

German government rejects lockdown despite spread of Omicron variant

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The global spread of the more infectious Omicron variant of the coronavirus coincides in Germany with a wave of infections from the Delta variant which is more catastrophic than ever before in the course of the pandemic. While daily new infections reached record levels of over 75,000 a day last week, infections with the new variant have already been found among travellers returning from South Africa in the states of Hesse, Lower Saxony, North-Rhine Westphalia, and Bavaria.

The situation in the hospitals is already totally disastrous. Of the 4,459 COVID intensive care patients nationwide, more than half are on ventilators. According to the Divi intensive care register, there are 27 children among the intensive care patients and their number has recently increased exponentially. Since the beginning of the pandemic, a total of 138,567 people have been treated with COVID-19 in an intensive care unit.

The official number of COVID-19 deaths in Germany has now surpassed 100,000. In the past week alone, 470,000 people were newly infected and 1,790 died. There are currently between 200 and 300 deaths every day. In many hospitals, the intensive care units are at their limit. Seriously ill and intubated patients have to be relocated nationwide by specially converted Airbus A310 and A400M military aircraft, because they can no longer be cared for in neighbouring federal states.

Last weekend alone, 80 people from Bavaria, Saxony and Thuringia were flown out to the north and west of the country by air force troop carriers. As a nurse told the Redaktionsnetzwerk Deutschland group of newspapers, decisions have to be made that amount to a “creeping triage.”

The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reported that normal operations can no longer be maintained in more than 75 percent of all hospitals in Germany. Planned operations are being postponed. The Hamburg intensive care doctor Stefan Kluge described conditions as “latent triage,”

because it is “not about hip operations, but, for example, urgent vascular operations in which an aneurysm could burst.”

The internist Michael Hallek (University Hospital Cologne) already told the *Ärzteblatte* a week ago that “soft triage” is taking place, which “occurs, for example, when a heart attack patient who cannot find a hospital with a free intensive care bed is driven around for an hour in an ambulance.”

With the mobilization of the German army, the federal and state governments are reacting to the consequences of their own policies of mass infection and spending cuts. While the health authorities of North Rhine-Westphalia approve carnival celebrations and soccer games with tens of thousands of participants without masks, hospitals in Berlin and Brandenburg are on the verge of collapse. It has long been foreseeable that due to the current COVID-19 infection numbers, thousands more patients will require hospital care, which will involve relocation, including to other European countries.

Virologists, epidemiologists and medical professionals have been warning of such a scenario for months. Several weeks ago, they issued a damning letter urgently demanding “early action” in order to prevent a further increase in COVID-19 infections. “The actual fourth wave has now begun,” stated the head intensive care physician Christian Karagiannidis, one of the first signatories, as early as October 21.

But instead of organizing a hard lockdown to prevent further infections, the government declared the maintenance of public life and economic activity to be its top priority and thus approvingly accepts the deaths of hundreds of thousands more people.

The tone was set by Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who appealed for people to get vaccinated and “voluntarily” restrict their contacts in a guest article for the *Bild*, “so that schools and day care centres do not

close again, so that we do not have to shut down public life completely.” On Friday, Steinmeier said in an address to the German Schoolmasters’ Congress, “It must now be our top priority to keep day care centres and schools open.”

This policy of mass infection, pursued by all parties, is in direct contradiction to all the findings of serious scientists.

“With such high numbers, short-term effects would only be expected in the event of a total lockdown,” affirmed Professor Markus Scholz, epidemiologist at the University of Leipzig. School lessons in their current form are “a major pandemic driver,” according to Scholz, who insisted, “Hard lockdown and schools closed—only that can help.”

Even the National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina, which is considered to be close to the government, issued a statement on Saturday calling for “immediate action” to be taken to achieve “significant contact reductions” and for the school holidays to be brought forward. In addition, a “nationwide reestablishment of vaccination centres” and a “further strengthening of outreach vaccination offers” is necessary so that “by Christmas, in addition to first and second vaccinations, around 30 million third doses are possible.”

In order to end the “exponential increase in new infections,” the scientists concluded, it is necessary “to significantly reduce the number of contacts for a few weeks from the beginning of the coming week.” This must “also apply to vaccinated and recovered people who ought to receive a booster vaccination during this time.”

But the members of the planned traffic light coalition government made it clear again last week that they do not intend to do anything to even mitigate the looming wave of mass deaths. Free Democrats (FDP) general secretary Volker Wissing referred on Friday to the “toolbox of the federal states”—which the Social Democrats (SPD), Greens and FDP had restricted by voting to amend the law just days earlier.

Green Party co-leader Annalena Baerbock said they would wait ten days to “watch” the progress of the pandemic and vaccinations. No immediate measures are necessary, she added, but merely a further meeting between heads of the federal and state governments.

There is growing resistance among workers and young people to this criminal policy, which consciously gives the profits of the economy priority over the lives of the population.

“Steinmeier appeals to ‘voluntary action’ and the

traffic light coalition watches people die,” wrote Twitter user Andrea Z. in a popular post. “We are not people; we are numbers, and we must pay. End of story. They send us into the pandemic with as little hesitation as they used to send us into wars. It’s the same terrible kind of person.”

The paediatrician Dr. Werner explained, “Tens of thousands of children are infected with COVID - because their infection protection is not taken care of! In my 25 years as a paediatrician, there has never been an infectious disease that made so many children so seriously ill in such a short period of time. The house is on fire and the infection of children must not go on like this! Paediatricians and parents must stand together.”

Carsten, a supporter of the fight for safe education, remarked on the amendment of the Infection Protection Act by the traffic light coalition: “There is a direct causal relationship between the prohibition of efficient non-pharmaceutical measures such as contact restrictions and the number of deaths from SARS-CoV-2. Greens, SPD and FDP should be on trial for a crime against humanity.”

As for the German courts, however, they declared shutdowns and curfews unconstitutional during the pandemic and played a central role in even removing mask mandates in school classrooms.

The Socialist Equality Party, which has been the only party to fight for a democratic and humane solution to the crisis since the beginning of the pandemic, remains under secret service surveillance with the consent of the judiciary.

Those responsible for the profit-before-life policy can only be held accountable through a movement of the international working class. The *World Socialist Web Site* has initiated the Global Workers’ Inquest into the COVID-19 Pandemic. We call on all readers to support this initiative and to establish rank-and-file committees in workplaces, schools and neighbourhoods that will decide upon and enforce the measures that are urgently necessary.



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