

Tokyo Olympics Games come to a close, while Japanese COVID-19 victims told to die at home

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On Sunday, August 8, the 16-day Tokyo Summer Olympic Games came to an end. They concluded with a speech by International Olympics Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach, who cynically stated, “You, the Japanese people, can be extremely proud of what you have achieved.”

What was not mentioned is the vast unpopularity of the games that ensued in the midst of a national and global emergency during the worst COVID-19 surge in Japan to date. The reality of the matter is that the “Japanese people” had no say in the events which were highly opposed. Polls showed more than 80 percent of the population wished to cancel or postpone the Olympics as they unfolded during a state of emergency.

The Olympics Games brought in about 11,500 athletes from 206 nations, territories and principalities, together with an estimated 79,000 Olympic officials, journalists and support staff. According to a document released by the IOC, there were at least 320 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among athletes, Olympics organizers and workers.

It is estimated that the Japanese government squandered more than \$36 billion for hosting the games, building nine new stadiums, while nothing was spent on COVID-19 mitigation measures nor on COVID-19 relief for those affected throughout the pandemic.

During the duration of the global corporate event, Japan recorded its highest number of coronavirus cases to date. Tokyo topped 5,042 cases on August 5, with 229 of them under 10 years old, and the country as a whole recorded 15,000 cases.

The National Institute of Infectious Diseases announced 90 percent of all cases in the Kanto region

(Tokyo, Kanagawa, Saitama, Chiba) and 60 percent of all cases in the Kansai region (Osaka, Kyoto, Nara) are from the Delta variant. The agency told Asahi TV, “The number of deaths will increase.” Health experts have advised that the government declare a nationwide state of emergency, which the Suga government refused to do throughout the games.

The massive surge in coronavirus cases pushed Tokyo even further into a worsening health care crisis, with only 32.9 percent of the population fully vaccinated. In reaction to numerous hospitals reaching their capacities, the Suga government implemented a callous and deadly policy shift to limit hospitalization only to those with the most severe COVID-19 cases. Mild and moderate cases were not to enter hospitals and were to remain quarantined at home. Despite pleas by Japan’s health minister over the new policy, the administration refused to bend.

Running out of beds and health care resources was completely foreseeable, but the government made no effort to accommodate the expected increase in cases nor to contain the virus. On July 29, Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike stated, “For those living alone, utilize your home as a hospital bed.”

This statement was widely criticized on the internet with comments such as, “She is recommending that we die alone,” “What will you do if your symptoms get worse?” “Tokyo is basically leaving those who live alone to die,” “There are cases of death while quarantining. Are you telling us to die?”

As a result, death among those quarantining at home increased drastically, especially those in their 30s to 50s. As of August 5, there were at least eight deaths while isolating at home. On August 7, it was reported

by NHK, Japan's public broadcaster, that a woman in her 50s developed severe symptoms while isolating at home and passed away shortly after she was admitted into a hospital.

"Death while quarantining increases" was among the trending keywords on Twitter. Many expressed their outrage at the horrifying situation stating, "This would definitely increase. I could be next." "It has been only 5 days since we entered August and we already have 8 deaths." Another expressed his anger towards the government's nonexistent COVID-19 measures, stating, "This is unforgivable. It has been a year and a half since we entered the pandemic. Why can't they build isolation facilities? They can't even hire enough medical staff nor do they have any strategy against the virus. Useless government."

As of August 9, there are 17,356 people self-isolating, 1,869 people at hotels, and 13,325 people waitlisted to be admitted into a hospital. Infection among families now accounts for more than 60 percent of the cases due to increased cases of self-isolation. COVID-19 patients who wish to self-isolate in hotels are put on a wait list of more than 100. A social worker told *Asahi Shimbun*, "I have seen many people suffering with severe symptoms not being accepted into hospitals right before their deaths." Nurses were deployed to visit the elderly and people with disability with severe COVID symptoms quarantining at home. They explained the patients were unable to move, and vomit left as it is. Many asked the nurses, "Am I going to die?"

Monumental stadiums have been erected, officials coordinated the movement of tens of thousands of athletes, staff, workers, health care, hotel, restaurant staff and an army of other workers to make the games possible. No expense was spared for the events, which consumed enormous resources equivalent to the annual GDP of a small country. But after a year and a half, absolutely nothing was done to improve hospitals, build isolation centers, or carry out the mitigation efforts to prevent the nightmare facing hospitals and exhaustion of health care staff and facilities.

Adding insult to injury, it was revealed that the National Institute of Infectious Diseases (NIID) filed a report on the international virus database, known as GISAID, of the finding of the first case of the highly infectious Lambda variant three days before the

Olympics opening ceremony, but the information was never publicly disclosed by Tokyo.

It is absolutely criminal that the Olympic Games took place despite the mass opposition among people, not only in Japan but from all over the world. While the Japanese government never took any serious measures against the pandemic nor provided any relief fund for those affected, they were eager to put billions of taxpayer dollars into the games. This was carried out not just by the decisions of the Japanese government but by the international organizers of the Olympics. There existed no interests or political will by the international ruling class to halt the pandemic.

Numerous protests erupted leading up to and during the course of the games. The popularity of the Suga administration has plummeted to 28 percent. Anger among the Japanese population has reached a breaking point with all the ills of the capitalist system coming to the surface from the COVID-19 pandemic and the forced hosting of the games. This is an event that will not be forgotten and will go down in history for its deep criminality.



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