

Europe's pandemic death toll passes 100,000

Robert Stevens
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Sunday marked a terrible milestone, as the coronavirus death toll passed 100,000 across Europe. An additional 3,287 deaths yesterday take the number of officially recorded fatalities across the continent to 102,565. Nearly 1.1 million coronavirus cases (1,088,651) have been announced, meaning the 102,000 plus deaths represent a fatality rate of nearly 10 percent.

Even as the big business media pointed to a lessening of the number of deaths in some countries, the gruesome death toll rises—an indictment of the entire profit system. The five major states in Europe—Germany, France, Spain, Italy and the UK—account for around 85,000 of the 100,000 plus deaths.

In Spain, 565 deaths were reported Saturday, and 410 new deaths announced yesterday. Spain's death toll stands at 20,453 deaths—the third country to reach the horrific milestone of 20,000 behind Italy and the United States.

In Italy, 482 more people were announced dead on Saturday and 433 on Sunday, with 23,660 fatalities overall. This week, the Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Italy's leading technical-scientific body, published a report revealing that 2,724 elderly patient deaths in residential medical facilities were certified COVID-19 infections. There is no precise number of COVID-19 deaths in care homes, where doctors often do not arrive and the deaths are not reported to municipal authorities.

On Saturday, France recorded 642 deaths, and 395 more on Sunday (total deaths 19,718).

In Germany, 186 deaths were announced Saturday and 104, Sunday. Germany is routinely described in the corporate media as a model in how to confront the virus—but deaths there are now approaching five thousand (4,642). Some 145,184 cases of COVID-19 have been recorded by Berlin.

The UK is engulfed in a social catastrophe for which the ruling class is fully responsible. Britain is around four weeks behind Italy and Spain in terms of the spread of the virus, but has become the pandemic's epicentre in Europe.

On Saturday, 888 deaths were announced and 596, Sunday, as the death toll reached 16,060. Some 5,589 of these deaths have occurred in the last week. Claims of a “glimmer of good news” as the “first wave” of the virus reached its peak in the UK (*Daily Mail*) were shot down as Saturday's 5,525 new cases represented the third highest jump since the outbreak of the pandemic in Britain. An even higher 5,850 new cases were reported Sunday.

Boris Johnson's Conservative government has refused to publish in its daily fatalities tally the number of people who have died in care homes or in their own home. It is estimated that the number of deaths could be double, if not more, than the official tally.

The Tories are also concealing the true number of health workers who have perished. The *Nursing Notes* web site reported that 86 had already died by Sunday morning—mainly through the chronic lack of personal protective equipment (PPE). This weekend, NHS hospitals were poised to run out of protective gowns and many warned that they were running short of oxygen.

The devastating impact of the Johnson government's policy of “herd immunity” is being played out in the mass loss of life. The *Sunday Times* Insight team reported Sunday that despite being warned by scientists from mid-January of an unfolding catastrophe, the government pushed through its “herd immunity” strategy that was officially announced as policy by government chief science adviser, Sir Patrick Vallance, on March 12.

Johnson and his government did *nothing* to combat the virus for a five-week period from January 24 to March 2. On January 24, the government held an emergency COBRA meeting, but as the *Times* reports this was only to “brush aside the coronavirus threat... Matt Hancock, the health secretary, bounced out of Whitehall after chairing the meeting and breezily told reporters the risk to the UK public was ‘low.’”

Johnson, after holidaying with his fiancée, Carrie Symonds, from December 26 to January 5 in the Caribbean aboard a yacht and at a mansion—paid for him

to the tune of £15,000 by mobile phone billionaire David Ross—was so unconcerned by the mounting coronavirus epidemic that he didn't attend the January 24 COBRA meeting or four subsequent COBRA meetings on COVID-19.

On February 3, four days after the UK exited the European Union, Johnson gave a speech in London in which he declared, “we are starting to hear some bizarre autarkic rhetoric, when barriers are going up, and when there is a risk that new diseases such as coronavirus will trigger a panic and a desire for market segregation that go beyond what is medically rational to the point of doing real and unnecessary economic damage, then at that moment humanity needs some government somewhere that is willing at least to make the case powerfully for freedom of exchange, some country ready to take off its Clark Kent spectacles and leap into the phone booth and emerge with its cloak flowing as the supercharged champion, of the right of the populations of the earth to buy and sell freely among each other.”

Johnson then disappeared with Symonds for another 12 days for a “working” holiday from the middle of February; this time at the government's grace-and-favour 115-room Chevening country estate. By March 2, when Johnson finally attended a COBRA meeting on Covid-19, it was simply to sign off on the herd immunity strategy that was to be announced 10 days later. His “battle plan” consisted of telling the population the government would “contain, delay and mitigate the spread of the virus.”

Johnson and his partner attended alongside 81,520 other people the England v. Wales rugby game at Twickenham on March 7. Three days later the government allowed the Cheltenham horse racing festival to go ahead attended by 250,000 people over four days. A number of people immediately reported being taken ill after attending.

The scale of deaths being contemplated is revealed by the *Sunday Telegraph*, which reported, “Britain assumed a deadly virus would ‘inevitably’ cripple the NHS and kill up to 750,000 people during a secret cross-government exercise held in 2016 to test preparedness for an outbreak, officials have admitted.”

In 2016, the government held its Exercise Cygnus into the impact on Britain of a novel respiratory influenza pandemic. The exercise revealed that the National Health Service would rapidly collapse, leading to hundreds of thousands of deaths.

The *Telegraph* cites a “senior Whitehall official involved in drawing up Cygnus,” who said, “Everything we planned for was based on the idea that a disease would

kill lots and lots of people... We didn't spend a lot of time exploring how we could prevent it in the first place. Instead we looked at how we could build up mortuary space and intensive care beds after it had already spread.”

The central theme of the British media, including the main supporters of the Tories in the *Telegraph*, *Mail* and *Sun*, is to insist Johnson return from nearly dying himself from COVID-19 and roll out a return to work to “save the economy.” The *Sunday Mail* headlined its front page, “Get Britain moving again.” It reported that a “grand coalition” of senior political and business figures is demanding the government “lift the shutters” and map out an end to the lockdown. Among these were “Former Cabinet Ministers David Davis and Iain Duncan Smith,” who have “joined forces with Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer and City bosses to warn the lack of a clear exit strategy could wreak lasting damage on the UK economy.”

This is the agenda of governments continent-wide.

In Italy, the government plans to use a smartphone app developed by Milan-based tech start-up, Bending Spoons, to track people who test positive for the coronavirus as part of efforts to speed up the government's “back to work” before the end of the pandemic.

This weekend, Spanish Socialist Party Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, after sending millions back to work last week, said, “In the month of May we will begin taking the first steps towards a new normality.”



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