

An emergency program to stop the global new wave of COVID-19!

Statement of the WSWs International Editorial Board
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Over the past two months, daily new COVID-19 cases around the world have surged by more than 60 percent, driven by more dangerous and deadly variants of the disease. Within weeks, public health experts warn, the number of global daily new cases, now at nearly 600,000, will reach the highest levels since the start of the pandemic.

In many countries this is already the case. On Saturday, India reached 100,000 daily new COVID-19 cases, the highest number ever and a nine-fold increase since the start of 2021.

France had a record 60,922 daily new cases on Sunday. Turkey had 41,000, a seven-fold increase in a matter of months. In Ukraine, over 400 people are dying every day, and only 250,000 out of a population of 40 million have received a first dose of the vaccine. In Poland, infections are now 60 times higher than at the start of the pandemic.

Throughout Eastern Europe, hospitals are full, and health experts in Germany and France warn that their health systems will be totally overwhelmed within a matter of weeks. In Brazil, with nearly 3,000 deaths a day, hospitals and morgues are overflowing and bodies are being disinterred from graves to make room for the newly deceased.

In the United States, sections of the Midwest are seeing a massive surge in new cases, with Michigan—the heart of the US auto industry—reaching its worst daily caseloads since the start of the pandemic.

Much of the surge is being driven by new variants of the disease, which, unlike the earlier types, disproportionately affect young people. According to figures published by the State of Michigan, more than 40 percent of the state's major outbreaks are centered in schools, childcare facilities and centers of higher education.

“We are just beginning this surge and denying it is not going to help us,” warned infectious disease expert Michael Osterholm. “We are walking into the mouth of this virus monster as if somehow we don't know it's here, and it is here.” He added, “Now is the time to do all the things that we must do to slow down transmission, not open up.”

But all over the world, governments are doing the exact opposite, accelerating their efforts to abandon all measures to contain the disease. In the US, the Biden administration is spearheading the drive to reopen schools, and in the past week

alone, the governors of Washington, Massachusetts and Ohio announced moves to reopen schools.

In refusing to close businesses to contain the disease, French President Emmanuel Macron last week reiterated, “We are going to live with the virus.” Macron said society must “take into account the consequences” of measures to stop the disease on “the economy.”

Macron was articulating the principle that has governed the response of every country in Europe and North America to the pandemic. Instead of implementing the public health measures necessary to eradicate COVID-19, capitalist governments decided at the outset to make the population “live with the virus,” because taking the measures needed to stop it would impinge on the profits of major corporations.

The defenders of this policy have argued that allowing the pandemic to spread will generate “herd immunity.” Once enough people are infected, coupled with vaccination, the disease will go away on its own, they declare.

This policy has led to disaster. The claim was that allowing the disease to spread unchecked would result in its disappearance on its own. It has led instead to the creation of new, more virulent and more lethal variants of COVID-19. In addition to making people more susceptible to reinfection, the variants have partially degraded the effectiveness of at least some vaccines, squandering one of the most potent weapons available to suppress COVID-19.

Emergency measures are necessary to stop the spread of the virus and millions more deaths! The International Committee of the Fourth International demands the following urgent actions:

- **All non-essential production must immediately stop until the disease is brought under control.** This includes all manufacturing not directly related to core social infrastructure, as well as all non-essential retail and in-person food service. Unlike the partial lockdowns implemented in March of 2020, the suspension of non-essential production must be total, and executives of corporations that violate public health guidelines must be imprisoned. All workers must receive 100 percent pay either for remote work or, when remote work is impossible, to fully compensate them for lost income over the entire time they are furloughed.

- **All self-employed tradesmen and tradeswomen, contractors and small business owners must receive full compensation for all lost earnings resulting from the halting of non-essential production.**

- **All in-person education must be immediately suspended and replaced with remote instruction.** Billions of dollars must be made available to ensure that every child and adolescent is provided with his or her own modern laptop and high-speed internet service, along with a safe, spacious and comfortable learning environment at home.

- **The public health system must be massively expanded and tens of thousands of public health coordinators hired.** Eradicating COVID-19 means treating every infection and exposure as an emergency. Everyone infected with the disease, or exposed to it, must have immediate and timely access to public health staff, nurses and doctors who can monitor their symptoms and help them safely quarantine without infecting others.

- **Trillions of dollars must be allocated for the creation of a global vaccination program.** The distribution of vaccines must be administered by scientists and public health experts with a mandate to protect the whole world. It must not be subject to the geopolitical interests of competing capitalists ruling elites.

Eight months ago, the Socialist Equality Party (US) adopted a resolution at its Congress drawing a balance sheet of the pandemic and the response of the ruling class to it. Comparing the pandemic to the outbreak of World War I, the resolution stated: “When World War I began, it was assumed by all belligerents that it would be over relatively quickly. However, the conflict dragged on and on, year after year, because the capitalist ruling elites, who dictated government policy, considered the sacrifice of the lives of millions of workers an acceptable cost in achieving their geostrategic interests in the conflict.”

Now, 14 months into the pandemic, the catastrophe is not only continuing, it is intensifying. Workers throughout the world, influenced by the propaganda of the ruling elites, may have wanted a “truce,” but there is no truce. This is because the ruling class is unwilling to take the necessary measures to stop the ongoing carnage.

The fight against the pandemic is not simply a medical issue. It requires a political struggle of the working class against the capitalist system.

The necessary measures to stop the pandemic must be paid for through a frontal assault on the wealth of the capitalist

oligarchy. Since March 2020, the wealth of billionaires in the US has increased by 44 percent, or \$1.3 trillion, with similar orgies of wealth accumulation taking place in every capitalist country.

This wealth must be seized and used to contain the pandemic. The gigantic corporations that control economic life must be transformed into publicly controlled enterprises, run on the basis of social need, democratic control and a rational plan, not private profit.

Above all, a response to the pandemic in the interests of public health requires a global plan and global coordination.

An injury to one is an injury to all, as the old slogan of labor solidarity recognized. In the case of the pandemic, an injury to one country is an injury to the entire globe. As disease ecologist Peter Daszak has noted, “viruses don’t think about national boundaries.”

But a global approach conflicts at every point with the capitalist nation-state system, which is incapable of international coordination because of its inherently competing nation-state interests. Already, the initial rollout of the vaccines has been hampered by the efforts of capitalist governments, above all the United States, to leverage their control over life-saving treatments to advance their geopolitical interests against their rivals.

Two different trajectories arise out of the pandemic, representing the interests of two different classes. The policy of the ruling class means the continuation of the pandemic and, with it, mass death and social devastation.

On the other side, the pandemic is already producing a growing wave of working class unrest, which is an initial expression of the eruption of class struggle on a global scale. The logic of these struggles raises the necessity for the working class to take power, expropriate the wealth of the rich, and reorganize all of social and economic life.

The working class is the only truly international class. United in the process of global production, workers of every country share the same interests. It is only through the intervention of the working class that the global pandemic can be answered with an internationally coordinated response, dictated by public health needs and not the profit interests of the oligarchs.

The development of the objective movement of the working class as a conscious and revolutionary struggle for socialism requires the building of a revolutionary leadership: the International Committee of the Fourth International and its national sections, the Socialist Equality Parties.



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