

Johnson demands two-week UK quarantine for 600,000 Britons holidaying in Spain

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On Saturday, despite knowing for weeks that there was a resurgence of cases in Spain, a new batch of reported cases led the Johnson government to convene an emergency cabinet meeting and change its “air bridge” policy in relation to British holiday makers traveling to the country. With just four hours’ notice, 600,000 people were told they would now have to self-isolate themselves for two weeks on returning from Spain.

The data revealed that cases in Spain had tripled in a fortnight, from 8.8 cases per 100,000 to 27.4. Spain, along with Italy, was one of the main epicentres of the disease as it ravaged Europe. As of this week 28,432 people have died in Spain with almost 320,000 infected. It has suffered 608 deaths per 1 million of population. But the UK and Belgium have recorded higher ratios.

Spain is the main holiday destination for British people travelling abroad, with millions visiting each year. Britons made up more than 20 percent of all foreign visitors to Spain last year.

Spain was taken off the government’s “safe-travel” list after being put on it just weeks earlier. The UK’s Department for Transport not only ruled that from midnight on Saturday people returning from Spain to the UK must enter a 14-day self-isolation period, but that from July 26 only essential travel to Spain was permitted—impacting on many more who have booked holidays. All had followed government advice in doing so.

Thousands attempted to get flights back to the UK Saturday to avoid being put into quarantine, without success. Moreover, the change in advice immediately invalidated the travel insurance of holiday makers. After midnight, 17 flights from Spain arrived in the UK with their passengers instructed to enter self-isolation.

The UK government took the decision after Norway re-imposed a 10-day quarantine requirement for people arriving from Spain from Friday.

The maniacal push by ruling elites across Europe to fling open the economy, enforce a mass return to work and allow virtually unrestricted cross-border travel has resulted in massive crisis, jeopardising the health and livelihoods of hundreds of thousands.

Encouraging millions to go on holiday abroad to “save the summer” was central to this policy. It has contributed to the continued spread of the virus with thousands of new cases reported since lockdown measures were ended, as the official death toll passed 200,000 across Europe. Spain’s Canary and Balearic Islands, which have low infection rates, have been included in the travel ban despite appeals from the Spanish authorities.

The recklessness of government policy is epitomised by the fact that Transport Secretary Grant Shapps was in the midst of a two-week holiday in Spain as the travel advice was changed. Shapps was described by the *Times* as one of the “strongest proponent of easing [lockdown] restrictions.” London and small business minister Paul Scully is also in Spain. Scully tweeted, “Best turn to gin. I’ll still be able to work. Just no shopping or running I guess #quarantine.”

The situation is no laughing matter for workers. Many will not be allowed the time off work if they are forced into self isolation and unless tested as positive for COVID-19 will not even receive paltry Statutory Sick Pay of £95 a week.

The Johnson government tried unsuccessfully to play down the crisis, with Dominic Raab stating that those forced into self-isolation “can’t have penalties taken against them” for “following the rules.” But there is nothing in law to prevent employers from going as far

as even sacking workers for not returning to work.

Raab was challenged by employment barrister, Grahame Anderson, who warned, “If you come back from Spain today [Sunday] and your boss says you have to be in work on Monday, there’s not a great deal you can do if they say ‘well if you don’t come in I’m not going to pay you.’ And if you haven’t been there for two years, [due to employment law] you’ve got very little protection against being dismissed as well.”

Speaking to *Sky News*, Pippa Stickler, who was due to fly home yesterday, said she and her partner could not get 14 days off work on their return. “My partner is in a hands-on job with only four days’ holiday remaining, so it has to be unpaid, and I can’t work from home so cannot be off. This news is awful and is too last minute ... As if we weren’t in financial difficulty enough!”

Raab claimed the government took “swift, decisive action to protect the UK because we’ve made such progress getting the virus down, and to prevent the virus from retaking hold in the UK.”

This is nauseating in the extreme. Upon ending the national lockdown, Prime Minister Boris Johnson claimed that all that was required was intervening to deal with localised increase of COVID-19. As the series of localised outbreaks in Britain in recent weeks has increased, aside from the city of Leicester being placed under lockdown (which may be lifted this week) virtually nothing else has been implemented in terms of safeguarding public safety.

On Sunday, a caravan park site was forced to close near Craven Arms in Shropshire after 21 people tested positive for coronavirus. The cases were confirmed after 41 people at the residential site were tested, meaning a contracted rate of over 50 percent of those tested. Craven Arms is a small town with a population of 3,000 people. According to Shropshire Council’s director of public health, Rachel Robinson, the cases were linked to an outbreak in the nearby Welsh town of Welshpool—just 25 miles away.

Workplaces continue to record infections among staff. Last week, after testing 476 employees, eight cases of COVID-19 associated with the Zorba Delicacies Ltd food processing plant in Ebbw Vale, Wales were confirmed. Despite this the plant was not closed.

Yesterday, after 20 staff tested positive for

COVID-19 at Balfour Beatty’s concrete manufacturing site in Avonmouth, Bristol, the site was closed for a deep clean. The plant is a strategically important facility—purpose-built to manufacture concrete segments for use at the Hinkley Point C nuclear power facility being constructed in nearby Somerset.

Avonmouth is situated just a few miles from the main city of Bristol and is itself the location for many major corporations who run warehousing and distribution operations including Amazon, which employs more than 1,000 workers.

A Royal Mail office in Swindon has just reopened after several postal workers tested positive for COVID-19. This followed an outbreak of COVID-19 at a Royal Mail delivery office in Chester at the beginning of July. In total 14 delivery offices have reported coronavirus cases.

As the first wave of the coronavirus is in resurgence across the continent, its governments are systematically lying in order to enforce their back-to-work plans and ensure the profits start rolling back in to the corporations. On Monday, Spanish Foreign Minister Arancha González Laya claimed that outbreaks in the country were “perfectly controlled” and “Spain is safe for Spaniards and for tourists.”



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