

Prime Minister Boris Johnson admits to mass murder as UK official COVID-19 death toll passes 100,000

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Britain officially passed 100,000 coronavirus deaths on Tuesday according to the government's measure of a fatality within 28 days of a positive COVID-19 test. This means that 147 people have died for every 100,000 people in the UK, a figure only topped by two other nations—Belgium and Slovenia.

More people have now died in the UK from COVID-19 than its civilian death toll in World War II.

As the milestone was reached, Prime Minister Boris Johnson called a Downing Street press briefing, in which he had the gall to declare, “[I]t is hard to compute the sorrow contained in that grim statistic. The years of life lost, the family gatherings not attended and, for so many relatives, the missed chance even to say goodbye—I offer my deepest condolences to everyone who has lost a loved one.”

Asked why so many had died in Britain, he replied, “I think on this day I should just really repeat that I am deeply sorry for every life that has been lost, and of course as I was prime minister I take full responsibility for everything that the government has done.”

Had he answered truthfully, he would have replied, “Because of the murderous ‘herd immunity’ policies pursued by my government on behalf of the major corporations.”

Instead, he said “we make this pledge: that when we have come through this crisis, we will come together as a nation to remember everyone we lost, and to honour the selfless heroism of all those on the front line who gave their lives to save others.”

Johnson was speaking of national mourning at the end of the crisis on the day that 1,631 deaths were reported, taking the overall total to 100,162, and 20,089 new infections, taking the total to 3,689,746.

Speaking at the press briefing National Health Service England leader Sir Simon Stevens also noted, “This Sunday, it will have been a year since the first two patients with coronavirus were treated in a hospital in Newcastle.” In that time, he said, “Over a quarter of a million severely ill coronavirus patients have been treated in hospital.”

Ever since it prematurely ended last spring's lockdown, the government has allowed the virus to spread—with only the most inadequate restrictions in place for the last eight months. Far from the pandemic being brought under control, more than a quarter of all deaths have occurred in the first 26 days of this year—26,606 lives lost.

Following Johnson's statement, the government's Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty warned, “Unfortunately, we are going to see quite a lot more deaths over the next few weeks.”

But every comment that followed was equivocal, as Whitty said in response to a media question as to when the government could start relaxing restrictions only that, “I think we need to be careful we do not relax too early.” He added that with 35,00 people ill in hospitals with Covid-19 this was an “incredibly high number” but had “flattened off” and was not rising overall.

Substantial sections of the Conservative Party are insisting on a timetable to end to the current lockdown, which is due to be reviewed February 15. Central to their demands are that schools be fully reopened so that all parents can return to the workplace and produce profits for the corporations.

According to a front page article in Tuesday's *Daily Telegraph*, the Tory Party house organ, “Government sources said last night that mid-March was now viewed

by ministers as the target deadline for reopening.” This was accompanied by an editorial titled, “When will schools be allowed to reopen?”

The number of deaths admitted to by the government is a massive underestimation of the real tally. The *Guardian* quoted Dr David Spiegelhalter, chair of the Winton Centre at Cambridge University, who said, “There will be a lot of attention given to deaths with Covid reaching 100,000, but this is based on the figures released each day, which only include people who had a positive test and then died within 28 days.

“The more accurate ONS [Office for National Statistics] data show that over 100,000 people in the UK had already died with Covid on their death certificate by 7 January, nearly three weeks ago. This rose to 108,000 by 15 January, and the total now will be nearly 120,000.”

The *Financial Times* reported, “A *Financial Times* model estimates 120,200 excess deaths so far, again putting the UK in a position alongside Belgium, Spain and Italy as the worst in Europe and higher than the US.”

On March 13 last year, two days after COVID-19 was declared a pandemic, Johnson’s Chief Scientific Adviser Sir Patrick Vallance suggested publicly that the population could “build up some kind of herd immunity so more people are immune to this disease and we reduce the transmission.” Johnson spelled out the practicalities of this policy in an interview the week before, where he explained, “one of the theories is, that perhaps you could take it on the chin, take it all in one go and allow the disease, as it were, to move through the population.”

Johnson has been able to oversee this herd immunity policy and death and destruction on an horrific scale because he has faced no challenge from the Labour Party or the trade unions, who pledged that they would only function as a “constructive” opposition during the pandemic. This took obscene form when Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer gave a filmed address following the Downing Street briefing, in which mentioned neither the Tory government, nor Johnson himself.

In a meagre two-minute address, Starmer said the deaths were “nothing more than a national tragedy, a terrible reminder of what we’ve lost as a country.” And like Johnson, his answer was to dispense bromides about the post-pandemic future: “To those that are

mourning, we must promise to learn the lessons of what went wrong. And to build a more resilient country, a country that can give people security of health and of work and of opportunity.”

What had to be built was a “better future that is worthy of the British people” This was why “we must be vigilant in the national effort to stay at home, protect our NHS and vaccinate Britain.”

The truth is that to defend the profits of the capitalist class, Starmer’s party functions as de facto coalition partners of Johnson, in alliance with the trade unions and frames everything in terms of a mythical “national interest” to conceal the irreconcilable antagonisms between big business and the working class.

Workers and young people must draw the lessons and take matters into their own hands. Control of the response to the pandemic must be taken from the political criminals in Downing Street and their allies.

The public health catastrophe requires that the working class urgently take up the Socialist Equality Party’s calls for the establishment of rank-and-file committees in every workplace and neighbourhood to fight for effective lockdowns with full income, educational and social support, genuinely safe conditions for key workers, and a functioning test-and-trace system. This must be funded by seizing the fortunes of the super-rich who have continued to pile up billions more in wealth during the pandemic.



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