

Steep rise in coronavirus cases in Germany portends a second deadly winter of the pandemic

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Daily COVID-19 infection numbers are rising explosively in Germany. On November 4, the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) reported 33,949 new cases, the highest daily increase since the pandemic began twenty months ago. Nearly a quarter of a million people (247,800) currently have coronavirus in Germany, and more than 96,000 have died since March 2020.

The seven-day incidence rate of 154.9 cases per 100,000 population has doubled in two and a half weeks, since October 19 (75.1). The seven-day incidence rate is steadily rising, particularly among children and adolescents sitting in crowded schools without vaccine protection. Among 5–9-year-old children, the national average is 194 and among 10–14-year-olds it is 237. In nine districts, incidences in the 10–19-year-old age group have even exceeded 500. These are all figures that do not reflect reality exactly, with a lack of testing meaning that a significant number of cases are unreported.

All graphs show the fourth wave as a steep exponential curve that already exceeds the zenith of the third wave. Despite vaccinations, levels are higher than this time last year. There can be no doubt: a massive spike in deaths looms in the winter. 'We are worse off compared to last year,' explained Frankfurt virologist Sandra Ciesek with great concern.

More than a thousand people (1,075) have died from COVID-19 in the last ten days, when an average of nearly 20,000 people have been newly infected each day.

The situation in hospitals and intensive care units is currently as bad or worse than a year ago. As of November 3, 2021, there were 2,226 COVID-19 cases in intensive care; 90 had been added since the previous day. A year ago, there were also about 2,000 ICU patients with coronavirus, that number tripled in a few weeks. Deaths then shot up in a short time, from 10,500 at the beginning

of November 2020 to five times that number, 56,000 at the end of January 2021.

The ominous trend confirms the central finding of the October 24 webinar, 'How to End the Pandemic,' hosted by the *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees with leading scientists from multiple countries. As they demonstrated, 'living with the virus' cannot be an option. The coronavirus pandemic, which has brought death and suffering to hundreds of millions worldwide, must be eliminated through a globally-coordinated elimination strategy.

An important finding is that with the emergence of new strains of the virus, vaccination alone is not enough to push the curve back down. To end the pandemic, all non-essential workplaces must be closed and measures such as testing, tracing, and isolating all cases must be undertaken systematically. At the same time, it is necessary to compensate working people for lost wages and provide social support to families.

Clearly, this requires not only medical steps, but also political and social steps. For this, it is necessary to mobilize the working class globally. Capitalist politicians have long since proven they are neither willing nor able to implement such a programme.

The new "traffic light" federal coalition of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), Liberal Democrats (FDP) and Greens, for example, wants to tighten up the herd immunity policy even more. It has just announced that it will phase out the 'national epidemic emergency' on November 24. Already, free tests have been abolished, and even mandatory mask-wearing has been lifted in schools in several states. This is despite the fact that the highly contagious Delta variant now accounts for 99 percent of infections. Undoubtedly, this policy will lead to

many more thousands of coronavirus deaths. With their eyes wide open, politicians are walking into a social catastrophe.

There are already mass coronavirus outbreaks and waves of deaths in more and more nursing homes. This week, at a nursing home in Norderstedt, Schleswig-Holstein, north of Hamburg, 68 elderly residents and 22 staff members fell ill with COVID-19. Six residents have died so far.

Similarly, a coronavirus outbreak at a retirement home in Schorfheide, Brandenburg, has led to the deaths of 14 residents; 44 residents and 15 staff members at the facility have contracted COVID-19. In Munich, Haus St. Josef has also just reported an outbreak: there, 39 residents and eleven staff members have tested positive for coronavirus.

However, the outbreak has long since spread beyond the older generation, and hospitals and intensive care units are increasingly seeing younger patients as well. Contrary to propaganda, children and adolescents are also acutely threatened.

A new document from the RKI points this out. Even asymptomatic children can contract the serious secondary disease MIS-C (multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children) in the course of a COVID-19 infection, which can lead to death, the document shows. The RKI warns, 'With increasing SARS-CoV-2 spreading among children, there could be a high number of infections in children and adolescents during the winter. The more children are infected, the higher the number of severe outcomes the disease would then have.'

The RKI also points to the consequences of Long COVID, which have not yet been fully explored. In its letter this week, the institute, supported by a 'large cohort study,' cautions 'that not only adults but also children and adolescents are affected by long-term consequences after SARS-CoV-2 infection.'

The outgoing government politicians have deliberately brought about this atrocious situation, and the protagonists of a new 'traffic light' coalition are preparing to enforce the 'profits before lives' policy even more ruthlessly than before.

In mid-October, it became known through broadcaster ARD's political magazine, programme Kontraste, that millions of vaccine doses, which the German government promised to donate to poorer countries as part of its Covax initiative, were about to be destroyed. The reason: the private manufacturers of the vaccines, which can make the difference between the life and death of millions of people, pharmaceutical companies Moderna and

Biontech/Pfizer, had demanded excessive compensation payments for doing so, because they would then be able to sell fewer vaccines to poor countries.

The compensation payments they are demanding are to be added to the contractually agreed purchase price, which will be paid from tax revenues. As a result, instead of 100 million doses of vaccine, as originally promised, the German government has so far actually delivered only 19 million doses.

Another truly macabre example, involving the Fresenius healthcare group, illustrates the prevailing capitalist logic particularly vividly. It concerns the business with dialysis patients who regularly have to use medical equipment in hospital for blood purification. A subsidiary of this corporation called Fresenius Medical Care (FMC) manufactures such dialysis machines. Because more and more dialysis patients are dying of coronavirus, FMC now plans to lay off 5,000 of its 125,000 employees worldwide.

FMC CEO Rice Powell, who made the announcement on November 2 when presenting the company's quarterly financial statements, calculated that about 11,500 more dialysis patients than expected had died worldwide in the 12 months to September 30, 2021. Cynically, he spoke of a 'much stronger COVID-19 effect on our business than we had forecast at the beginning of the year.'

To drive profits back up, Fresenius is now responding with mass layoffs. The plans were very well received on the stock market, and the DAX-listed shares of FMC and Fresenius posted high gains. While intensive care units are overflowing and the death toll is rising, the champagne corks are popping again on the stock markets.



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