

Open schools and businesses in Germany are leading to record infections and mass death

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The coronavirus pandemic has long run out of control in Germany. New record numbers are being reported daily. On Friday, the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) reported the second consecutive daily record, with almost 30,000 new infections registered in 24 hours. Also, almost 600 COVID-19 patients died again in one day. This brings the total number of deaths to 21,000, and another 10,000 could be added by the end of the year. About 4,400 coronavirus patients are fighting for their lives in intensive care units.

With these explosive figures, Germany has catapulted to the top of the European infection rankings. In terms of daily infection figures, it now ranks ahead of France, Britain and Italy. In Europe, 446,000 people have died of COVID-19 so far, which is more than a quarter of the almost 1.6 million coronavirus deaths globally. Twenty million people worldwide are currently fighting the SARS-CoV-2 lung disease, and 70 million have been infected since the beginning of the pandemic.

The scale of this “winter of death” confirms all warnings of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and the *World Socialist Web Site*. Already in the spring, we called on workers to form rank-and-file safety committees to take protection from the pandemic into their own hands independently of the trade unions. Long before the beginning of the autumn semester, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP), the WSW and the IYSSE youth and student organization called on students, teachers, educators and parents to take action for their own protection and that of their children.

“By returning to face-to-face teaching amidst rising infection rates, governments of all stripes are putting the health and lives of countless teachers, students and parents at risk,” we wrote in our August 14 statement titled “Stop school openings! Prepare for a general

strike!” We predicted: “The mass deaths of teachers, parents and even students will be condoned in order to force workers back to work and secure the profits of the rich.”

This warning has been tragically confirmed.

On Thursday, Lothar H. Wieler, the head of the Robert Koch Institute called the spread of the coronavirus infection throughout the population “alarming.” There are now about twice as many outbreaks in nursing homes and homes for the elderly as in the spring. The measures officially ordered so far are wholly insufficient, he said. The number of deaths would continue to rise in the coming weeks, Wieler confirmed, and more and more intensive care units will reach their limits.

This was confirmed two days ago when the University Hospital of Augsburg halted all admissions for non-urgent treatment. The hospital was at full capacity with 163 COVID-19 patients, 33 of them in intensive care, the medical director of the hospital, Michael Beyer, told the Bavarian Broadcasting Corporation (BR). A doctor from the University Hospital pointed out that now, considerably more young patients were having to fight for their lives. “They are around 30, around 40, have no pre-existing conditions whatsoever and sometimes conduct this fight unsuccessfully.”

The unsafe opening of schools after the summer vacations has played a decisive role in the spread of the pandemic. Numerous serious scientific studies now prove this. Most recently, a large-scale study commissioned by the Austrian Ministry of Education clearly showed that schoolchildren are infected practically as frequently as adults. Since the autumn of 2020, the study has observed around 14,800 school children aged between 6 and 15 years and compared

them with 1,200 teachers in terms of SARS-CoV-2. The only difference, the study found, was that children show fewer symptoms. As a result, coronavirus infection was less frequently detected in them. Nevertheless, children could pass on the virus to other social layers with devastating consequences.

This was also confirmed by a research group at the Karlsruhe University KIT. The group investigated the effectiveness of various measures to contain the pandemic in the spring. Like other researchers in Vienna and Oxford, this group concluded that “a significant effect” could be observed following school closures. The sooner schools were closed in the spring, the more the effect of falling case numbers became apparent, as Dr. Niklas Kühl, head of the research institute in Karlsruhe, explained. “If we had waited one day longer in the spring in Germany before closing schools, this would have meant 125,000 additional infections, according to our analyses, and closure seven days later, even 400,000 additional cases.”

These findings have been known for a long time. However, the positions of the scientists are being suppressed and they are put under pressure, so they do not speak about their results too loudly. Christian Drosten, head of virology at the Charité hospital in Berlin, pointed this out on December 8 in his coronavirus update on broadcaster NDR. There was a “basic climate” among scientists, he said, which consisted of the following: “You simply cannot say what it is like anymore because otherwise you will be burned, put in a corner, attacked in the media and, unfortunately, also by some voices within the scientific community ... This basic mood has already spread among many people. And I know from many of my colleagues that in the last few weeks they have had the feeling: better not say anything, there will only be trouble.”

The pressure placed on scientists is part of the campaign to keep schools and businesses open, which has been accompanied from the outset by countless unscientific studies, open lies in statements by corrupt experts. The refrain is: the economy must continue to run and make profits under all circumstances.

Given the catastrophic effects, resistance to this policy is growing. At dozens of schools, students have gone on strike or joined protests. According to broadcaster ZDF’s political barometer, on Thursday,

73 percent of all respondents were in favour of a lockdown as in the spring, during which schools, day-care centres and businesses would also be closed. A clear majority is also of the opinion that the measures taken by the German government “did not go far enough.”

When the same politicians who have sacrificed human lives for months on the altar of profit now announce “tough measures,” they are only trying to bring this overwhelming opposition under control. The measures adopted so far are not even remotely capable of preventing the catastrophe.

Instead of the immediate closure of schools, day-care centres, and non-essential businesses, they are merely discussing an extension of school vacations and placing further restrictions on private contacts, which most people have reduced to a minimum anyway. Even the closure of shopping centres is only being considered in a few German states before the holidays in order not to jeopardize the profitable Christmas trade.

“This winter of death in Europe shows the bankruptcy of capitalism. If hundreds of thousands of lives are to be saved, the working class must intervene independently into political life in opposition to the social system that has led to this horrific disaster by blocking a rational, scientific policy,” the WSWS wrote yesterday in a perspective, calling for building “a network of independent action committees to prepare a Europe-wide general strike to enforce the closure of schools and non-essential industries.”



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