

Delta variant infections explode in Brazil

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While the Brazilian ruling class is promoting the broadest resumption of economic activities, along with the reopening of schools and entertainment venues, celebrating a fictitious end of the COVID-19 pandemic, a third wave of the coronavirus is growing at alarming speed, enhanced by the spread of the Delta variant.

Brazil has already recorded 569,218 deaths and 20,361,493 COVID-19 cases. Despite decreasing numbers in the last period, the country continues to record very high daily averages of more than 28,000 infections and 800 deaths.

In an interview in early August, the physician and neuroscientist Miguel Nicolelis, who has raised the most consistent warnings and predictions about the pandemic's uncontrolled development in Brazil, described the current situation as an imminent catastrophe.

In a strong image, the scientist compared the development of the epidemic to the movement of the waves, in which the current decreasing moment of epidemiological curve precedes an overwhelming new uprising. "It's like a wave, a tsunami, that 'swept the coast' and now has gone backwards," he stated. "The tsunami of the second wave in Brazil retreated with the sea only to gain energy, and that energy is going to, in some way, reproduce here the dynamics happening in other countries. ... While the whole world is exploding [with the Delta variant cases], we are just waiting for it to explode here in Brazil."

Nicolelis further characterized the present moment of the pandemic in Brazil as a "dispute between the Gamma variant and the Delta variant," and he pointed to the recent news that in Rio de Janeiro the Delta variant already accounted for 45 percent of new cases as a sign that "this dispute is being won by the Delta variant, as expected."

The most recent data from the Fiocruz Genomics Network further substantiates that dismal prediction.

They point out that the share of Delta variant cases in Brazil increased from 2.3 percent in June to 23.6 percent in July, a nine-fold increase. This is a radically faster spread than that recorded with the Gamma variant, which at a similar stage of its development, between December and January, had only doubled its share of the total number of cases.

But if scientists like Nicolelis advocate "keeping mask mandates, restricting crowds, not resuming classes, not opening economic activities, not having soccer games" and in certain cases "decreeing lockdowns," the joint response of all of Brazil's governing bourgeois parties is the complete opposite.

An offensive against all measures to contain the virus is being led by the administration of fascistic President Jair Bolsonaro. In an official statement in late July, the ministers of education and health, Milton Ribeiro and Marcelo Queiroga, called for the immediate return of in-person learning and economic activities throughout Brazil. While Ribeiro emphasized that "the vaccination of the entire school community cannot be a condition for the reopening of schools," Queiroga declared, "It is necessary that we manage to promote a prompt return of economic activities, we have beds available in hospitals, let's live with this pandemic situation."

To better elucidate his idea of "living with this pandemic situation," Queiroga quoted an excerpt from a song by Brazilian composer Lulu Santos that says, "Nothing will be again the same way it was one day." In other words, the Brazilian population should accept as the norm the indiscriminate deaths caused by this pandemic, as well as by others that will predictably surge in the coming years. In his crusade to implement this homicidal policy, last Wednesday the minister offered a guarantee "on behalf of Bolsonaro" that by the end of the year "we will be able to take off these masks once and for all."

Such sociopathic ideas, which correspond to the

deeply reactionary interests of the bourgeoisie, have gained a particularly grotesque manifestation in the policies advocated by the mayor of Rio de Janeiro, Eduardo Paes, of the Social Democratic Party (PSD). On July 29, Paes announced that his city, now the epicenter of the Delta variant in Brazil, will launch in September a continuous year of festivities to celebrate the end of the coronavirus pandemic. He even plans to institute a municipal holiday called “Reunion Day” and stated that he will promote the “biggest New Year’s Eve in the history of the city,” which should be celebrated without the mandatory use of masks.

Similarly, in São Paulo, which has the second highest number of confirmed cases of the Delta variant in Brazil, Governor João Doria of the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB) declared Monday (August 16) the “Day of Hope” because the entire population up over the age of 18 will have had access to the first shot of the vaccine. The date will coincide with the largest reopening of activities since the beginning of the pandemic. It is especially hypocritical to use such an occasion to talk about “hope” when the rapidly spreading Delta variant is reportedly responsible for breakthrough infections and for the reduction of vaccine protection, especially for those who have received only a first shot.

While the Rio de Janeiro state (but not municipal) public schools have been closed again to contain the advance of the new variant, Doria is continuing to promote the widest functioning of schools in São Paulo, the largest educational system in the country. A large portion of teachers in the state have received only a first shot of the vaccine, while the millions of students who are increasingly susceptible to infection and death have received none at all.

The same anti-scientific measures are being promoted by governments headed by the Workers Party (PT) and its allies. Officials like the governor of Bahia, Rui Costa of the PT, are proceeding with the resumption of in-person classes despite resistance from educators. At the same time, the trade unions controlled by the PT and supported by its pseudo-left satellites are not organizing any resistance to the homicidal back-to-work policy of the ruling class.

A new explosion of the COVID-19 pandemic and the uncontrolled spread of the Delta variant throughout Brazil will have predictably catastrophic effects on

neighboring South American countries. The outbreak of the second wave of the pandemic in Brazil in early 2020 spread across the continent with devastating results. The Gamma variant, originally from Manaus in northern Brazil, rapidly engulfed neighboring countries, critically contributing to the explosion of infections and collapse of hospital systems in countries such as Colombia, Paraguay and Uruguay, causing an overwhelming number of deaths.

It is urgent that the Brazilian working class organize an independent political movement to confront the COVID-19 pandemic, appealing to its class brothers and sisters in Latin America and around the world. This movement must confront the rotten capitalist system with its increasing demands for sacrifices by the working class and its systematic development towards dictatorial forms of rule, raising the banner of international socialism.



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