

US officials reject further lockdowns despite 100,000 reported new infections

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The Biden administration's chief medical adviser, Anthony Fauci, rejected "lockdowns" as a measure to contain the virus on Sunday, while reported new daily cases in the US spiked above 100,000 for the first time since February, and as cases globally neared 200 million.

In other words, 1 in every 39 people on the planet have contracted the disease, with 1 in 10 having gotten COVID-19 in the United States. Moreover, the massive surge in cases has new record highs in hospitalizations in places such as Austin, Texas, where there are now only seven open ICU beds in a metropolitan region of 2.3 million. In Florida, a record 10,207 people are hospitalized with confirmed cases of the coronavirus.

There is every possibility that Chicago will follow suit, after its Democratic Party-run city government allowed the superspreader Lollapalooza music festival, with its 400,000 attendees, to go forward. In other words, across the US, local, state and federal governments are doing the exact opposite of what is needed to contain the deadly contagion, and promoting policies and events which all but guarantee the continued spread and evolution of more deadlier forms of the ongoing pandemic.

And while deaths, which stand at 320 a day, have not risen as sharply in the United States as cases have, the rise in hospitalizations raises the danger that patients again begin dying from an inability to provide adequate treatment, dangers which were made clear in the first weeks and months of the pandemic in 2020.

Worldwide, deaths caused by the pandemic stand at more than 4.2 million, a figure which currently climbs at more than 9,000 a day. These figures, moreover, are known underestimations. In May, the *Economist* noted that the actual number of lives lost to the deadly contagion, using excess death counts, is likely to be two to four times higher than official figures, suggesting a real global tally of 8–16 million dead.

Such staggering death counts are all the more horrific

under conditions where the pandemic is accelerating. In a press conference Friday, World Health Organization Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned, "On average, in five of WHO's six regions, infections have increased by 80 percent or nearly doubled over the past four weeks. In Africa, deaths have increased by 80 percent over the same period. Much of this increase is being driven by the highly transmissible Delta variant, which has now been detected in at least 132 countries."

In absolute numbers, the most recent low point of daily cases was on June 21, when there was the average fell to 360,000 cases a day. Since then, as the Delta variant has spread around the world, daily case counts have climbed to more than 581,000. And while daily deaths have not had as dramatic an increase, it is worth understanding that worldwide, deaths caused by the pandemic have not been below 7,600 a day since last November.

Not incidentally, it was last November that cases had reached a "mere" 50 million and officially counted deaths had reached 1.2 million, 10 months after the pandemic began. Now, only nine months later, cases and deaths have increased four-fold.

Unlike last November, however, when even limited lockdowns and other social distancing measures were considered by the world's capitalist governments, such critical and life-saving policies are being discarded out of hand. Similar to the US, Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson ended the country's lockdown in July, and the government of Narendra Modi in India refused to implement a national lockdown even as the Delta variant emerged and surged, while at the same time attacking state and local officials for implementing just modest measures.

That no lockdowns are being planned is criminally irresponsible. Fauci himself noted that, "things are going to get worse." Indeed they are. The spread of the Delta variant in the US, which has become the dominant variant

of the virus in every region of the world except South America, where the Gamma variant remains most prolific, has caused case counts in the US to rise by more than six-fold in less than two months. Some 13,000 people have died from the virus over that same period. The country as a whole has suffered 35.7 million cases and just under 630,000 deaths.

The measures that have been put forward to contain the spread of the disease are inadequate at best. The current drive by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is to note in which counties the spread of the pandemic is “substantial” and to recommend masking indoors in those locations. At the same time, leaked internal documents make clear the agency is well aware of the dangers of the Delta variant and the need for more stringent measures to contain the virus, and has been blocked by the Biden administration.

At the same time, figures such as Fauci have turned toward blaming individuals for not getting vaccinated as the underlying cause for the continued spread of the disease, stating, “We have 100 million people in this country who are eligible to be vaccinated who are not getting vaccinated.”

Nowhere does Fauci mention the fact that hundreds of millions of people in the US and billions around the world wouldn’t have had to get vaccinated if governments around the world had responded in a rational and scientific manner to the coronavirus pandemic when it first emerged. While it is true that many are reluctant about getting the vaccine, the fault for the pandemic itself lies at the feet of capitalist governments in the US, Europe, Australia and elsewhere that placed corporate profits above human lives.

It is also worth noting that one of the chief purveyors of misinformation about the pandemic—that it is safe to have school and work amid the pandemic, that mask mandates can be dropped and that testing, contact tracing and lockdowns are unnecessary to contain the pandemic—has been the government which Fauci works for. These anti-scientific conceptions have been pushed for months by both Biden and his predecessor Trump and have played a significant role in the anti-scientific attitude of millions toward vaccines.

Nor does anyone in the US media or political establishment raise the necessity of vaccinating the population of the entire planet to actually eradicate the pandemic; vaccines are treated as a solely national question. The evolution of the Delta variant, however, makes clear that stopping the pandemic in just one

country is impossible when the coronavirus is allowed to spread essentially uncontrolled elsewhere. Variants inevitably emerge that are “fitter” and “faster,” in the words of WHO’s Dr. Mike Ryan, and that may totally escape the immunity granted by vaccination.

The dangers of unevenly vaccinating the world are spelled out in the spread of cases both in the US, where cases are spiking most sharply among the unvaccinated, and around the world, most of which still does not have easy access to vaccines. In India, where excess death estimates place the number of fatalities at about four million, more than 40,000 people come down with COVID-19 each day, citing official figures, and the full vaccination rate is just 7.4 percent. In Brazil, where more than 550,000 have died, less than 1 in 5 is fully vaccinated.

Other countries are in equally dire straits, or worse. In Iran, where the Delta variant has caused daily cases to more than triple and daily deaths to more than double in the past six weeks, the fully vaccinated rate is less than 3 percent. In Thailand, which had been relatively untouched by the pandemic until the Delta variant hit it in April, only about 5 percent of its population are vaccinated amid daily case counts that were less than 100 at the beginning of April and have skyrocketed to more than 16,000 now.

Even countries with higher vaccination rates, such as Mexico and Turkey, with 20 percent and 33 percent full vaccination rates respectively, have had sharp increases in their case counts as a result of the Delta variant. Such countries are both examples of the virulence of this new variant, the dangers it and more evolved mutations pose. They and virtually every other country also highlight the need for a globally coordinated and scientifically planned response to end the pandemic.



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