

# Nearly 30,000 Americans have died of COVID-19 in the past 10 days

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The herd immunity policy pursued by the United States government and its counterparts around the world is producing ever spiraling heights of mass death. There have been more than 28,895 deaths in the US since the new year began.

The number of lives lost each day is rapidly increasing. The highest the average number of daily deaths recorded before the holiday lull in reporting was 11,731 worldwide. That number has now increased to 12,680 and increasing. A similar trend is seen in the United States, where two consecutive days of more than 4,000 reported deaths have shot the weekly average past 3,000.

At this rate, more than a quarter million people will die across the globe before the end of January, including more than 60,000 in the US alone. Whatever hopes workers and youth around the world had that 2021 would provide some relief are quickly being shattered.

Such sentiments have been further dashed in light of the new and more infectious variant of COVID-19 first detected in Great Britain. It has been estimated to be about 56 percent more infectious and has already spread to many parts of the United States, Europe and other parts of the world, 47 countries so far.

It is expected that this variant will become the dominant version of the coronavirus wherever it emerges. One person infected with the already existing variant might cause 39 new cases after one month if the spread of the virus is uncontrolled. One person infected with the new variant could cause 150 new cases, nearly quadrupling the inevitable increase of illness, hospitalizations and death.

The surge in cases is also placing even greater strain on the distribution of the vaccine. The development of multiple vaccines to the coronavirus in less than a year is a triumph of modern medical science and those deemed safe and effective should be administered and taken as widely as possible. But this achievement is being gravely undermined by the total lack of any other controls on the

spread of the virus. Testing has remained stagnant in the US even though more than 12 percent of all tests nationally come back positive. Contact tracing has been all but abandoned.

“We’re losing the race with coronavirus — it’s infecting people much faster than we can get vaccine into people’s arms, and it’s overcoming our social distancing,” said University of Florida biologist Derek Cummings, an expert in emerging pathogens, to the *Los Angeles Times*. “Now there’s this variant that will make that race even harder.”

Moreover, the vaccine distribution rollout has been an unmitigated disaster. After initially promising 100 million vaccinations by the end of 2020, the Trump administration ultimately only prescribed about 3 million doses by the new year. Bloomberg estimates that only 7.73 million doses have been given across the country. At the current rate, it will take years to vaccinate the entire population. In the meantime, hundreds of thousands will die.

There have also been new, potentially more infectious variants of the coronavirus found in South Africa, as well as in patients that had traveled from Brazil to Japan.

So far, initial research into these variants has found that the vaccines are effective against these new strains of the virus. Scientists are increasingly worried, however, that this will not hold. Every new infection turns a person into a potential incubator for a vaccine resistant strain of the virus. Dr. Mike Ryan of the World Health Organization recently said that COVID-19 “is not the big one.” What was left unsaid is that the more infections occur, the more the virus mutates and the more it has the potential to become “the big one,” to turn into a pandemic that is even more infectious and even more lethal.

Such an outcome raises all the more urgently the need to implement every possible measure to contain the pandemic. What measures have been put into place,

mostly limiting large gatherings of individuals, have proven to be wholly inadequate. Above all else, schools, businesses and nonessential production must be shut down, with full compensation for those impacted. Workers must not be forced to choose between sacrificing their livelihoods and the lives of themselves and their loved ones. Lockdowns and vaccinations must be combined with the implementation of a mass testing program to detect the virus and serious contact tracing to track down cases.

The resources to do so must be seized from the ill-gotten gains of the major banks and giant corporations who collectively received at least \$6 trillion in bailouts last year. These funds, combined with a moratorium on rent and mortgage payments, could be used to provide everyone in the country with \$2,000 each month for six months, while providing more than \$2 trillion for the necessary supplies and personnel to care for those who are sick and end the pandemic in the US and internationally.

That such sums were given to Wall Street and not used to end the pandemic back in March speaks to the political and social orientation of both the Republicans and Democrats. After the lockdowns in March and April, which were ultimately forced by workers themselves taking strike action to shut down factories, every effort has been made by Trump and his ilk to eliminate any restrictions on the reopening of businesses and schools.

They have been aided and abetted by the Democrats, who falsely claim that schools and nonessential production can be “safely” open during a pandemic.

Such claims are absurd on their face. The United States has suffered nearly 23,000,000 confirmed cases of the pandemic virus. Even allowing that up to five times that many total cases, with the others going unreported, that still indicates that 217,000,000 people have not been infected. Using that same estimate, globally there are about 450 million people who have been infected and about 7.4 billion people who *have not* been infected. Every effort must be made so that they remain healthy.

Alongside the mass deaths that have occurred in the past eleven days, the fascist coup attempt of January 6 cannot be ignored. The pandemic exacerbated what had already been a massive social crisis that existed at the end of 2019 and produced an even greater catastrophe. The United States remains with 9.8 million fewer jobs than at the start of the pandemic, when the US experienced the most rapid employment decline in its history, even when compared to the Great Depression. Millions more face homelessness and destitution.

Both Trump and the Democrats are fully aware that such staggering levels of social inequality are incompatible with social and democratic rights. At the same time, they are aware that the only way they can maintain capitalist rule is by maintaining such levels of inequality through increasingly authoritarian forms of rule. Presidential dictatorship, established under Donald Trump, is one option.

Whether or not Trump succeeds at carrying through a coup d'état, which is still an open possibility, it is the product of the ongoing rightward shift of official American politics for decades. The growth of fascistic forces at the very apex of the American state is the result of the protracted decline of American capitalism as a whole.

As such, it is against that social order and economic system that workers and youth must direct themselves. This has taken embryonic form in the strikes taken by workers in the US and internationally against school and factory reopenings, as well as the numerous rank-and-file safety committees established with the help of the Socialist Equality Party and the *World Socialist Web Site*.

Now, such actions take on increased urgency. The fight against the pandemic is not primarily a medical or scientific question, but a political one. The past year has demonstrated that capitalism is incapable of containing the disease, and in fact the profit motive spurs on the spread of the deadly virus through near universal policies of herd immunity.



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