

How to end the pandemic

David North
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Below are the opening remarks by David North to the October 24 webinar, “How to End the Pandemic,” which was co-sponsored by the World Socialist Web Site and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC). North is the chairperson of the WSWS International Editorial Board and of the Socialist Equality Party in the United States.

I would like to welcome viewers from all over the world to this international webinar, whose purpose is clearly stated in the event’s title: “How to End the Pandemic.” It is being sponsored by the *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees. My name is David North. I am the chairperson of the International Editorial Board of the WSWS and of the Socialist Equality Party in the United States. I will be moderating the event. My co-moderator is Dr. Benjamin Mateus, a practicing physician who has worked closely with the WSWS in its coverage of the pandemic. Since its first posting on the subject on January 24, 2020, the *World Socialist Web Site* has published more than 4,000 articles on the pandemic. Dr. Mateus has personally written 240 of these articles.

From the earliest days of the pandemic, when weekly deaths on a global scale were still being measured in single digits, and before COVID was a household word, the WSWS was warning that the pandemic—unless counteracted by an immediate and coordinated global response—would exact a devastating toll on human life. We did not possess a crystal ball. In fact, our reporting and analysis was based on a careful study of the results of scientific research conducted by epidemiologists and scientists working in related fields. Among those whose work the WSWS followed closely are several of the members of today’s panel.

Calling attention to the fact that the WSWS’s coverage of the pandemic dates back to January 2020 is not for the purpose of boasting. Rather, it is to refute the lie—perhaps the most pernicious of the tidal wave of lies that have flowed from governments and the media—that the consequences of this pandemic could not have been

foreseen, that no one knew it was coming, and that—once it began—no one knew what had to be done to stop it. The truth is that the danger of a catastrophic pandemic was the subject of urgent warnings over the past two decades. Moreover, once the pandemic began, epidemiologists and other scientists active in the sphere of public health had a very clear understanding of what had to be done to quickly bring it under control. Today’s panel includes scientists who were among those who sounded the alarm and identified the measures needed to prevent a massive loss of life.

The world has already paid a terrible price for the deliberate refusal of governments to listen to scientists.

Where are we now, as we approach the end of the second year of the pandemic?

At the end of the first year of the pandemic—that is, as of December 31, 2020—the official global death toll stood at just under 1,950,000 people.

As of yesterday, with more than two months left before the end of the 2021, the total official death toll stood at 4,958,947.

Contrary to the daily claims of the media, the pandemic is not fading away, and COVID-19 is not evolving into something akin to the common cold. On August 24, 2021—only two months ago—the WSWS sponsored an international webinar on the pandemic. Since then, the total number of cases globally has increased from 213 million to 244 million. The official death toll has increased by more than a half million.

Listing only the countries with the largest number of dead, the United States—the richest and most technologically advanced capitalist country in world—has led the world in COVID-19 victims. The official toll is 756,205. In Brazil—led by Bolsonaro, a homicidal maniac—605,569 people have died. The number of dead in India is 459,301. Mexico has lost 286,259 of its citizens. In Peru, the death toll is 200,000. In Russia—which is now in the grip of another devastating surge—the toll is 229,528. In the United Kingdom, the country’s prime minister declared, “Let the bodies pile high in their

thousands.” Some 139,461 people are now dead. Boris Johnson is seeing his wish fulfilled. In Iran the number of dead is 125,052.

But these figures do not convey the full extent and horror of the pandemic’s butcher’s bill. The *Economist*—a publication that no one would accuse of socialist leanings—carries an article titled “The pandemic’s true death toll.” It states:

Although the official number of deaths caused by COVID-19 is now 4.9m, our single best estimate is that the actual toll is 16.5m people. We find that there is a 95% chance that the true value lies between 10.2m and 19.2m additional deaths.

In determining the human cost of a war, the figures include not only the dead but also the injured. The human cost of COVID-19 includes not only the dead, but all those who have been afflicted by the disease, and especially the “long haulers,” who suffer the continuing effect of infection, known as “Long COVID.” For those who will endure the illness for years to come, COVID bears a terrible resemblance to polio.

During the past month, approximately 1,700 people have died every day in the United States. The daily toll is no longer reported. The well-known saying, “One death is a tragedy; a million deaths is a statistic,” is being confirmed. Confronted with the reality of this continuing disaster, at what point does it become necessary to start referring to COVID not only as a “pandemic,” but as a form of social “holocaust”?

We are approaching the beginning of the third year of the pandemic. This webinar is dedicated to the proposition that it must be ended. For this goal to be achieved, it is necessary to understand the following:

1. The target of Sars-CoV-2—the virus that causes COVID-19—is not individuals, but entire societies. The virus’ mode of transmission is directed toward achieving mass infection. Sars-CoV-2 has evolved biologically to strike billions, and, in so doing, kill millions.

2. Therefore, the only effective strategy is one based on a globally coordinated campaign aimed at the elimination of the virus on every continent, in every region, and in every country. There is no effective national solution to this pandemic. Humanity—people of all races, ethnicities, and nationalities—must confront and overcome this challenge through a vast collective and truly selfless

global effort.

3. The policies pursued by virtually all governments since the outbreak of the pandemic must be repudiated. The subordination of that which should be the unquestioned priority of social policy—the protection of human life—to the interests of corporate profit and private wealth accumulation cannot be allowed to continue.

4. The initiative to bring about a decisive turn to a strategy directed toward global elimination must come from a socially conscious movement of millions of people.

5. This global movement must draw upon scientific research. The persecution of scientists—many of whom labor under threats to their livelihoods and even their lives—must be ended. The global elimination of the virus requires the closest working alliance between the working class—the great mass of society—and the scientific community.

Governments won’t listen to the scientists, but the working people will. Today, our panel of experts will present the critical information that the public must have on the topics of Long COVID, airborne transmission vs. droplets, vaccine efficacy and boosters, the impact of COVID on children, the role that schools play in viral transmission, the connections between the pandemic and climate change, and debunking the myth of “herd immunity” through letting the virus rip through the population. Most importantly, we will outline a scientific strategy, which, if implemented, could lead rapidly to the global elimination of SARS-CoV-2 and the effective end of the pandemic, saving millions of lives worldwide.

The material will be challenging. In our preliminary discussions, Benjamin and I have urged the panel members to say what has to be said, present and explain the concepts that are essential to an understanding of the pandemic and what must be done to end it.



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