



PSI INTERAMERICA STATEMENT ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is observed annually on the 21st March. On that day, in 1960, police opened fire and killed 69 people at a demonstration in Sharpeville, South Africa. Those people were demonstrating peacefully against the racist apartheid pass laws that divided and controlled people based on invented categories of 'race'.

The rights to equality and non-discrimination are the cornerstones of modern human rights law. Yet in many parts of the world, discriminatory practices are still widespread, including racial, ethnic, religious and nationality-based profiling, and incitement to hatred.

"The fight against racism and racial discrimination is becoming even more important when populist governments use racial hatred and xenophobia as their campaign flags, talking about building walls when we should build bridges of solidarity, inclusion and equality. Now more than ever, trade unions must combat and eradicate these practices"

Rosa Pavanelli, PSI General Secretary

We will not tolerate the racist discrimination and physical attacks against people that identify as Chinese and Asian that have intensified in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. We are actively engaged in the fight against the mobilization of racism, fear and ignorance practiced by right-wing politicians locally, nationally and internationally.

The coronavirus does not recognize nationality, or ethnicity. People are afraid. Racism and xenophobia increase with fear. People look to their leaders for how to respond during stressful events and crises. Consequently, those leaders have important responsibilities to reaffirm that all people must be treated with compassion and dignity.

In response to the increase in physical and rhetorical racism, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet argued that, "racism and xenophobia are 'contagious killers' too." But unlike the current virus that does not have a cure, the tools to defeat racism are clear: we must confront ignorance with knowledge and bigotry with empathy, acceptance and solidarity.

Interamerica Regional Secretary Jocelio Drummond highlighted that, "while coronavirus has forced us to put a few meters of distance between us, this 'social distancing' is only physical; we must continue to act in solidarity with each other. Racism can, will, and must be defeated."

Join the fight against racism and xenophobia:

Communicate

- Share useful and accurate information about people and current events.
- Participate in or organize a workshop or seminar about combating racism and xenophobia.
- Invite someone to speak about combating racism and xenophobia at a union event.

Act

- Be an ally. Reach out to your neighbors and colleagues who might feel at risk because of their ethnicity, nationality or other traits. An ally is someone who actively supports racialized groups facing harassment or any other manifestation of prejudice.
- Confront racist or xenophobic comments and 'jokes' everywhere they are encountered. Make it clear that such behavior is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.
- Challenge racist and discriminatory policies and practices at your workplace and in your organization.
- Challenge yourself. Consider how some of your own assumptions might be influenced by discrimination.
- Negotiate anti-discrimination and equity language into your collective agreement.
- Get in touch with the Inter-American Committee to Combat Racism, Xenophobia and All Related Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance for further information.