More support from teachers and educators in Germany for October 1 school strike

Our reporters
30 September 2021

The call for a school strike on October 1 in the UK to protect children from the COVID-19 pandemic is finding a powerful response in Germany. The WSWS has already published two articles with statements of solidarity from parents and students. Also among German teachers and educators, resistance is growing against the criminal herd immunity policy, which is supported and organised by all government parties and the trade unions.

Cristin, a self-employed educator, sent us this message:

> For me as an educator, it is so important that we as parents and teachers and educators finally set an example that we need to protect our children.
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> Usually—especially with children—BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY.
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> We do that in everything, whether it is bottles, the way we put a baby to sleep, car seats, rockers, baby food, bike helmets, toys, playgrounds ... Everything!
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> Only in the case of a multisystem disease that affects both organs and the endothelium and is neurotropic do we completely throw these safety aspects out the window.
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> We know zero about what COVID disease (even asymptomatic) can do in one, two, five or 10 years. We already see diabetes playing a role, kidney disease, microthrombi developing, brain damage.
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> We have to ask ourselves, would we put our children in a car seat that has been poorly tested? No, we would not, even though the likelihood of an accident is already very low.
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> And right now, we're infusing our children with a potentially dangerous virus that can have massive long-term consequences. And even parents who want to protect their children are being forced into the schools.
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> We have to show the politicians that we as parents, educators and teachers no longer play this dangerous game. We have to get attention; we have to inform about the dangers and we finally need safe schools.
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> That means air filters, small classes, masks, tests, vaccinations—that's the only way we can prevent children from becoming infected. That's why we need a strike—we need to get loud and we need to finally make it clear that we no longer accept the contamination of children!
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> Therefore, as an educator, I expressly support this strike—we cannot protect the children entrusted to us under the current circumstances and we have a responsibility.
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> We can only do justice to this by showing clearly now, as parents, teachers and educators, that we will not support the mass infection of children. We finally need safe educational facilities.

Harald, a teacher from Duisburg, wrote:

> Dr. Feigl-Ding, a leading epidemiologist, in an interview with WSWS on the issue of fighting COVID-19, said this: "If you say, 'Kids shouldn't be dying of cancer,' at a media conference or a hearing you would mostly get nods across the room."
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> But if someone said the same thing about COVID-19, namely that no child should die from it either, then he would not currently receive the necessary attention in the established media. The media erroneously assumed that serious consequences of a coronavirus infection in children were statistically quite insignificant, that allegedly such cases hardly ever occurred.
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> However, it is a fact that just in the US about as many children are dying per week from COVID-19 as from cancer. These statistically unquestionable numbers are simply withheld from the public. And there is one major difference between cancer and COVID-19: COVID-19 is controllable through consistent methods of containment. The method is called ZERO COVID and not "learning to live with the virus." No one would demand that we "learn to live with the cancer threat" today either.
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> In addition, schools that are open worldwide are among the most significant places where the pandemic spreads. Moreover, no country can vaccinate as quickly as the Delta variant of this disease is spreading, thus also increasing its mutation and risk potential.
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> It follows that there must be no hesitation in protecting our school children and their families, educators and teachers, and the entire international workforce, through consistent containment measures, vaccination and consistent lockdowns in schools and workplaces. This demand is underlined by the widespread initiative by British parents for a school strike on October 1.

Helmut, a young teacher from Berlin, states:

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A few weeks have now passed since the school opened in August, and I can say with certainty and not a little bitterness that nothing has improved since last school year.

The situation at my school is so tense that many colleagues are absent due to illness. Some also due to COVID-19 infection, whole classes have to be quarantined. And some classes would have to be quarantined, but often only seat neighbours of infected pupils are required to do so. Health departments are clearly still overworked and unavailable to school administrators. There have also already been deaths among parents.

What are the politicians doing? Practically nothing. There are only two room filters for the whole school! Many colleagues cannot find any other words for the situation than “infiltration policy.” I support the concern of parents and teachers, who are the only ones who really care about the welfare of children. The politicians definitely do not. Since the unions have done nothing to support teachers since the pandemic began, teachers should now organize themselves into independent action committees and take workplace safety into their own hands. It is encouraging that this is already happening in other countries.

Anna, a primary school teacher, sent us a detailed message that reviews her situation and experiences during the pandemic. Her statement also ends with a strong appeal to support the school strike on October 1:

Children are basically my life, both personally and professionally. I teach at a primary school and am a mother of three U12 [under 12] children. I love my job, from the very beginning. Often the circumstances were not easy, but always somehow manageable. It was very clear to me from the beginning that children unfortunately do not have the value in society as a whole that they should have. No, they must have! I became even more aware of this when I became a mother myself. Then came COVID-19. As I had just had our third child, it was our great good fortune in the first year of the pandemic that I was at home and able to school and look after my children well myself.

While I could definitely take some positives from the first few weeks, the longer it dragged on, the more stressful the situation became. Homeschooling for us, as for so many kids, meant a weekly exchange of worksheets. If a teacher ever tried to contact the kids via a video platform, it usually failed. So, it stuck to worksheets. My kids were annoyed. So was I. Over and over, I thought: how do parents who cannot stay home do it? How do parents who have no training to be teachers do it? Conversations with other parents revealed that they were usually in despair. So there was great joy among many when schools fully reopened. I can understand it. I, too, was weary. Despite the benefits I had from parental leave and a job.

When it became clear that unfortunately it would not be over with COVID-19 in the summer of 2021, I was still a bit naive, because I assumed that something would be done to enable the children to have a normal school year. I did not think for a second that it would not be about protecting the children, but about infecting them.

I am now back in the teaching profession. And I am honestly sad. For months, face-to-face teaching was described as indispensable, children would suffer so much at home. Mental health problems, abuse, maltreatment: all these things must be prevented by face-to-face teaching. It was clear to me even then that none of this would matter once the children were back in class. And I was right. The children do indeed still have all these problems, but simply no one is interested in them anymore.

The situation at the school is depressing. We do not have hot water in the classrooms, so we cannot wash our hands properly. We test twice a week. When we do this, all the children sit in a small room, many sneeze. In the square and outside, as well as in the gym, there is no mask requirement. With the low quality and often completely filthy, ill-fitting masks, it is, in my opinion, only cosmetic anyway.

Basically, we cannot keep any of the AHA+L rules [distance, hygiene, everyday masks, ventilation]. We keep it to pray and hope. I wear FFP3 mask at school throughout. For one important reason: my own kids. I don’t want to bring COVID home to them.

They have not seen the inside of a school yet this school year. In our state, compulsory attendance has been lifted. I am not an authority on this virus. But I do read and try to stay informed. And I try to reflect and evaluate what I read. So far, the evaluation is always the same: the risk of possible consequential harm is too great for me. I protect my children as best I can. In our area all adults are vaccinated and usually tested. We try to build nest protection for our children until they are vaccinated. I cannot understand why many parents talk down the dangers for their children.

But I can tell you: there is hardly any protection for your children at school. Even if the politicians try to tell you otherwise. Do not be naive. Protect your children. Set an example with us: join the global school strike this Friday, October 1. Show the government that you will not and cannot accept the infection of your children. There are many of us! Of that I am firmly convinced.

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