

“Sacrifices” demanded for Tokyo Olympics, as Osaka hospitals reach breaking point

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Osaka city, the second largest city in Japan, has been the centre of Japan’s fourth wave of COVID-19 infections and deaths as the healthcare system is overwhelmed. As of now, Osaka has had over 17,098 reported new cases and a total of 734 deaths just in the month of May, with a daily average of 684 new cases and 30 deaths.

On May 25, the city of Osaka Prefecture held a task force meeting and announced that they will request the central government to extend the COVID-19 state of emergency for the prefecture amid the current healthcare crisis.

Doctors have been warning since April that the city is “on the edge of healthcare system collapse.” Since the end of last week, hospitals have been at full capacity with reports on Thursday that 96 percent of the 348 hospital beds reserved for severe cases were occupied.

The city is running out not only of beds and ventilators but other essential resources and prescriptions. Propofol, a drug used to sedate intubated patients, is becoming scarce. Thousands of people are waitlisted to be treated and in some cases are dying at home with no access to beds. At least 17,000 COVID patients are at home and waiting for care. As of May 22, the official count is that 19 people have died at home while waitlisted.

It was reported Monday that a healthy 30-year-old man, infected with COVID-19, died before the city health centre responded to the initial report of his infection. The man died after six days and was never contacted by the health centre to assess if he would qualify to get access to care.

The government of Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga continues to do everything in its power to cover up and downplay the severity of this healthcare crisis in order to proceed with the Tokyo Summer

Olympics.

If the games proceed to take place it is estimated 90,000 athletes and staff members from around the world would arrive in Tokyo in July. Showing complete disregard for human life, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) announced last Friday that they will proceed with the Olympics even under the state of emergency.

John Coates, IOC vice president, told a public meeting, “I can say it’s now clearer than ever that these Games would be safe for everyone participating and, importantly, safe for the people of Japan.” Despite feigning concern for the health of the population, Coates added that “the most important thing is giving athletes a chance to compete.”

On Saturday, IOC president Thomas Bach said in a meeting of the International Hockey Federation, “The athletes definitely can make their Olympic dreams come true. We have to make some sacrifices to make this possible.”

Bach’s comments sparked a flurry of denunciations by the Japanese public on social media. One twitter user asked, “Does he say that the safety, health, and life of the Japanese should be sacrificed for the Olympics?”

A poll released last Monday by the *Asahi Shimbun* daily found that 83 percent of the population are against the games, with 43 percent of respondents wanting them cancelled outright, and 40 percent wanting them postponed.

Adding further fuel to the fire, Japanese Olympics officials have stated Games will have audiences and announced plans to fill stadiums with 810,000 children from public elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. All of this points towards the Olympics turning into daily super-spreader events.

Mass opposition continues to mount against the

Olympic Games. Over the past month nurses have protested on social media with a quarter of a million tweets against the government's request to redeploy 500 nurses to assist with the games as hospitals are strained to capacity. Doctors have released letters calling for cancellation. They denounced the prioritization of the games, declaring, "If a dispatch is possible they should be dispatched to hospitals."

There have been other protests calling for the outright cancellation of the Summer Olympics. An online petition to cancel the Tokyo Olympics has nearly 400,000 signatures from people from more than 130 countries around the world. At protests in Tokyo, people held signs saying "Murderous Olympics," "Prioritize life over Olympics" and "Nurses and doctors are at the edge."

Japan's insistence on proceeding with the Olympic games is solely to maintain its geopolitical position and the profits of the ruling class. IOC President Bach's call for sacrifices implies the sacrifice of lives and safety of millions of people.

Despite the mass opposition, Prime Minister Suga told the media, "[We will] take all possible preventative measures for the infection for athletes and staff and hope to carry out safe and secure Olympic Games," implying that he has no intention of cancelling the Games.

Since the start of the pandemic, there has been no real effort by the Japanese government to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. As of May 12, only 2.8 percent of the population has received at least one dose of vaccine and less than 1 percent have had two shots. Despite a stabilized shipment of the vaccines into the country, Japan is months behind the United States and other wealthy nations in vaccinating its population.

The current surge and the grim reality facing strained hospital systems expose the lie, which has been peddled by the ruling establishment in Japan, that the country is untouched and immune to the COVID-19 pandemic because of its standard of living.

Last year right-wing Deputy Prime Minister of Japan Taro Aso stated, "I often get phone calls from other countries asking about the low mortality rate in Japan and I say to them 'Our people and your people have different levels of cultural standard(?).'" Aso, who is notorious for racist comments in the past, implies that the suffering in impoverished countries is due to their

barbarism compared to 'advanced' Japanese society.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the level of indifference to the health and lives of working people by the Japanese ruling elites in pursuit of their profits. COVID-19 is a global pandemic, affecting every nation in the world and as such there is no national solution to the crisis. It is only the unified international working class that can put an end to the skyrocketing death toll by fighting for the implementation of proven scientific health measures to bring the pandemic under control.

We call for Rank and File Safety Committees to be built in every workplace to insist that human life is made the priority over capitalist profits. We encourage workers in Japan and around the world to contact the WSWs today.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact