

The Thanksgiving holiday weekend threatens surge of COVID-19 infections across the US

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25 November 2021

On November 24, 2021, Thanksgiving Eve in the US, the World Health Organization's Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, during the COVID-19 press conference, warned that the rising number of COVID-19 deaths and cases in Europe and other countries are translating into unsustainable pressures on the health care systems that are exhausting health care workers.

He also raised concerns that many countries' governments have grown complacent with employing and maintaining public health measures due largely to their sole reliance on COVID-19 vaccines against the coronavirus.

He said, "In many countries and communities, we are concerned about the false sense of security that vaccines have ended the pandemic and that people who are vaccinated do not need to take any other precautions. Vaccines save lives, but they do not fully prevent transmission. Data suggests that before the arrival of the Delta variant, vaccines reduced transmissions by about 60 percent. With Delta, that has dropped to about 40 percent. If you are vaccinated, you have a much lower risk of severe disease and death. But you are still at risk of being infected and of infecting others."

He then called on people and governments to redouble their efforts to stem the tides of infection and prevent further loss of life regardless of their population's vaccine status. These include the most basic measures, such as wearing masks even for the vaccinated, which Dr. Anthony Fauci has deemed unnecessary for those who are vaccinated.

Two years into the pandemic, these calls have been repeatedly made but have done little to sway leaders of capitalist nations that have placed profits over any crisis that besets the working class around the world. It

bears repeating that the insatiable drive for profits has created these disastrous conditions in the current COVID-19 pandemic that is entering its third year.

Weekly COVID-19 cases across the globe have been steadily climbing for more than five straight weeks, with almost 3.8 million infections the week beginning November 15, 2021. In just the last 24 hours, there were more than 662,000 reported infections. Deaths have made their continual ascent, having climbed to 52,500 deaths in the same week. Currently, the global cumulative coronavirus cases have surpassed 260 million, and nearly 5.2 million have died.

The rise in COVID-19 cases in Europe is unprecedented throughout the pandemic despite high population vaccinations. And the US, when comparing the dynamics of community transmission, is lagging Europe by six weeks. Europe reached its last trough on September 25, 2021. The US saw its previous trough in the first week of November. However, Europe had only half the per capita community transmission when their surge began. The present growth across the US is on track with that in Europe.

In line with concerns raised by the WHO director-general for Europe, coronavirus cases in the US are exploding. On November 22, 2021, more than 162,000 COVID-19 infections were reported. The seven-day average has reached 95,000 cases per day, 25 percent above the averages two weeks ago. Deaths, a lagging indicator, have now turned upwards. Hospitalizations have once more exceeded 50,000 admissions. There are currently 38 states and the District of Columbia that are seeing growth in COVID-19.

Despite such ominous statistics, there is little mention of the pandemic other than various voices within the media shifting the blame on these developments onto the backs of the unvaccinated and demanding that the

pandemic be proclaimed ended and for life to move on once more. Once death is normalized, they hope, it will fade into the recesses of forgotten memories.

Michigan hospitals and Democratic Governor Gretchen Whitmer have asked the federal government for immediate emergency staff to be sent in to support the catastrophe laying waste to the health care systems there.

An excerpt from the letter to President Joe Biden, written by Representatives Democrat Debbie Dingell and Republican Fred Upton, reads, “The situation in Michigan is rapidly getting worse, and we need all hands on deck and any and all resources you are willing to provide. We are concerned about the impact of the spread of COVID-19 on the state’s ability to effectively address the current public health emergency if current trends continue.”

The Henry Ford Health System, a health care organization in Metro Detroit, has seen COVID-19 cases skyrocket by 50 percent in just three weeks. Statewide hospitalizations have now surpassed over 4,000, bringing many health care systems to their knees. Adnan Munkarah, Henry Ford’s chief clinical officer, noted, “Our emergency departments and our hospitals are functioning beyond full capacity. That means our beds are full, and we have patients waiting in the emergency department for hours for beds to open.”

Speaking with *Crain’s Detroit Business*, Eric Toner, a senior scholar who specializes in hospital preparedness, said, “We have burnt through a whole generation of health care workers. More often than not the reason that the intensive care units are overwhelmed is they don’t have staff.”

As the WSWS noted previously, Michigan has become the canary in the coal mine. Commercial airlines and airports across the US are recording one of their busiest travel days. The TSA is estimating approximately 20 million air travelers will be screened during the Thanksgiving weekend. On Tuesday, the agency reported that it had seen more than 2 million people pass through security for six consecutive days. Meanwhile, the travel group AAA (American Automobile Association) reported it expects 53.4 million people will be on the roads visiting friends and families.

One year ago, during the beginning of the holiday

season, the US saw a catastrophic surge in cases that lasted three months, infected over 16 million people and claimed 230,000 lives. As WHO Director-General Ghebreyesus noted, COVID-19 vaccines will save lives and prevent severe diseases. Still, the Delta strain will find every venue and infect millions this holiday season without any other mitigation measures in place. The death toll, even for the vaccinated, will climb without a doubt.

Even as the current COVID-19 fallout in Michigan was fully underway, White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator Jeff Zients told reporters at the Monday briefing that the administration would not be implementing any future nationwide lockdowns to stem the pandemic. Despite the catastrophe erupting in Europe, he doubled down, stating emphatically, “We can curb the spread of the virus without having to in any way shut down our economy.”

Perhaps the only sober voice among them was Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) and the Chief Medical Advisor to the President. He said that time was running short to prevent a “dangerous” surge of coronavirus infections over the holidays. “We have a lot of viruses circulating around. You can’t walk from the data, and the data show that the cases are starting to go up, which is not unexpected when you get into a winter season. People start to go indoors more, and we know that immunity does wane over time.”

However, instead of calling for mask mandates, closure of nonessential businesses and schools, and warning against holiday travels, all he said was “... get vaccinated!”



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