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Seville, April 6, 2020

Dear colleagues of the International Council of Psychologists,

For months now we have been facing a global health crisis that has taken us all by surprise. These are difficult and, for many, sad times. They are however also times for reconsideration, times for rethinking some of our assumptions and seeing reality in a new light. This pandemic, dire as it is, also offers an opportunity to reinforce global cooperation and understanding. It is for example worth noting that aid to afflicted countries has been reciprocal, with offers of equipment and supplies first to China from Europe and North America, and now from China (and other countries often considered under-resourced, such as Cuba (of health materials or medical personnel). This reciprocity of aid from high income to low and then in reverse is indeed paradoxical, and food for thought.

Our hearts go out to all who are affected by this pandemic. We especially support health care workers, including psychologists, many of whom are working on the front lines to develop ways to offer psychosocial support to victims and their families. We see every-day evidence of the need to attend to those who suffer the disease in isolation. We also witness the need to provide support those who are alone, scared and forced to maintain social distance, confined in their homes. Our colleagues' work to provide support and guidance when it is often not possible to see, touch or console our loved ones is breaking new ground, for which we, as a discipline, were not prepared. We support our colleagues everywhere who are finding their practices challenged in many ways. We also recognize the importance of validation for psychosocial support as part of the necessary care during the COVID-19 pandemic and call on governments everywhere to include this along with medical treatment.

We also support the efforts by psychology organizations worldwide to contribute to addressing the pandemic, with the development of guidelines, resources and advice on how to offer services to clients, to caregivers, to the public and to politicians and governments (e.g., <http://www.ecpa-online.com/coronavirus-covid-19-the-role-of-psychologists-in-europe/>) . For its part, the ICP has been working on its collaborative effort to launch the Global Network of Psychologists for Human Rights (GNPHR) with a special section on psychology, human rights, con't, p. 2

### PUBLICATIONS:

*The International Psychologist (IP)*  
 and *International Understanding*

### ARCHIVES:

*Archives of the History of American Psychology, University of Akron, Ohio, USA*

### ANNUAL CONFERENCE:

*International Conference of ICP*  
 2019 Cadiz, Spain  
<http://www.icpweb.org/conferences>

### ANNUAL AWARDS:

*Early Career*  
*Feminist/Gender*  
*Distinguished Contributions*  
*Advanced Research & Service*  
*Student Travel*  
*In Absentia Posters*

and COVID-19 (<http://humanrightspsychology.org/content-areas/hr-andcovid19/> ).

We as psychologists, need to plan for the medium- and long-term psychosocial effects of the pandemic. There are collateral effects on many groups. We are facing an extraordinary situation, a hard situation for all, particularly for vulnerable peoples - migrants and refugees, the disabled, children, women - that will take us all some time to adjust to and leave behind.

As in most crises, the collateral effects of this one will mostly affect women. Studies on the latest health crises such as Ebola, or bird flu, for example, show that all crises leave behind long-term negative effects on gender equality.

This reminds us that worldwide women are still the main caregivers, not only professionally but also in an informal, unpaid capacity. This means that, although the covid19 seems to affect men more than women, women are more exposed to it than men. We will have to wait and see what statistics have say about this, although breaking down official data by sex is not usually a priority, thus making women's reality invisible. Let us only note here that on March 19, the first health worker in Spain died, a 52-year-old female nurse who had attended one of the first cases of coronavirus.

It is worth remembering, in this regard, that remarkable researchers, such as Marie Curie or Rosalind Franklin, died from diseases related to their working conditions. Is it a coincidence that this has affected women more than men? According to Caroline Criado Perez (author of *Invisible Woman*), it is no coincidence at all, but rather a result of the well-established rule that science focuses on human needs from an androcentric angle, that the world in general is built to men's image, including working conditions, which thus have a more negative impact on women than on men.

Health crises also tend to result in an increase in the mortality of women and their babies due to unrelated health problems that arise during pregnancy and childbirth. Pregnant women's needs for care usually take a back seat during health crises. This is especially so in countries with weak health systems and high birth rates, where women die in greater numbers for reasons related to pregnancy and birth than to the health situation in question. This is further complicated by the increase in the contagion of women who attend hospital centres in cases of perinatal complications.

The isolation of families in their homes also affects women very negatively. To begin with, domestic workers and home helpers, mostly women, often stop working during confinement imposed by the pandemic, which often results in salary loss. As a result of this, and with everyone staying home, the domestic work carried out by wives and mothers increases to the nth degree, thus affecting women's wellbeing, especially where they also have to attend to their paid work telematically. In this context, the work of educational centres is more highly valued than ever, yet with children at home it is parents, which still mostly means mothers, who attend to both their entertainment and their homework. Indeed, although fathers do "lend a hand" with housework and homework, both fall mostly on mothers, many of whom are now at the end of

their tethers ("on the verge of a nervous breakdown" as Almodóvar, our famous filmmaker, would say).

To make things worse, abused women are forced to live with their abusers during confinement, which increases their risk of suffering gender violence, even losing their lives.

Nor can we forget that many people are losing their jobs, which is creating a situation of social emergency, a situation that will mostly affect women: when the crisis is over and new jobs begin to be created, priority will likely be given, as usual, to men's employment.

We are facing an extraordinary situation, a hard situation for all, particularly for women, that will take us all some time to adjust to and leave behind. Crises, however, also have their silver lining, which as a social psychologist I have learned to focus on. Now as oftentimes, I will do my best to put into practice the popular saying that necessity sharpens one's wits. Let me encourage you to do the same. We need to keep our spirits up and come out of this situation stronger than before, because the tasks we have in front of us are enormous. Many people will need our assistance and it will be our job to provide it. Many, if not most, of these people will be women and we must endeavour to help them, to rectify their situation of social disadvantage. Indeed, I propose to make this one of our maxims.

We cannot after all forget our roots. We cannot forget that the ICP was founded by women psychologists in another terrible moment of world crisis. We must, furthermore, be true to our profession, now more than ever, and prove our commitment with our actions. Only so can we live up to a fundamental role of Psychology: the achievement of Equality, Justice and the protection of Human Rights throughout the world.

Health for all!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "A. Guil".

Ana Guil  
PhD in Social Psychology  
President of ICP 2019-20