

With lifting of restrictions, world must brace for a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic

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The rate of COVID-19 infections in the United States continues to remain relatively flat, with approximately 25,000 to 30,000 cases per day. The number of daily fatalities has also remained steady at around 2,000 per day. These coronavirus cases continue to take a considerable toll on the health infrastructure.

As the Eastern Seaboard is seeing declining cases from the lockdown and restrictions placed into effect more than six weeks ago, the pandemic is moving westward into states like Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota, where the number of daily cases continues to climb just as these states are moving to lift some restrictions. Canada, with over 60,000 cases and over 1,000 deaths, has seen the number of new cases triple over the last three weeks.

Additionally, rural communities in the US, which were initially spared, are facing the ravages of the pandemic. According to the *New York Times*, “As food processing facilities and prisons have emerged as some of the country’s largest case clusters, the counties that include Logansport, Indiana, South Sioux City, Nebraska, and Marion, Ohio, have surpassed New York City in cases per capita.”

Spain and Italy have made substantial efforts to decrease their daily cases, which are down by 60 percent from their peak, which occurred nearly six weeks ago. The daily cases of fatalities for these two countries have also seen a similar reduction. The United Kingdom has only managed to halt the acceleration of infections, with a current rate of about 5,000 cases per day. Daily fatalities in the UK are slowly turning downward. France and Germany have suppressed new cases and deaths by 80 percent. Portugal, Greece and Turkey have seen similar declines.

Just as in the US, there are indications that the virus is

moving out of the European continent into Russia, where there are over 145,000 cases including 10,581 new cases in the last 24 hours. India, too, is seeing an acceleration of cases after a brutal five-week lockdown that caused tremendous hardship for the poorest. Despite this rise, on Monday India moved to relax restrictions, a tentative return to normal with the caveats of “social distancing and stringent hygiene standards” that will be impossible to implement.

Mexico City hospitals are expecting to see the surge peak in mid-May with an estimate of 1,800 patients in intensive care units (ICUs). In Lima, Peru, a city of 10 million people, where more than two million lack access to water and sewage services, the city is the epicenter for COVID-19, with nearly 30,000 of the 47,372 cases in the country. The metropolitan city of Chile, Santiago, has seen over 10,000 cases, accounting for 60 percent of the country’s cases.

Brazil, now with over 100,000 total cases, has seen a spike in daily cases of more than 6,000 per day. Daily reported deaths have surpassed 400 per day, a gross underestimation of the real figure. The number of fatalities in Manaus, a city near the country’s rainforest, has forced cemeteries to bury five coffins at a time in collective graves. The city has run out of ICUs for patients. The cities of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo are facing similar catastrophes despite the fascistic President Jair Bolsonaro’s proclamation that the virus is just a “little cold.”

According to every epidemiologist, too little is known about the nature of this virus to predict its behavior. But the mitigation efforts have made a difference. The African continent, with few resources and underfunded health infrastructure, but years of experience with malaria, HIV, Tuberculosis and Ebola, was much quicker to implement containment measures employing

the basic ABC's of public health measures. With 47,554 total cases and 1,838 total deaths, it is the least impacted continent, though it remains still too early in the course of the pandemic.

Meanwhile, the *New York Times* reported that an internal White House memo projected that the daily death toll would climb back up to 3,000 by June 1 as states move to relax social distancing efforts and restrictions on businesses. Even the highly criticized University of Washington's low estimates, often quoted by the White House Coronavirus Task Force, have been revised again to nearly 135,000 deaths in the US by the beginning of August.

On CBS News on Sunday, Dr. Scott Gottlieb, President Trump's former Food and Drug Administration commissioner, said, "While mitigation didn't fail, I think it's fair to say that it didn't work as well as we expected. We expected that we would start seeing more significant declines in new cases and deaths around the nation at this point. And we're just not seeing that." Such disingenuous statements are aimed at downplaying the effects of mitigation and boosting efforts to lift restrictions.

The tremendous discipline, effort and sacrifice made by the working class of many countries to stem and turn the course of the pandemic matter little to the financial markets and their political stooges, who are eager to see restrictions lifted sooner and workers sent back to work regardless of the destructive potential of a second wave. Yet, it is the working class that should be genuinely credited for any measure of success that brought the pandemic under a modicum of control.

At every turn—from failure to provide protective gear and testing kits, delays in imposing restrictions, lack of workplace safety, the collapse of essential public health infrastructure, fraudulent claims of therapeutics for COVID-19—the ruling class has thwarted any real effort to stem and curtail the pandemic. Now the markets are clamoring, "It's been long enough!"

On Monday, Reuters announced that world leaders had pledged nearly \$8 billion to research, manufacturing and equitable distribution of any possible vaccine and therapeutics for COVID-19. The joint venture between the World Health Organization and the European Investment Bank is a new initiative and a suspect one.

According to WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros

Adhanom Ghebreyesus, "Combining the public health experience of the World Health Organization and the financial expertise of the European Investment Bank will contribute to a more effective response to COVID-19 and other pressing health challenges."

This initiative is supposedly aimed at developing more effective malarial treatments and addressing the pressing concerns over growing antimicrobial resistance. Much is being made of the Trump administration abstaining from pledging any help to these efforts as the US aims to direct blame against the WHO and China to cover for their malignant negligence in face of the pandemic.

During a meeting at the end of April, European Union leaders agreed to build a trillion-euro emergency fund, a bailout, while also committing the EU to fast-tracking return-to-work policies. According to Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, the EU had so far already provided state aid worth €1.8 trillion to blunt the economic hit of the coronavirus. These measures are the European counterpart of the US government's multitrillion-dollar bailout of the markets and big business.



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