

Delta variant escalates catastrophic spread of COVID-19 in Brazil

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In recent days, the health secretariats of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro have announced the existence of community transmission of the Delta variant of the coronavirus in the two largest metropolitan centers of Brazil.

On Wednesday, São Paulo City Hall reported that the investigation of a Delta variant case, originally confirmed on June 21, revealed that the patient had had no contact with anyone from abroad, and that three other people from his family were also infected. The following day, Rio de Janeiro City Hall reported its first two cases of local transmission of the variant, along with 10 other infected people who had been in contact with the patients.

The Ministry of Health, while not yet assuming community transmission in Brazil, recognizes 27 confirmed cases of the variant that originated in India, which have already led to five deaths.

The president of the World Health Organization (WHO), Tedros Adhanom, made an alarming statement last week, declaring that “The world is at a perilous point in this pandemic.” Transmission of the Delta variant around the world has already reached at least 104 countries, is being accompanied by an explosive rise in epidemiological curves in dozens of countries.

This situation, with its incalculably devastating potential, is being driven by the criminal actions of capitalist governments around the planet, which are promoting the irresponsible suspension of measures to control the virus under the mantra of a “return to normalcy”

In Brazil, the picture is no different. On Friday it surpassed 540,000 COVID-19 deaths and continues to record the highest number of daily deaths in the world. On average, 1,244 people die from COVID-19 every day in Brazil, while another 42,819 are being infected,

according to *Worldometer* data.

The Brazilian public health institution Fiocruz warned in an extraordinary bulletin on July 14 that despite observing “the maintenance, for the third consecutive week, of a downward trend in COVID-19 incidence and mortality indicators” in Brazil, “the high rate of positivity demonstrates an intense circulation of the virus.”

The reduction in the rates in recent weeks, according to the researchers of the Fiocruz COVID-19 Observatory, is a result of an advance in the vaccination of the Brazilian population, which is still at an early stage, with only 15 percent fully immunized.

The researchers, however, warn that “the available vaccines have limits in relation to blocking the transmission of the virus, which continues to circulate with intensity” and maintain that the “concern with the possibility of the emergence of variants with the potential to reduce the effectiveness of available vaccines is pertinent and cannot be lost sight of.”

They end by appealing to the population to maintain measures of social distancing, wearing masks, and attending vaccination campaigns.

These recommendations clash head-on with the policies being pushed by all parties of the Brazilian ruling class, which are forcing the end of any isolation measures and encouraging among the population the feeling that the dangers of the pandemic are over.

The malign effects of these actions were revealed in a Datafolha survey published on July 14, which points out that, for the first time, “the perception that the pandemic is under control in the country is a majority.” According to the survey, 53 percent of the Brazilian population believes that the pandemic is partially controlled, 5 percent that it is totally controlled, and 41 percent that the pandemic is out of control. In March,

79 percent stated that the pandemic was out of control.

Neither *Folha de São Paulo*, which conducted the survey, nor the other corporate media outlets question what has permitted this perception to advance among Brazilians, and even less do they propose to combat such ideas by exposing their misleading bases and the extreme risks they carry.

In an editorial this Friday, the *Estado de São Paulo* celebrated the drop of COVID-19 numbers in Brazil and referred to the Datafolha survey stressing that the “relief and the perception of control are justified.” Its only recommendations—which reflect the dominant position of the capitalist class—are that governments continue vaccinating the population “in the shortest time possible” and that “personal care is still strictly necessary.”

While seeking to isolate the growing opposition of the Brazilian population against the homicidal capitalist response to the COVID-19 pandemic to the figure of “denialist” President Jair Bolsonaro, these bourgeois outlets work to frame the equally criminal actions of local politicians as “responsible” policies.

The millionaire governor of São Paulo, João Doria, of the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB), is promoting a widespread attack on coronavirus restriction measures, totally indifferent to their catastrophic effects. With a terrible average of 373 deaths per day, São Paulo is the state most affected in absolute terms by COVID-19, and already has 133,901 deaths from the disease.

With the full support of the media, the São Paulo government promoted the reopening of its schools last February. This measure has already resulted in at least 1,194 outbreaks in school facilities and the deaths of 100 teachers and three students in the state public network alone, according to data from the APEOESP union up to June 30.

Last week, Doria announced a flexibility package that includes, besides the expansion of the capacity and working hours of all economic sectors and the realization of 30 test events with large public participation, the resumption of in-person classes in universities and the end of the limit on students within school classrooms. The requirement for 1.5 meters distance between students was also reduced to only 1 meter.

On Wednesday of this week, he continued his series

of attacks on social distance measures by demanding the return of all public employees who were allowed to work from home for belonging to so-called high risk groups. Justifying his ruthless action he declared, “Life is returning to normalcy and we are confident about it.”

Just one day later, Doria announced he was infected for the second time with COVID-19, even after being fully immunized. His illness, a product of his own criminal policy on behalf of capitalist interests, completely demolishes his cynical “life is back to normal” claim.

Doria’s policies are being replicated by governors in every Brazilian state. The capital city of Rio de Janeiro has also adopted the reduction to 1 meter of distance in classrooms, aiming for a full return of students soon. Last week, teachers in Minas Gerais voted massively for a one-week strike in protest against the reopening of state schools by governor Romeu Zema of the pro-capitalist New Party.

In Bahia, teachers are clashing with Workers Party (PT) Governor Rui Costa, who announced the return of in-person classes later this July. Confronted by the decision of teachers not to return to schools, Costa publicly threatened them, stating, “If you miss [work] days in a row without an excuse, you will not receive your salary and eventually you will be fired.”

The uncontrolled development of the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil and around the world is exposing the utter inability of capitalism and its political representatives to respond to the most basic problems of humanity.

The task of putting an end to the pandemic through a response based on the science and the social interest of preserving life depends upon the mobilization of the working class as an independent political force.

The intensification of the class struggle internationally, which finds its expression in Brazil through the growing strikes and massive demonstrations against the homicidal policies of the ruling elite, is opening the way for this revolutionary perspective.



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