Global surge in COVID-19 cases as governments abandon efforts to contain the pandemic

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Global coronavirus cases will top the 40 million mark sometime this weekend, and the number of new cases is approaching 400,000 a day. The grim progression of the pandemic can be charted in these numbers: new cases first reached 100,000 a day on May 20; they hit 200,000 a day on July 1; 300,000 a day on September 4, and reached 398,609 on Wednesday, October 14.

There are already more than 1.1 million deaths. The daily number of fatalities has also started turning upward with a seven-day moving average of 5,200 deaths. Two days running, the number of deaths has exceeded 6,000. The current projections by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation place estimates of global COVID-19 deaths at 1.9 million by January 1, 2021.

Whereas during the summer, Brazil, India and the United States were at the center of the pandemic, with the turn to fall and colder temperatures in the northern hemisphere, where the majority of the world's population lives, cases across Russia, Europe and North America have seen a dramatic upward shift, as predicted by modelers and epidemiologists.

On Thursday, the United States, with 65,000 new cases of COVID-19, surpassed India for the first time in several weeks. Twenty-six states have posted more than 1,000 new cases. Wisconsin shattered its previous high with more than 3,700 new cases. Though the Midwest and rural communities face the brunt of the current surge, cases are trending upward in 44 states. Nearly 900 people died yesterday.

Caitlin Rivers, a Johns Hopkins University epidemiologist, painted a bleak picture. "We are headed in the wrong direction, and that's reflected not only in the number of new cases but also in test positivity and the number of hospitalizations. Together, I think these three indicators give a very clear picture that we see increased transmission in communities across the country." Hospitalization across the country for COVID-19 stands at 37,308, a 30 percent rise since the last week of September.

The surge across Europe has been catastrophic, with the United Kingdom, France and Spain each having surpassed the United States on a per capita basis as Germany begins to see a similar steep climb. Some 35 percent of France's outbreaks of three or more cases occurred in schools or universities. More than a third of UK outbreaks in September were in educational settings. The incidence rate of COVID-19 among children and youth since returning to school has been astronomical.

Placing it in context, in early August, the number of daily new cases across Europe dropped under 20,000. On October 15, there were 131,726 new cases, a more than sixfold increase. Over the next few weeks, these current highs will be quickly outstripped as no real measure is being employed to stem the deluge.

France saw an unprecedented 30,621 cases yesterday. It is estimated that 90 percent of their intensive care units will be filled by the end of next week. Yet, President Emmanuel Macron has announced rhetorical measures that will do little to stem this tsunami of cases. The political crisis in the United Kingdom is unraveling rapidly, with Prime Minister Boris Johnson resisting lockdown as new cases approach 20,000 per day. With over 7,074 new cases Thursday, Germany surpassed its peak highs from the spring and is also seeing hospitals filling rapidly.

Hospital beds in Central Europe are quickly filling

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with COVID patients. Many of these countries are short of critical equipment as well as nursing and physician staff, as many are falling ill attempting to care for their patients. The public health infrastructure is collapsing under the impact of the pandemic. The Czech Republic, with close to 10,000 new cases yesterday, has the highest per capita infection rate in the world. It is issuing a perfunctory partial three-week lockdown closing schools, bars, and clubs. The positivity rate has reached 30 percent, and the health officials are warning that hospitals will soon be overwhelmed.

Dr. Hans Kluge, the World Health Organization's regional director for Europe, said that Europe had recorded its highest weekly number of COVID-19 cases on Thursday. "The evolving epidemiologic situation in Europe raises great concern," he said. "Daily cases are up; hospital admissions are up, and COVID is now the fifth leading cause of deaths in the region." Despite attempting to strike an optimistic note that compared to the number of cases, deaths were down, he admitted that there was "a realistic potential" for the situation to worsen dramatically, specifically if the contagion began to creep back into older and more vulnerable groups.

Capitalist governments worldwide, under pressure from their bosses in the financial markets, are resisting further lockdowns, recognizing that any such restrictions would have significant consequences on an already shaky economic situation.

The homicidal policy of "focused protection," as formulated in the Great Barrington Declaration, is now the stand-in nomenclature for the discredited policy of "herd immunity" that has been pursued by the ruling class in its response to the pandemic.

These terms are applied to cover up what is in every sense of the word a policy of social euthanasia: abandoning any effort to suppress the virus, regardless of the consequences for the elderly, those with compromised immune systems, and countless others. Simply stated, this policy will see millions die to protect the profits of the corporate elite.

In opposition to the Great Barrington Declaration, 80 renowned researchers published a letter in the *Lancet* stating, unequivocally, that a strategy of herd immunity (forced protection) is a "dangerous fallacy unsupported by the scientific evidence … it is critical to act decisively and urgently. Effective measures that suppress and control transmission need to be implemented widely, and they must be supported by financial and social programs that encourage community responses and address the inequities that have been amplified by the pandemic."

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