

The Brazilian Center for Health Studies in the fight during the Covid-19 pandemic

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OVER THESE LAST TWO YEARS, THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN BRAZIL has translated into a catastrophic event, which, in addition to exposing the emphasis of public policies by the federal government against the citizenship rights conferred by the Federal Constitution of 1988, shows, each increasingly, a political determination to destroy the civilizing role of the State in guaranteeing individual and collective rights.

This is a criminal political attitude, which disregards the vulnerability and enormous inequality in the Brazilian population, which are only increasing during this health crisis. Contrary to what should be done, morally and constitutionally, it was necessary to implement policies aimed at controlling, overcoming, and reducing the economic, social, cultural, educational, and science and technology impacts that the pandemic had created. Similarly, the need to implement emergency actions of scientific recognition worldwide and nationally, such as: availability of vaccines, social isolation against crowded situations, use of masks and hand sanitizers, among other measures to reduce virus transmission. All these practices are associated with measures of direct support to people, families, and workers, such as transport policy, with support for adequate housing, access to food, among many other basic needs that should be minimized by robust emergency aid for a more durable period until the pandemic situation improved.

Today, more than that, it is necessary to have a plan to deal with the consequences of a pandemic that was deliberately uncontrolled by the federal government. It will be necessary to plan a policy that provides relief, subsidizes the mourning for the loss of the lives of more than 600,000 people whose deaths left countless children and adolescents – today orphans – behind, disrupted families whose elderly (the group initially more vulnerable to illness and death by Covid-19) often supported their families with retirement, albeit for minimal amounts, but who were still responsible for the income of all these vulnerable people.

The activities of the Brazilian Center for Health Studies (Cebes) in the struggle for the democratization of society and the defense of social rights, in particular the universal right to health, were intensified by the articulation of partnerships between people and institutions, social movements, committed to reform the Brazilian health in the expectation of strengthening and mobilizing against this current situation of underfunding and dismantling the Unified Health System (SUS) and the rights conquered through the Citizen Constitution!

The disastrous agenda of reforms carried out in this period of pandemic by neoliberals remains centered on fiscal austerity and on reducing the role of the State in the economy and

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in defending the population's well-being. Labor, social security, tax and State privatization reforms that do not allow the nation's growth and development and that gradually lead the country to unemployment, the return of hunger and poverty with worsening of life and health indicators, of fiscal indicators, against the policy of transparency in the use of public resources and the fight against corruption¹.

The situation only gets worse, since the first case of Covid-19 in Brazil was registered (February 26, 2020), the first case of internal transmission (March 5, 2020), and the notification of the first death by Covid-19 in the country (March 17, 2020). The SUS, as a national health fortress, due to its decentralization, regionalization and universality with capillarity and territorial coverage with a Primary Health Care network, has markedly contributed to fighting the pandemic. Initially, with the opening of hospital beds and greater offer of intensive care, organizing clinical care for severe cases, in the expectation of a reduction in the number of deaths, followed by the strategy of supporting the population's health with care, diagnosis, and following-up of mild cases from local territories².

The strength of a supra-party plural space – bringing together activists, leaders, researchers, professors, professionals, and students with the perspective of articulating and participating in fronts and alliances with various social movements, groups, and entities in civil society – presupposes more robustness in the struggle for the democratization of society, for the defense of social rights, and the sovereignty of the country. In the face of this suffering and so many attacks against science, resilience and resistance are created with mobilization and reflective debates that consolidate the production of knowledge through critical analysis of shared health policies for the subjects who build and fight for the history of this nation. In this way, strategies are outlined for some action fronts for the victory of bringing justice, equity, democracy, and sovereignty to a Brazil with constitutional rights.

We are therefore referring to the Front for Life, Popular Brazil Front, People without Fear, Intersectoral Health Manifesto, Education and Social Assistance, which brought together numerous entities strengthened by the National Health Council (CNS), National Council of Health Secretaries (Conass), National Council of Municipal Health Secretariats (Conasems), among others.

The mobilization has been enormous, and one of the first responses was the creation of a National Plan to Combat the Covid-19³ Pandemic, created by institutions linked to the Front for Life, which drafted it in light of the omission, irresponsibility, and ineptitude of federal authorities in the face of the pandemic and the need for the Brazilian society to overcome the health crisis and its consequences.

'Marches for Life' were carried out. 'Public Demonstrations in the Streets against the Federal Government' for its genocidal stance, in numerous Brazilian cities, called, respectively, 25M, 19J, 29J, 7S, 02O among others. Denunciation ceremonies against the exponential increase in the number of deaths by Covid-19, with the delivery of a document to the Legislative, Executive, and Judiciary branches. Claims for renewal and development to the full power of the SUS. Arguments and requests against the inequities accentuated by the pandemic, generated by race/color, class, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, geographic origin, and sexual orientation. Furthermore, different population segments should be considered in the production of data and action strategies to fight the pandemic, in particular, the vulnerability of indigenous peoples and other isolated or recent contact groups, which demand urgent and priority measures⁴.

Another measure resulting from the mobilization of entities was the institution of the Parliamentary Inquiry Commission on the Covid-19 Pandemic (*CPI da Pandemia*), in which

society demands that attitudes liable to criminal action by federal authorities and, in particular, by the president of the republic be scrutinized, whose neglect and abandonment of the population and of the right to life, his usual rejection and delay in the acquisition of vaccines, which aggravated the pandemic. The policies implemented by them were based on the search for herd immunity and the absence of vaccines, which only facilitated the circulation of the virus, added to attitudes against all prevention and safety measures for the population against Covid-19, creating fake news, promoting medicines not recognized by science for the treatment of patients, leaving a lack of medication and equipment, which are essential for the defense of life, as was the case with the lack of oxygen, sedatives, and intubation material, as occurred in the state of Manaus⁵.

Today, in the face of the greatest calamity in our history, the Brazilian government stands out for its denial, which led Brazil to the highest number of deaths by Covid-19 (607,125 on November 29, 2021)⁶ and the worst management of the pandemic in the world, making it a global threat. In this context, the Cebes has been playing a leading role in defending the life and health of the Brazilian population, continuing to work on several fronts, strengthening intersectoral collaboration with various social policies⁷ and stimulating the mobilization of society for the reconstruction of the country. It is a moment that demands the strengthening of our union to overcome this catastrophe and affirm a project for a solidary and sovereign country, which faces our explosive inequality, the mark of an enslaver nation.

Collaborators

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