

German government refuses to order lockdowns despite hospitals reaching capacity under crush of COVID-19 infections

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24 November 2021

The Robert Koch Institute (RKI) reported a record 66,884 new coronavirus cases on Wednesday. In the past two weeks, about 630,000 people in Germany have officially been infected with the coronavirus and more than 2,700 have lost their lives. With a mortality rate of 0.8 percent reported by Lothar Wieler, president of the RKI, the infections of the past two weeks mean a death sentence for more than 5,000 additional people. In the last 24 hours alone, 335 people died from COVID-19, according to the RKI.

Like the nearly 100,000 coronavirus deaths in Germany so far, these people have been the victims of a policy carried out in the interests of the German stock market, which has reached historic highs in recent weeks in tandem with the surging infection figures. If industry, schools, offices and daycare centres are not shut down, another wave of mass death threatens to dwarf the pandemic's previous course.

"Cumulative reported deaths [in Europe] by spring of next year are expected to reach more than 2.2 million," the World Health Organization (WHO) predicted in a report presented Tuesday in Copenhagen. So far, 1.5 million people have already officially died from COVID-19 in Europe since the pandemic began. If current trends continue, another 700,000 deaths are imminent by March 2022, according to the WHO.

"The pandemic is not under control," Gernot Marx, president of the German Association for Intensive Care and Emergency Medicine (Divi), warned in the *Tagesspiegel* newspaper on Monday. The situation in hospitals in Germany resembles developments a year ago, when 1,000 people were dying daily. Compared to the previous year, Marx said, there are 4,000 fewer intensive care beds available due to the nursing shortage.

According to Divi data, of the 3,675 COVID-19 patients in intensive care, one in two currently requires invasive ventilation—with a strong upward trend. In the past week alone, an additional 1,887 new COVID-19 patients were admitted to intensive care units. Experts put the likelihood of COVID-19 patients dying in an intensive care unit at between 30 and 50 percent. Their length of stay, averaging 14 days, is more than three times greater than for other ICU patients and is expected to increase.

"Exactly what should always be avoided" is what now threatens, concludes the *Tagesspiegel*: an "overload of the health care system," with the introduction of triage, the selection of which patients receive life-saving treatment and which do not, giving rise to "dramatic images like those in Bergamo, Italy, in the spring of 2020."

World Medical Association Chairman Frank Ulrich Montgomery had already warned last week of a "deadly coronavirus winter" and expressed the hope over the weekend that the "waffle about freedom," which "in reality is a freedom to [accept] illness and death," will not prevail. Bundestag (federal parliament) vice president Wolfgang Kubicki (Liberal Democrats, FDP) then denigrated the physician at an FDP state party conference in Schleswig-Holstein as the "Saddam Hussein of the medical profession."

In fact, Wednesday marks the last day that comprehensive shutdown measures could be enacted due to the "traffic light" coalition of the Social Democrats (SPD), FDP and Greens ending the designation of an emergency situation. Instead of closing schools, daycare centres and workplaces, breaking the chains of infection, and rapidly vaccinating and caring for the population, federal and state governments are sticking to their profits-before-lives policies, putting tens of thousands of lives at risk.

In Bavaria, where the incidence rate per 100,000 among school children has now risen to more than 1,300, Minister President Markus Söder explicitly dismissed the "closure of schools" in a government statement on Tuesday. However, international studies have repeatedly shown that school closures are an indispensable part of any real pandemic response.

In the hospitals of southeastern Bavaria, intensive care bed occupancy is currently at 95 percent, despite hospitals already transferring patients to other Bavarian hospitals whenever possible. In the region, "only absolute emergency care is still guaranteed" and all "non-urgent operations," including tumour cases, have been "postponed until further notice," reports broadcaster Bayerischer Rundfunk. The hospitals in the Neu-Ulm district have already begun to prepare for the collapse of intensive medical care by establishing a "triage team."

In Saxony, according to the president of the state medical association, intensive care units could be overwhelmed as early as the end of the week, so that “even large hospitals would have to implement triage.” It is likely that anyone who has to be admitted to the intensive care unit and be given artificial respiration in the state will not be able to be transferred to other hospitals because the situation in surrounding states is similar.

Wherever additional measures have been announced, they are completely inadequate.

On Friday, the Saxony state government decided on a supposed “wave break lock-down,” which, however, does not provide for any closure of the manufacturing sector. Instead, the governing coalition of Christian Democrats (CDU), Greens and SPD amended the Working Hours Act to allow crematoria to burn the victims of their policies on Sundays. Until December 15, the maximum daily working hours may also be exceeded for medical treatment and care and mobile vaccination teams, among others.

In Thuringia, clubs, bars and discos, as well as indoor and outdoor swimming pools, are to close from Wednesday. A night-time curfew between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. is in effect for the unvaccinated. Christmas markets will be cancelled. But schools, daycare centres and businesses will remain open without any restrictions.

Similar measures are apparently also being discussed at the federal level. Tuesday evening, outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) invited her designated successor Olaf Scholz (SPD) and the other leaders of the “traffic light” parties—Annalena Baerbock and Robert Habeck (both Greens) as well as Christian Lindner and Marco Buschmann (both FDP)—to a crisis meeting at the Chancellor’s Office. According to media reports, the discussion was “about further measures in the fight against pandemic.”

Again, the goal is to avoid the urgent need for tough measures. Just last week, the traffic light coalition leaders in the Bundestag had decided to allow the designation of an “epidemic emergency” expire, thus eliminating the legal basis for nationwide school and business closures. Closing recreational facilities or curfews for the unvaccinated are not nearly enough to prevent hospitals collapsing and significantly curb the pandemic.

The same applies to the introduction of a general vaccination requirement. The governing parties have so far strictly refused to do so but are now signalling a possible change of course. Berlin’s mayor Michael Müller (SPD) told RBB Tuesday that he believed there would be no getting around compulsory vaccination. “Only vaccination permanently ensures that we can experience everything as we want to.”

In fact, it has been scientifically proven that vaccination alone is not enough to reduce infection rates and end mass deaths. To contain and eventually eliminate the virus, schools and non-essential businesses must also be closed, first and foremost, and measures such as testing, tracing and isolating all cases must be

carried out systematically.

In addition, the vaccination campaign in Germany has been a disaster. The RKI’s recent “COVIMO” report, which surveyed more than 3,000 adults about their willingness to be vaccinated, suggests that this is far higher in all age groups than the vaccination rate realized to date. But instead of ensuring that the entire population receives the desired protection, the federal and state governments have largely shut down public vaccination centres.

Federal Health Minister Jens Spahn (CDU) had recently even issued an order cap of 30 doses per doctor’s office for Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines, claiming that “not all orders could be filled” due to the “short-term” increase in demand. The Moderna vaccine, which is to be delivered instead, is recommended by the Standing Committee on Vaccination (STIKO), in contrast to the Pfizer shot, only for people over 30 years of age, so that the vaccination of younger people is once again in danger of being delayed.

The same indifference of the ruling class to the health and lives of the population is evident in the vaccination debacle as in all other areas of pandemic policy. “Probably by the end of this winter everyone in Germany will have been vaccinated, recovered or died,” Spahn declared at a press conference Monday. With that, he summed up the fascistic indifference of the ruling class to mass death.

By allowing infection numbers to explode while millions remain unvaccinated or boosted, the federal and state governments are increasing the risk of another “escape” variant emerging. Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), warned of this danger in a public statement in late September.

“With the amount of virus currently circulating in the US, especially among unvaccinated people, our greatest concern as public health officials and scientists is that the virus will become even more transmissible and have the potential to evade our vaccines that protect us from serious illness and death. The next elusive variant,” Walensky said, may be “just a few mutations away.”



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