

1.5 million dead from the coronavirus pandemic worldwide

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The world passed a grim milestone Thursday morning: 1.5 million lives lost worldwide from the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. More than 10,000 people are killed by this deadly disease every day, 50 percent more than the height of the first wave of the pandemic in April and more than double the daily death rate at the start of October.

Another measure of the spread of the pandemic is the number of confirmed cases of the infection, which has just passed 66 million. Nearly 600,000 people contract the virus each day, up from less than 300,000 new daily cases two months ago. The doubling of both the daily case and daily death rates are stark indicators that the virus has been allowed to rage totally unchecked through the world's population by governments in every country.

In response to the surging cases worldwide, World Health Organization Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned in a recent press briefing, "This is no time for complacency, especially with the holiday season approaching in many countries and cultures." He noted that while some areas of the world had seen a reduction in new cases in recent days, "Gains can easily be lost and there was still an increase in cases in most other regions of the world and an increase in deaths."

This is truest in the United States, where the situation remains most dire. There are now more than 14.7 million cases and 285,000 dead across every state and territory, more than any other country in the world. More than 100,000 people in the country are hospitalized from the disease. An average of more than 175,000 people are newly infected each day and nearly 2,000 die. It is projected that the daily death rate will exceed 3,000 this month.

As President-elect Joe Biden said Wednesday, "I don't want to scare anybody here, but understand the

facts—we're likely to lose another 250,000 people dead between now and January." Yet, instead of calling for a national lockdown and an emergency halt to all nonessential production to save lives as one of the necessary measures to end the pandemic, Biden declared, "We no longer have to shut down."

Such statements fly in the face of reality. Forty-seven out of the country's 50 states have "uncontrolled spread" of the coronavirus, according to the website *CovidExitStrategy*. On a national scale, the number of those now testing positive for the coronavirus exceeds 1 in 10. Contact tracing is essentially impossible, meaning that those exposed to one who is infected are not alerted and the myriad chains of COVID-19 transmission remain unbroken.

The death toll for Europe as a whole is even higher than that of the United States, currently at more than 416,000. There are more than 5,000 deaths each day on the continent, meaning that at the current rate, the number of coronavirus deaths in Europe will reach 500,000 before Christmas day. The number of new cases now exceeds 200,000 each day, and total infections broke 18 million on Friday.

Italy now has an average of more than 700 deaths each day, only slightly lower than its peak in March and April. Its number of new infections, while trending downward because of recent lockdown measures, currently still stands at more than 20,000 each day, about four times the known daily cases during the peak of the country's first wave.

Similarly in the UK, there are still more than 400 deaths in the country each day. The Johnson government's de facto policy of "herd immunity," now adopted by governments in all the major capitalist countries, has brought the total number of dead above 60,000. Moreover, the number of "excess deaths" in

the country, which research shows is a better measure of the true scale of the pandemic, is well over 70,000.

Belgium now has the highest per capita death toll of any country in the world, currently 1,467 deaths per million people. This has been in large part driven by the government's abandonment of medical care for residents in retirement homes in Belgium throughout the coronavirus epidemic. At the same time, the new prime minister, Alexander De Croo, declared when he took office in October that he will not consider a lockdown in the country no matter how many lives are lost. "Let me be very clear," De Croo asserted, "Our country, our economy and our businesses can't handle a new general lockdown."

Countries in South America are also experiencing a second wave of coronavirus cases and deaths. There are more than 11.3 million cases on the continent as a whole, and more than 330,000 deaths. More than 74,000 new cases were recorded Thursday and nearly 1,300 deaths.

The most hard-hit country in the Southern Hemisphere remains Brazil, which is facing a spike in cases similar to what it faced over the summer, when there were more than 40,000 new cases a day. The country's daily death rate is currently more than 500 and rising. Its official case count and death toll, figures that fascistic President Jair Bolsonaro has tried to censor, stand at 6.5 million and 176,000, respectively.

A comparable disaster is continuing to unfold in India, which has more than 9.6 million cases and has suffered nearly 140,000 dead. A recent government-appointed committee has estimated, however, that these numbers are far lower than reality, and that it is likely that fully half of India's population of 1.3 billion people will have been infected by the contagion by February.

That the pandemic has become so entrenched in every city, state and country in the world is a testament to the real priorities of every government. The necessary public health measures needed to end the coronavirus are known and have been shown to work in the limited number of cases where they have been applied. However, instead—from the United States, to Europe, to South America, to South Asia and beyond—corporate profits and stock market dividends are being placed above human lives.

Dr. Tedros said, "The pandemic has brought us to a

fork in the road," and "we cannot—we must not—go back to the same exploitative patterns of production and consumption, the same disregard for the planet that sustains all life, the same cycle of panic and neglect, and the same divisive politics that fueled this pandemic."

While true, this cannot be done through an appeal to the world leaders and social system that allowed the coronavirus to become so deadly in the first place. Capitalism itself has been revealed as utterly incapable of meeting the most basic and urgent social needs of the day. The solution to the pandemic is thus not renewed bourgeois nationalism, but the fight for international socialism led by the only revolutionary force in society, the working class.



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