

# A New Year's appeal from the *World Socialist Web Site*

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12 January 2022

New Year 2022 marks the beginning of the third year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Humanity is in the midst of the greatest crisis since the two world wars of the first half of the 20th century. The death toll stands, officially, at approximately 5.5 million. But if the calculation of fatalities is measured by “excess deaths”—an increase in expected mortality that is, in all probability, caused by circumstances associated with the pandemic—the total number of COVID-19 victims is approximately 19 million. Within the United States, close to 850,000 people have died. This number includes one out of every 100 Americans over the age of 65.

The horrific death toll cannot be understood only in terms of the biological transmission of a viral pathogen. The science underlying the pandemic is understood very well by biologists, epidemiologists, and virologists. Experts in the sphere of public health, drawing on more than a century of experience, know what must be done to end a pandemic and save lives.

But the application of scientific knowledge and the efforts of conscientious public health experts have been sabotaged by the ruthless prioritization of the economic and political interests that have determined the response of capitalist governments throughout the world to the pandemic.

Within weeks of the discovery of the SARS-CoV-2 outbreak, scientists and public health officials understood that the world confronted a threat of potentially catastrophic dimensions. In a complex and intensely interconnected global community, the coronavirus would spread rapidly throughout the world, infect billions, and make seriously ill and even kill tens of millions of people unless emergency measures were taken to stop viral transmission. It was necessary to implement a Zero-COVID strategy directed toward the elimination and ultimate eradication of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

In China, New Zealand, and a few other primarily Asian-Pacific countries, effective health measures were put in place. The number of infections quickly plunged, and the number of deaths were held to low double-digit or even single-digit figures.

But the most powerful capitalist governments, first and foremost those in the US and Western Europe, rejected this scientifically rational and humane course of action.

For two years, that which should be the fundamental aim of public health policies—the protection of human life—has been consciously and criminally subordinated to corporate profit and personal wealth accumulation by mega-millionaires and billionaires. Government policies have been focused not on driving the death toll down but on driving share prices on the stock exchange higher.

Malignant self-interest has interacted with national chauvinism. The fight against the pandemic requires a global strategy. But a toxic

alliance of imperialist and corporate interests opposed a scientifically guided global response. Safe and effective vaccines should be made quickly and freely available to every person on the planet. Yet, the giant pharmaceutical companies' defense of their profits stands in the way.

Nearly 70 years ago, the virologist Jonas Salk—who played a central role in the development of the polio vaccine in the early 1950s—was asked on nationwide television if he owned the patent. Salk replied, “There is no patent. Can you patent the sun?”

The pharmaceutical industry has long since made impossible such expressions of public health altruism. Everything has a price—especially the right to medical care. Having converted urgently required medications and vaccinations into private property, it holds billions of lives for ransom.

The global pandemic has exposed, as no other event in modern history, the failure of the capitalist system and the irreconcilable conflict between the grotesquely rich ruling elite and the overwhelming mass of the world's population.

The pandemic will not be stopped only through medical measures. The struggle to end the pandemic has assumed the form of a struggle between classes.

The capitalist class has viewed the pandemic, first and foremost, as an opportunity to increase its wealth. Share values on Wall Street stand at record levels. The policies that the ruling class has implemented during the last two years have resulted in the colossal enrichment of an infinitesimal fraction of the world's population. Those same policies have led to millions of deaths.

Having gorged themselves for the past two years, the corporate-financial elite and the governments they control are determined that the feasting will continue. Despite the emergence of the more infectious Omicron variant, governments are demanding that children be sent into schools and workers stay on their jobs.

Sending kids into infected classrooms is not about education. It is about providing corporations with a workforce, without which corporate revenues and profits cannot be generated. But in demanding that teachers report to schools and workers remain on the job, the capitalists are acknowledging that the working class is indispensable to the functioning of society.

All pretense of stopping the transmission of SARS-CoV-2 has been abandoned. A chasm has opened between media propaganda and observable reality. The Omicron variant is blessed by the corporate media with the words “mild” and “less severe.” The schools are declared to be “the safest places to be,” where children are, as if by magic, protected against infections. But on January 10, it was reported that 141,000 Americans are in the hospital with COVID-19 and that

more than 580,000 children under 18 were infected with the virus last week alone. Record numbers of children are being hospitalized due to the supposedly “mild” Omicron variant. Over 1,000 children have already been killed by COVID-19 in the US, a figure that will rise dramatically in the coming weeks due to the Omicron surge.

But the slogan of the day, repeated endlessly by the media, is that society must “learn to live with COVID.” What does this mean? Since Christmas Day, little more than two weeks ago, more than 20,000 Americans died of the virus. These victims could not live with the virus. But the government and media continue to normalize death and suffering, to elevate what the recently inaugurated New York City Mayor Eric Adams calls the “financial ecosystem” over the wellbeing of humanity.

This is the outlook of a social class that is hurtling toward barbarism. There is no limit on the number of deaths that capitalist governments are prepared to tolerate. Committed to the policy of “herd immunity”—the uncontrolled spread of the virus throughout the population—governments are carrying out a ghoulish experiment on the working people of their countries. As British Prime Minister Boris Johnson infamously stated, “Let the bodies pile high.”

The working class is now beginning to take up the fight against this inhuman indifference to human life. This is the significance of the struggle of teachers, who are refusing to conduct classes under conditions that place the lives of children and their families at risk. Broader sections of the working class and student youth are joining this fight.

But the development of a powerful mass movement against the pandemic requires a political, social and historical perspective: that is, a clear understanding among workers of *who* they are fighting against and *what* they are fighting for.

The *World Socialist Web Site* —published by the International Committee of the Fourth International and its affiliated Socialist Equality parties throughout the world—is the indispensable and decisive weapon in the fight for this perspective.

2022 marks the beginning of the twenty-fifth year of daily publication of the WSWS. It has, during these many years, established itself as the authoritative and uncompromising voice of socialism and international working-class solidarity.

For the past two years, the *World Socialist Web Site* has reported on and analyzed the nature and significance of the pandemic. It has explained both the science and the politics of the pandemic. Since it posted its first article reporting the emergence of the new coronavirus on January 24, 2020, the *World Socialist Web Site* has posted more than 4,000 articles on the pandemic.

From the earliest stages of the crisis, the WSWS insisted that the pandemic could be stopped only through the implementation of a global strategy. On March 6, 2020, when the global death toll was less than 3,500 and total deaths in the United States were still under 20, the WSWS warned:

“Without emergency intervention, there is a danger that this pandemic will spread uncontrollably throughout the population and cause a staggering loss of life. ...

“This social catastrophe must be prevented. All sections of the working class, youth and students must demand that governments take emergency action to stop the spread of the virus and provide the necessary care for all those who are infected by the disease. This requires a massive reallocation of social resources.

“The principle that must guide the response is that the needs of society overrule the interests of profit. Capitalist calculations of share

values and profits must not be allowed to limit, undermine, or prevent the combatting of the disease.”

There is no political party or publication whose record compares to that of the Socialist Equality Party and the *World Socialist Web Site*. The warnings of the WSWS, as well as the policies it advances, have been vindicated.

But the work of the WSWS has not been limited to reporting and warning. All our efforts have been directed toward laying the foundation for action by the working class to bring about the end of the pandemic.

During the past year, the WSWS has made significant advances in the organization and political direction of the struggles of the working class.

The call issued on May 1, 2021 for the establishment of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees vastly strengthened the struggle of workers in a series of major industrial strikes that developed in the months that followed.

The international webinars organized by the WSWS in August and October 2021 made a major contribution toward the building of a global movement of the working class, allied with the most principled scientists and public health professionals, for the elimination and eradication of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

The WSWS’s Global Workers’ Inquest into the COVID-19 Pandemic, launched in November, is gathering evidence to expose the criminal responsibility of the capitalist system for the massive scale of deaths.

The *World Socialist Web Site* is determined to continue and expand its work in the New Year.

The growing movement of the working class presents us with both opportunities and challenges. Among those challenges is the raising of resources.

This is why I urge you to make the largest possible donation to the *World Socialist Web Site* today. Your ongoing financial support is critically necessary not only to continue the work of the WSWS, but to vastly expand our reach to the millions of workers and young people throughout the world who are searching for an alternative to this inhuman, grotesquely unequal, militaristic and morally bankrupt society.

But in addition to asking for funds, I urge you to draw the necessary conclusion from the experience of the past two years: make the conscious decision to fight for a socialist future, to put an end to the pandemic, to capitalist exploitation and inequality, to war and fascism. Make the decision to join and build the Socialist Equality Party and the International Committee of the Fourth International.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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