

100,000 Spanish dead in pandemic: PSOE-Podemos regime ends restrictions

Alice Summers
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Over 100,000 people have died in Spain as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, according to Spain's National Institute of Statistics (INE), an official state agency.

The INE reports that in the year between 9 February 2020 and 13 February 2021, there were a total of 471,447 deaths in Spain, 103,512 more than in the same period the previous year. February 13 also marked a year since the first officially recognised coronavirus death in Spain, that of a 69-year-old man from the town of L'Eliana, Valencia, recently returned from a trip to Nepal.

The INE figures back up findings by Spain's funerary services, which report that between 14 March 2020—when Socialist Party (PSOE) Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez declared a state of alarm—and 19 January 2021, 119,113 lives were lost as a result of the pandemic.

Juan Antonio Alguacil, a registered undertaker and member of the US National Funeral Directors Association announced the findings, declaring, “staff organisations of civil registries obtained this figure after determining that [in this period] an average of 383 people were registered every day who had died from coronavirus.”

Alguacil also denounced the PSOE-Podemos government for presenting a falsified death toll well below the figures he was announcing: “These figures exceed all the [official] calculations and, now more than ever, this information transparency is necessary.” The numbers “do not square and are not going to square” with the government's figures, Alguacil stated, “because it is clear that they do not want us to know the real death toll.”

Alguacil added, “The explanation for this is clear: all those in charge are a disgrace. Ultimately, I have come

to think that we will never know the total death figures because right from the very first minute they were lying, they weren't telling the truth, they were hiding things.”

While news sites such as *El País*, *El Mundo* and *El Diario* were silent on the INE findings and Alguacil's comment, instead parroting figures from the PSOE-Podemos government, the INE's findings of over 100,000 deaths from the pandemic were widely reported in other press outlets.

On 13 February, the date on which the INE figures are based, the government's Spanish death count was only 64,747, almost 40,000 less than the INE's excess mortality estimate. As of last Friday, this had risen to 68,813, still far below these other figures. An average of 291 coronavirus deaths were reported by the government every day last week and nearly 8,000 daily infections, bringing the total number of cases to well over 3 million.

The Spanish Health Ministry only includes deaths in its official tally if the victim tested positive for the coronavirus, even though very few COVID-19 tests were carried out in the first wave of the pandemic last spring, and the government's testing program remains inadequate today.

Showing how widespread the devastation caused by the pandemic has been, a study released mid-February by the government-linked Centre for Sociological Research (CIS) reported that more than one in three (38.1 percent) Spaniards know someone who died from the virus. Seventeen percent said that they had lost a friend to COVID-19, and 19.4 percent indicated that a family member who they don't live with had died. Over 78 percent of people in Spain know at least one person who has contracted the virus, according to the CIS.

Despite the continuing health disaster in Spain, the PSOE-Podemos government and the regional authorities are ending almost all the limited public health restrictions imposed in Spain—in line with the policy of the bourgeoisie across Europe.

Last week, the north-eastern province of Aragón reopened gyms and indoor hospitality settings, although these venues will be limited to 30 percent of their usual capacity. In Asturias, restaurants and bars are open, and indoor cultural activities such as theatre productions can take place up to a capacity of 300 people, as long as spectators wear masks and remain 1.5 metres apart. Gyms and shopping centres are also open.

In Cantabria, the regional government announced last week that shopping centres will now be permitted to open at weekends; libraries, museums, cinemas and theatres can open at 50 percent capacity. Sports stadiums can also open with a third of their usual capacity, up to 1,000 people.

In some regions, such as Castilla-La Mancha and Extremadura, even indoor entertainment venues such as casinos and games centres have reopened.

Schools have remained open everywhere, after children returned to classrooms in early January, to allow parents to continue showing up to unsafe offices, factories and other workplaces to pump out profit for the bourgeoisie. Most regions have maintained a perimetral shutdown—preventing people from entering or exiting without justification—but few other restrictions remain. Ineffectual night-time curfews are still in place, but even these have been relaxed in many regions.

The bourgeois media, meanwhile, have launched a relentless “save the summer” campaign, calling for the reopening of tourist sites and promoting the PSOE-Podemos government’s pledge to vaccinate 70 percent of the population by summer. However, it is highly unlikely that this goal will be achieved. As of Friday, only 5 percent of the Spanish population (2.4 million people) had received at least one dose of the vaccine, and only 2.6 percent had received the two required doses.

“If the levels of vaccination are high in June it will save the tourist season,” Bank of Spain chief economist Óscar Arce told *El País*. “[But] if we delay until the end of summer,” he continued, “the economy will suffer a lot: in these three months of dramatic

uncertainty, a lot is at stake.”

In the same *El País* piece, Gonzalo García, from the financial consultancy firm AFI, demanded the relaxation of any remaining restrictions and the handing of bailout funds to Spanish businesses. “The reactivation [of the economy] is just around the corner, in a matter of months,” he declared. “But it is vital to reduce this period of time as much as possible to prevent companies from going bankrupt and for tourism. Fiscal policy must make a final effort to build a bridge and save the four, six or eight months that remain.”

As the bourgeoisie agitates for the complete reopening of the economy, government representatives are already speaking of a coming “fourth wave” of the pandemic. “It’s possible that there will be a fourth wave,” declared Fernando Simón, director of the Centre for the Coordination of Health Alerts and Emergencies, in mid-February, which will “largely depend on how we get out of this one, on what level of low transmission we manage to achieve in this one and on how the vaccination [campaign] develops over the next weeks.”

While the bourgeoisie presents the continued spread of the disease as inevitable, it is the entirely predictable and preventable result of their criminal policy of putting profits before lives, refusing to implement life-saving public health restrictions. Just last week, a study by scientists at Rovira i Virgili University in Tarragona and the University of Zaragoza found that had lockdowns been implemented seven days earlier last spring, 23,000 lives would have been saved in Spain.

Workers must reject the lies of representatives of big business, the PSOE-Podemos government and their mouthpieces in the bourgeois media, demanding instead the imposition of a shelter-at-home policy with full pay to all those affected.



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