

With COVID-19 out of control, German infectious disease agency expects ICUs to be overwhelmed

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Germany's COVID-19 infection rate has hit a new record every day for the past week, with the seven-day incidence Sunday reaching 289 infections per 100,000 inhabitants. The Robert Koch Institute (RKI), Germany's federal infectious disease agency, reported Friday 48,600 new infections and 191 deaths for the previous 24 hours.

Incidence rates as of Friday are particularly high in the states of Saxony (569 infections per 100,000 residents over the past seven days), Thuringia (491) and Bavaria (455). Schleswig-Holstein (94) is the only state with a seven-day incidence below the 100 mark. Four counties already have an incidence of over 1,000, which means one in every 100 residents got infected within the past week.

As infections surge, so do hospitalizations and deaths. The hospitalization incidence rate for COVID-19 is now 4.7 hospitalizations per 100,000 people, and 26 hospitalized cases per 100,000 inhabitants for those over 80 years of age. On Sunday, the number of COVID-19 patients being treated in intensive care rose above 3,000.

The situation is becoming increasingly disastrous. The latest weekly RKI report expects "there will be a further increase in serious illnesses and deaths and that the available intensive care treatment capacities will be exceeded."

RKI head Lothar Wieler warned at a press conference on Friday of the dangerous effects of the current wave of the pandemic. Of 50,000 newly infected people every day, around 3,000 will end up in hospital, 350 will require intensive care and 200 will die, he calculated. It's "five past twelve on the clock," he added.

As with the previous pandemic waves, outbreaks are increasing in elderly care and nursing homes, as well as in hospitals. Last week there were 119 new outbreaks in medical treatment facilities and 161 in elderly care and nursing homes. It is not uncommon for these outbreaks to be fatal. Last week, four residents died in a nursing home in Überlingen (Baden-Württemberg) and 16 in a retirement home in Brandenburg.

The number of cases and outbreaks is also increasing among children and adolescents. The age group of 5 to 14 year olds is still the age group with the highest incidence rate, with 545 infections per 100,000 people, followed by 15 to 34 year olds with an incidence of 302. There are an average of 70 outbreaks recorded per week at day care centers. There were 693 outbreaks in schools in the last four weeks, although the last two weeks have not yet been fully accounted for due to reporting delays.

Despite the ongoing catastrophe, the ruling class is doing nothing to prevent the virus from spreading. On the contrary, the Social Democrats, Greens, and Free Democrats, the "traffic light" coalition that is set to comprise the next federal government, continues to insist that the "epidemic situation of national scope" will be allowed to expire on November 25. This decision will remove the legal basis for urgently necessary protective measures—above all the closure of schools and non-essential businesses.

On Thursday, Germany's federal parliament debated a joint draft law by the SPD, FDP and Greens to replace the previous pandemic provisions. The measures described in it—such as social distancing rules, mask requirements and restricting access to public life for unvaccinated individuals—do not even come close to

what is necessary to curb the virus, which is spreading completely out of control. The “traffic light” coalitionists are aware of this.

With a cynical undertone, the designated Federal Chancellor and incumbent Finance Minister Olaf Scholz (SPD) declared in his speech to parliament, “We know what the consequence will be: Very, very many of those who are not vaccinated will become infected, and many of those who will become infected will get sick, and of those who get sick, some will struggle for their lives in the intensive care units of our hospitals.”

In fact, hundreds of thousands of lives are at stake. The chief virologist of Berlin’s Charité hospital, Christian Drosten, recently described 100,000 more COVID-19 deaths in Germany alone as a “conservative estimate.” The director of the World Health Organization (WHO) for Europe, Hans Kluge, warned that 500,000 people in Europe could die from COVID-19 in the next three months.

The “traffic light” coalition is pursuing such a right-wing course that even conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) politicians like CDU parliamentary group leader Ralph Brinkhaus criticize their pandemic policy as inadequate and demand a continuation of the “epidemic situation.”

This “criticism” is dishonest in several respects. First, the plan to end the “epidemic situation” was developed by the health minister of the grand coalition, Jens Spahn (CDU). Second, the CDU-led grand coalition has been just as aggressive and responsible for almost 100,000 COVID-19 deaths in Germany alone. And thirdly, the nationwide restriction of access to restaurants, bars, and public events to people who are fully vaccinated or recovered from an infection (the 2G rule) called for by representatives of the CDU and Left Party is completely inadequate.

The “profit before lives” policy of all bourgeois parties is meeting with increasing opposition from the population. The SPD, Greens, and FDP in particular have been discredited and are hated even before they form a new federal government. According to a survey by the opinion research institute Kantar for FOCUS, 59 percent of Germans are dissatisfied with Scholz’s role in fighting the pandemic.

The ZDF “Politbarometer” showed in a survey published on Friday that only 13 percent consider the

SPD competent in the field of pandemic policy. The Greens and FDP do even worse with values of 6 percent and 5 percent respectively. Nearly half of all respondents support stricter protective measures, while 32 percent describe the existing measures as “just right” and only 16 percent find them “exaggerated.” Two-thirds of those surveyed support a nationwide 2G rule and 71 percent support a vaccine mandate in the health care system.

The crucial task is to provide the growing opposition with a clear perspective and strategy. Only an independent movement of the international working class can and will implement the scientifically necessary measures to eliminate COVID-19. This includes the comprehensive shutdown of schools, universities and non-essential businesses with full compensation for those affected in connection with an aggressive vaccination campaign, mass tests, and the isolation of all infected people and contacts.



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