

Berlin teacher dies following COVID-19 infection

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The death of Soydan A., a young teacher who taught at a community school in Berlin-Kreuzberg, is due to the reckless school opening policy amid a pandemic that has been spreading rapidly for months. The responsibility for this lies with the Berlin Senate (state executive) comprising the Social Democrats (SPD), Left Party and Greens, whose unscrupulous education and health policies have made it acceptable for broad sections of the population to become infected.

Soydan A., who worked at the Carl-von-Ossietky School in the Kreuzberg district, apparently contracted the coronavirus at school. He was quarantined on November 10. According to information from *Tagesspiegel*, he was admitted to hospital five days later. He died there last week. The quarantine took place after several pupils in a class at the school tested positive. In addition, at least one other teacher was found to be infected with COVID-19.

The dramatic situation at the school was well known. A “red” coronavirus warning level had been in effect for weeks until December 16.

Soydan A. was a popular member of staff and taught German, Turkish and ethics. Relatives, friends, pupils and colleagues were stunned and full of grief about the death of the family man. There were many tributes on social media, such as, “Our school community mourns the loss of our esteemed colleague who left us far too early.” A book of remembrance has been set up at the school.

Many expressed anger at those in political power. “This is not just sad. This is a scandal. The lack of duty of care on the part of the employers is responsible here,” wrote Swifts on Twitter. “No FFP2 masks, no distance teaching, no split classes, no air filters ... Nothing. Are you actually still sleeping well, Minister of Culture?”

Jörg Scholl, a biologist, writes, “An accident would have been tragic. This [situation] was tolerated and could have been prevented. That’s what happens when economics is more important than people.”

The death of Soydan A. is not an isolated case. This week alone, three deaths of teachers or educators were reported to the Robert Koch Institute (RKI). By December 3, 364 teachers and educators had been admitted to hospitals.

In Germany’s most populous state, North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), the incidence rate among teachers was recently calculated based on data from the NRW Ministry of Education. The result shows that teachers have a significantly higher risk of becoming infected than the average person. International studies, for example from Britain, also come to similar conclusions.

The constantly rising infection and death rates, including among teachers, are a direct result of the “profits before lives” policy enforced by all government parties and the trade unions. In the interest of the economy and to ensure businesses could operate, schools were first reopened under unsafe conditions and have since been kept open at all costs.

In Berlin, this criminal policy is being pursued particularly aggressively by the SPD, the Greens and the Left Party. The official expression of sympathy by the Education Senator (state minister) Sandra Scheeres (SPD) cannot hide this fact. She is largely responsible for the pandemic situation in the capital, which has run completely out of control, and its deadly consequences. Only last month, she had claimed that “schools and day-care centres are the safest places to break infection chains.” Infections took place “outside the school.”

The result of these lies is a health disaster. On Sunday, Berlin passed the total of 1,000 deaths from coronavirus. There are now 86,564 confirmed cases. A

series of mass outbreaks and deaths among residents and staff has afflicted old people's and nursing homes. Berlin's Charité hospital is having to scale back to providing a "purely emergency programme" as of Monday, and other hospitals will follow suit in the next few days. Hospitals in the neighbouring state of Brandenburg are now accepting patients from the capital's completely overloaded hospitals, as there are already no more care facilities there at all.

Nevertheless, the SPD-Left Party-Green Senate is essentially continuing its political course. From January 11 onwards, there will again be in-person teaching at schools in Berlin and even during the Christmas holidays there will be extensive offers for them to provide "emergency care." This also applies to day-care centres. Since there is no widespread closure of businesses and relief measures for parents, this automatically leads to children being sent to day-care centres. There are no special safety precautions. Furthermore, for reasons of cost, no air filters are installed in classrooms and mass testing is not in sight, nor is there the comprehensive vaccination of the population.

Soydan A.'s tragic death shows the inhuman logic of keeping schools and factories open. It underlines the need to close schools as a matter of life and death. Students, teachers and parents must take their health into their own hands. They must build Education Action Committees independent of the unions that organise strikes against the Senate to close schools and factories and ensure the safety of the facilities.



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