

Global coronavirus death toll reaches daily record of over 9,000

Benjamin Mateus
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While the world remained riveted to their social media devices and news channels waiting on any decisive results that would determine a hotly contested election in the United States between fascistic Donald Trump and his right-wing Democratic opponent Joe Biden, almost silently and inconspicuously the global death toll from COVID-19 reached a harrowing record daily figure of 9,057, shattering the previous high set on April 17.

By every prediction, this is only a prelude to a catastrophic health crisis that threatens to make the last 10 months of the pandemic appear as a dress rehearsal and mere child's play. The ruling class remains indifferent to the plight of those who, after several days to weeks of struggling for their breath, have perished, their memory blotted out of existence.

In the face of over 9,000 deaths, the Dow Jones soared 542 points on Thursday to close at 28,390, ensuring the best week since April when the policy of herd immunity was inaugurated with the opening of commerce and the drive back to work. Despite a record 113,000-plus COVID-19 cases Thursday, the *Wall Street Journal* hailed the drop in jobless benefits.

Meanwhile, Jerome Powell, the Federal Reserve chairman, has pledged to keep interest rates at near-zero for at least three more years. Such developments hark back to the insistence by the White House that there would be no future lockdowns, emboldening the markets.

The Worldometer COVID-19 dashboard estimates total deaths to date attributable to COVID-19 at 1,238,375. The seven-day moving average has edged up to 7,110, exceeding the peak reached in mid-April with 7,047 deaths per day. With an astounding 3,916 deaths on Wednesday, Europe accounted for 43 percent of all the deaths in 24 hours, with infections spreading

throughout the continent and eastward. The United States has consistently led in the death counts, now with over 1,000 daily.

The world is fast approaching 50 million cases of COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic. With each passing month, the rate of daily cases has been climbing. There were 569,546 cases of COVID-19 on Wednesday, a single-day high. The seven-day moving average has risen from 400,000 cases per day to over 500,000 per day in less than two weeks. In other words, the rate of new cases will see 15 million added to the overall total each month. Yesterday saw more than 600,000 infections in just one day.

Health authorities have repeatedly been warning that the virus is highly contagious and deadly. If it is allowed to spread uncontained, hospitals will reach overcapacity, and intensive care facilities will quickly be overwhelmed. There is a direct correlation between the state of national health care systems and deaths from COVID-19.

As cases across Europe have exploded, nation after nation has been forced to reimpose some form of lockdown or restrictions in hopes of containing the transmission while sustaining commerce through half-measures such as curfews, restricted hours and the closing of bars and restaurants. The continent posted a single-day high of over 310,000 cases Wednesday.

Greece has joined the UK, France and Germany in imposing a three-week nationwide lockdown. Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis admitted that without these restrictions, he feared the health system would rapidly collapse. Greece has seen an exponential rise in cases, now approaching 3,000 per day, a nearly tenfold increase from the same time a month ago. The country has the lowest intensive care unit (ICU) beds per capita in Europe.

Italian Premier Giuseppe Conte has issued a nationwide overnight curfew and imposed tighter restrictions in regions where infections are surging and available hospital beds are running short. With a single-day high of 34,505 cases Wednesday, Italy had 428 deaths. The highest death count, on March 27, was 921.

With hospitals and ICUs reaching capacity, countries like Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK have attempted to introduce half-measures to check the population's movement. Frustrations are mounting. Protesters in Spain clashed with police over the weekend against the restrictions. Health Minister Roberto Speranza, a proponent of a national lockdown, said, "The epidemiologic curve is still very high. What worries me is the absolute figure, which shows a terrifying curve. Either we bend it, or we are in trouble."

In France, students and teachers are organizing strikes protesting Macron's policy to keep schools open, which places them in danger from the ever-prevalent virus. France saw close to 60,000 new cases, with 363 deaths reported Wednesday. Despite having increased its ICU capacity by 25 percent, Germany fears that its ability will hit a watershed moment in December. France and Switzerland fear this moment will come sooner, over the next two weeks. With Europe's worst COVID-19 infection rate of 1,735 cases per 100,000, Belgium's hospital system is at the breaking point.

Even Sweden has changed its tune by imposing new restrictions, as cases have suddenly climbed. The government has forecasted that the winter will be brutal and grim. Stefan Lofven, Sweden's prime minister, told reporters on Tuesday, "How we act now will determine what kind of Christmas we will be able to celebrate, and who will be able to take part." Even their state epidemiologist, Anders Tegnell, has had to profess that "overall, the development is moving in the wrong direction in many different ways."

The situation is most dire in the United States, with deaths approaching a quarter million before this month's end and every effort being made by the political establishment to oppose any form of lockdown to contain the pandemic.

Meanwhile, field hospitals have been opened again in Wisconsin and Texas as hospitals have reached breaking points. Texas is the first state to surpass 1 million COVID-19 cases. Though much has been said

about the virus driving deeper into rural communities, it is reemerging in the densely populated Northeast. Maine, Rhode Island and Connecticut have seen record cases. By December, projections show that the US death rate will climb to 1,700 per day.

Hospitals are turning to short-term traveling nurses to fill in vacancies. Many clinical staff are quitting, burnt out by months of difficult and emotionally wrecking work. Rural regions suffering from a chronic shortage of medical staff face catastrophe as hospitals are going into financial insolvency. Many of their patients, in critical condition, are being transferred to larger centers for intensive care, creating gridlock within the health care infrastructure, adding a new level of chaos to the national response.



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