, insurance companies and pharmaceutical industry.

We in Venezuela do not want an armed conflict in our region. We want brotherly relations of cooperation, exchange and respect.

We cannot accept war threats, nor blockades, nor can we accept the intention of

installing an international tutelage that violates our sovereignty and disavows the progress made in the last year in the sincere political dialogue between the government and a large part of the Venezuelan opposition that wants political solutions and not oil wars.

Based on the foregoing, I call upon the people of the United States put a stop to this madness, to hold your officials accountable and to force them to focus their attention and their resources on urgently addressing the pandemic. I also ask, together with the end to military threats, the end to the illegal sanctions and blockade that restrict the access of humanitarian goods that are so necessary for the country today. I wholeheartedly ask you not to allow your country to be dragged once again into another unending conflict, another Viet Nam, another Iraq, but this time, closer to home.

The peoples of the United States and Venezuela are not as different as their lies intend us to believe. We are peoples seeking a more just, free, and compassionate society. Let us not let the particular interests of minorities blinded by ambition to set us apart. We, as our leader Hugo Chavez once said, share the same dream. The dream of Martin Luther King is also the dream of Venezuela and its revolutionary government. I invite you to struggle together in order to make that dream come true.

No to a United States war against Venezuela.

No more criminal sanctions.

We want Peace.

Nicolas Maduro Moros

President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Source: [Resumen](#)



Message from Cuba's ambassador to China

written by Struggle - La Lucha

April 8, 2020

Message from Cuban Ambassador Carlos Miguel Pereira Hernández originally posted on April 3 on [Representaciones Diplomáticas de Cuba en el Exterior](#) website.

Things are always harder for Cuba. We Cubans don't even get a break during a pandemic. When Jack Ma, the founder of Chinese electronics giant Alibaba and the foundation that bears his name announced to the world his intent to donate 500,000 COVID-19 rapid tests to the U.S. and a million masks, overlooking the xenophobic and racist slurs of the current Present, he had already done so for countries such as Japan, South Korea, Italy, Iran, and Spain. These were then considered to be the most at-risk countries. It was an expression of his transparent call to join forces during this tough and unequal battle.

A second shipment of donations to support preventive work in Europe was scheduled to arrive at the Belgian airport of Liege on March 16. That same day it was reported that another shipment was arriving in Ethiopia for 54 African countries. One day later, a flight from Hangzhou to Rome was bringing in medical supplies for the Italian Red Cross, and there was an announcement that test kits and masks were on the way.

That same day, another plane was scheduled to arrive in Zaragoza, Spain, with another valuable shipment of 500,000 masks and other medical equipment to help the fight against the new Coronavirus. That day, a post on Ma's Twitter account stated in Spanish: #Estevirusloparamosentretodos (we will all stop this virus together). And one day later, another shipment arrived in Liege to support the efforts of Belgium and France. The Chinese agency XINHUA pointed out that the Jack Ma Foundation was stepping up its efforts to provide more support to the affected countries, especially Italy, Belgium, Spain, Slovenia, France, Austria, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, and the Netherlands.

On the 19th the beneficiaries were China's Asian neighbors of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand.

On the 21st more emergency supplies went to Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Laos, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. A few days later, similar shipments arrived in Azerbaijan, Butan, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam, for a total of 23 Asian countries.

On March 22, as the pandemic continued to grow, it was Latin America and the Caribbean's turn.

Jack Ma's next tweet announced a shipment of 2 million masks, 400,000 rapid test kits, and 104 ventilators to 24 countries in our region, including Cuba, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Dominican Republic, and Peru. On March 24 a publication by

the Chinese ambassador in Panama confirmed the arrival of 100,000 masks and 10 diagnostic kits in that country, while his colleague in Havana confirmed the same. As of yesterday, March 30, they were still announcing additional shipments of donations such as ventilators, gloves, and personal protective equipment. The hashtag #OneWorldOneFight was trending.

However, amidst all these news reports and announcements, one of those shipments could not reach its final destination.

Apparently the U.S. transport company that was hired to carry the donation rejected it at the last minute arguing that the rules of the economic, commercial, and financial blockade against the destination country, heightened by the current U.S. administration, barred it from doing so.

The noble, massive, and commendable effort by the founder of Alibaba and the Jack Ma Foundation that had reached some fifty countries around the world could not touch Cuban soil. It didn't matter how necessary those resources were for the fight the small, besieged, and blockaded Caribbean island nation was waging. Once again, the unjust, arbitrary, and illegal blockade ruined everything.

We thank Mr. Ma for having thought of us and for the efforts he is still making to bring his Foundation's efforts to our shores. Things are always harder for Cuba. That is why every achievement, every little step forward, becomes a colossal triumph against the devil.

Translated by Jill Clark-Gollub

