

Biden administration to America: Prepare to die from COVID-19

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Since the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Omicron (B.1.1.529) variant of COVID-19 a “variant of concern” on Friday, world governments have responded with essentially no measures to stop its global spread except for limited travel restrictions. As of Sunday evening, 159 cases of the Omicron variant have been sequenced on every habitable continent except South America.

Much remains unknown about the variant, but initial data from southern Africa indicates that it is likely more transmissible than the Delta variant, which is itself far more transmissible than the wild type of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. In Gauteng Province, South Africa, where most Omicron cases have been detected, new hospitalizations have more than tripled in the past two weeks alone. Given that the Omicron variant possesses over 50 mutations, with 32 on the virus’ spike protein, many scientists have warned that it could be the most vaccine-resistant variant so far.

Due to inadequate genomic sequencing programs in the United States, it is likely that the Omicron variant is already spreading undetected in the country. This coincides with a deepening surge of the Delta variant, which has killed over 165,000 Americans in the past four months and infected millions.

The rapid spread of the dangerous new variant has been met with demands by scientists for urgent measures to stop the spread of the disease.

But appearing on the Sunday morning talk shows, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the chief medical advisor to President Biden, rejected any lockdown measures, and even mask or vaccine mandates, to stop the spread of the Omicron variant and the pandemic more broadly.

Under conditions in which over 414,000 Americans were officially infected with the Delta variant over the past week, Fauci told ABC News that it was “too early to say” whether such measures would be needed. Fauci made clear that the position of the White House is that nothing should be done until the Omicron variant has swept over the entire country.

As with the Trump administration throughout 2020, the Biden administration’s categorical opposition to implementing these measures is solely motivated by economic considerations. As news spread Friday of the dangers of the Omicron variant, the

stock markets suffered their greatest loss of the year. In the White House, discussions are not about saving lives, but rather what will happen on Wall Street on Monday and how they can best delay any action until the Christmas shopping season is over.

On NBC’s Meet the Press, Fauci stated in the most categorical terms that the Biden administration opposes any attempts to eliminate or eradicate COVID-19. Asked by host Chuck Todd, “Is it pretty clear this is now an endemic [sic]? I mean, how does this end any other way?” Fauci replied, “You know, we certainly are not going to eradicate it. We’ve only eradicated one virus, and that’s smallpox. Elimination means there’s none of it in the country, like we have now with polio and with measles. I don’t think we’re going to be there with this.”

Fauci agreed with Todd that the virus will become “endemic” and reiterated the unscientific mantra of the Biden administration that vaccinations alone will lower infections and deaths to an “acceptable” level. “It’s not going to go away,” he said. “The lower we get it, the better off we’ll be. And you get it that low when you get the overwhelming majority of the population vaccinated and boosted. So, like I’ve said multiple times, Chuck, it’s in with our own grasp of how we’re going to be able to live with the virus.”

These statements and the overall response of the Biden administration to the Omicron variant were roundly condemned by leading scientists. Dr. Jorge Caballero, formerly of Stanford University, tweeted a clip of the interview and commented, “I’ve seen enough. We need bold strategic changes, and the current WH COVID Response team isn’t up to the task.”

Fauci has served as the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) since 1984 and is a trusted representative of the American ruling class. His explicit opposition to elimination and eradication is consciously directed against the growing support for this strategy within the working class and among the most far-sighted scientists.

The elimination strategy, which has been advocated continuously by the *World Socialist Web Site*, entails the universal deployment of all public health measures, including mass testing, contact tracing, the safe isolation of infected patients, the use of high-quality masks, improved ventilation,

travel restrictions, the rapid vaccination of the world population, and the temporary closure of all schools and nonessential workplaces with full income protection for all affected workers. The largest country to successfully employ this strategy is China, which has continuously stamped out minor outbreaks in a population of over 1.4 billion people since effectively eliminating the virus in March 2020.

The Biden administration's stated opposition to this strategy is based on definite class interests. The American ruling class has openly embraced a homicidal policy that they know will lead to ongoing mass death. They have accepted that an entirely preventable new cause of death has emerged, SARS-CoV-2 and its variants, which will continue to evolve and become more dangerous unless the virus is eliminated.

Substantial sections of the ruling elite view the death of elderly and retired workers from COVID-19 as a positive good. For years before the pandemic, there were growing calls to reduce the costs of pensions, social services and medical care by lowering life expectancy. The most explicit formulation of these aims was a 2014 article by Ezekiel Emanuel in *The Atlantic*, titled, "Why I hope to die at 75." The article had the sub-head, "An argument that society and families—and you—will be better off if nature takes its course swiftly and promptly."

Emanuel, who briefly served on Biden's COVID-19 Advisory Board, is getting his wish. In the first year of the pandemic alone, life expectancy declined by 2.2 years for adult males in the US, the worst decline since official records began to be kept in 1933.

In all essentials, the Biden administration has continued the pandemic policies of the Trump administration. After forcing open schools in major Democratic-led cities throughout the spring, Biden discouraged mask-wearing and social distancing and oversaw the ending of the federal moratorium on evictions, while relying on vaccines as a magic bullet to stop new infections. The Delta surge proved by July that this strategy was totally unviable, but the White House continued with the same vaccine-only approach, setting the stage for the present disaster.

The Biden administration's stated opposition to the elimination of COVID-19 in the face of a deadly new surge of the pandemic demonstrates the imperviousness of capitalist governments around the world to the demands of scientists and the public for the preservation of human life. The emergence of the Omicron variant demonstrates that those in power will continue to let the virus infect masses of people and mutate until the whole Greek alphabet has been used up, with each new variant having potentially catastrophic consequences.

Above all, the financial oligarchy is terrified that a movement will develop in the working class demanding lockdowns, akin to the wave of wildcat strikes that caused the initial lockdowns in March 2020. The closure of schools and nonessential workplaces, which could save millions of lives if conducted as part of a comprehensive global elimination strategy, would

curtail the extraction of surplus value that lies at the heart of the capitalist production process. Any impingement on the personal wealth accumulation of the billionaires, who have amassed over \$2 trillion since the start of the pandemic, cannot be tolerated.

Following the world's leading scientists, the WSWS has continuously warned that the only way to prevent the development of more dangerous variants such as Omicron is through a strategy aimed at progressively eliminating the virus in every country until all human-to-human transmission is brought to an end. The starting point of this strategy is a popular rejection of the policies that have been implemented to date, including "herd immunity" and the idea that "mitigation" policies—such as relying on vaccination alone—will end the pandemic.

By definition, there is no national solution to the pandemic. The fight to eliminate COVID-19 must be coordinated globally by workers taking matters into their own hands. The guiding principle of this mass movement, encompassing millions of workers, youth and progressive sections of the middle class, is that human lives must take unconditional precedence over corporate profits.

The fight to eliminate COVID-19 globally requires the most comprehensive exposure of the financial interests that have determined policies throughout the pandemic. For this reason, the Global Workers' Inquest into the COVID-19 Pandemic called by the *World Socialist Web Site* is all the more critical and must be systematically developed in every country. The same criminals responsible for the policies that have killed an estimated more than 12 million people globally are now threatening to unleash another wave of mass death throughout the world. This must be stopped and those responsible must be held accountable.



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