

US enters new phase of coronavirus pandemic: Report estimates more than 400,000 deaths by January

Joseph Kishore—SEP candidate for US President
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As summer turns into fall, the United States is entering a new and even more dangerous phase of the coronavirus pandemic. Scientists and epidemiologists are concerned that as temperatures cool, people will engage in more activities indoors rather than outside, helping to spread the virus. The combination of the pandemic with the flu season, which generally begins in October in the US, could completely inundate hospitals, testing centers and health facilities.

The principal factor creating the conditions for an even more horrific death toll in the coming months, however, is the ruling class' policy of "herd immunity"—that is, allowing the virus to spread without any restraint.

The death toll is already staggering. The US will soon surpass a new milestone of 200,000 deaths, possibly by the end of this week. COVID-19 has already become the third leading cause of death in the country, behind only heart disease and cancer.

Last week, the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington released a new report estimating that 410,000 people will have died by the end of the year.

More than 400,000 people! This is greater than the entire population of New Orleans, Louisiana or Cleveland, Ohio. If the IHME projections are realized, by January 1 more people will be dead from the coronavirus in the space of less than a year than American soldiers died in World War II over the course of nearly four years. More than one out of every 1,000 people living in the United States will have succumbed to the virus.

The Trump administration is spearheading a policy that it knows will lead to death on a massive scale. The

White House's new pandemic adviser, Scott Atlas, has argued explicitly in favor of ending social isolation measures to allow the disease to run rampant.

A focal point to this homicidal policy is the drive to open schools and get teachers back to work, as that is seen as critical to forcing workers back on the job. Many colleges and universities have already reopened, becoming centers for the transmission of the virus. In the case of one school, SUNY Oneonta, 17 percent of students tested positive less than two weeks after classes resumed, forcing the school to shut down and send everyone home.

This will be replicated many times over with the reopening of K-12 schools this month. The policy implemented in the United States is being repeated, in different forms, internationally. From the UK to Spain to Brazil, governments are pushing for the reopening of schools even as the pandemic accelerates. In France, new cases have surged far above the earlier peak in May, just as 12 million students are being sent back to school. In India, the government of Narendra Modi is eliminating all remaining restraints on transportation and business operations, even as the country has surpassed Brazil for the second most coronavirus cases, trailing only the United States.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has explained from the beginning of the pandemic, the response of world governments has been determined not by social need and public health but by profit. It is these same social interests that are creating the conditions for a horrific expansion of the disease in the coming months ahead.

Trump is pursuing a policy dictated by Wall Street. The administration, however, has many aiders and abettors. In the media and the political establishment,

the attitude that prevails to the staggering loss of life is indifference. Crocodiles have shed more tears than what is offered up by media pundits and Democratic Party politicians.

The claim that is repeatedly made by Biden and the Democrats that Trump is “an abject failure and incompetent” (as Kamala Harris put it over the weekend) is an evasion and coverup. In fact, the Trump administration has proven quite competent in the implementation of ruling class policy in relation to the pandemic which has been bipartisan.

Democrats, from Biden and Harris to Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, fully endorsed the massive handout to Wall Street in March and support the homicidal policy of forcing workers back to work and students back to the classroom. The mantra is that everything must be done to “get the economy going”—that is, resume the flow of profits.

The Democrats offer no program or policies to halt the pandemic. As the election enters its final stage, their central focus is on what has preoccupied them throughout the Trump administration: the demand for a more aggressive campaign against Russia. In the face of a pandemic that has killed hundreds of thousands, they are preparing a war that would kill millions.

Workers cannot allow themselves to be subordinated to either faction of the ruling class in the upcoming election. The working class must intervene in this crisis with its own program and policies.

There is already growing anger and opposition. Teachers have begun organizing independent committees to resist the homicidal back-to-school campaign. The scale of the social crisis, with millions of people out of work and facing poverty, eviction and hunger, is creating the conditions for a social explosion.

At the same time, there are mounting protests over police violence. In Portland, protests have been held for more than 100 straight days. Over the past two weeks, demonstrations have erupted in Kenosha, Wisconsin following the shooting of Jacob Blake and in Rochester, New York after the release of video showing the police murder of Daniel Prude. Protests have been spurred on by the response of the police and the Trump administration, including the deliberate incitement of fascistic violence.

The critical question is the development within the working class of a united and coordinated mass

political movement for socialism. The protests against police violence cannot be isolated. They must be connected to the resistance of teachers, autoworkers, transit workers, service workers and all sections of the working class to the ruling class and the capitalist system.

The Socialist Equality Party, along with our sister parties in the International Committee of the Fourth International, fights for a program that meets the needs of the working class. The back-to-work and back-to-school campaigns must be halted, with all workers and parents receiving full income until the pandemic is brought under control.

There must be an internationally coordinated campaign to save lives. The wealth of the billionaires must be expropriated and the trillions of dollars handed out to the banks reclaimed to meet urgent social needs, including universal health care, emergency relief for the unemployed, and the cancellation of debt, mortgage and rent payments.

Consider the following: The IHME states that 200,000 people in the US could die by the end of the year. The 200 richest individuals in the country have a collective wealth of more than \$2 trillion, which, if put at the disposal of society as a whole, would allow for a colossal investment in health care and public education infrastructure. It would be more than enough to ensure that everyone had a sufficient income to sustain themselves while the disease is brought under control. The lives of 200,000 vs. the wealth of 200...

The implementation of such elementary measures to stop the pandemic is a revolutionary question. It is inseparable from the fight by the working class to take political power in its own hands, to restructure all of social and economic life on the basis of social need and not private profit.

The ruling class and its parties are the parties of death and profit. The working class must fight for life and socialism. This is the basic issue that is posed in the months ahead.



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