

Coronavirus infection rates in Germany reach all-time high

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The coronavirus incidence rates in Germany are higher than ever. On Monday, the seven-day incidence (cases per 100,000 people) reached a new all-time high of 553.2. In Germany alone, 116,448 COVID-19 patients have died; no fewer than 1,620 coronavirus deaths have accrued in the last seven days.

The incidence recently exceeded 500 for the first time since the pandemic began. In just one week, more than five of every thousand residents have become infected with SARS-CoV-2.

A year ago, even the administration Angela Merkel declared a seven-day incidence of 50 people infected per 100,000 population to be a “critical threshold,” because at higher incidences, public health departments could no longer reliably track chains of infection. Such considerations are long out of date. Levels have increased tenfold and continue an exponential rise due to the Omicron variant. But the federal coalition and state governments still see no reason to employ effective public protections.

In a dozen days, the seven-day incidence has more than doubled. And in a number of counties and cities it has passed the 1,000 mark. In Berlin Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, it is just under 1,600; in Bremen, 1,477; in Frankfurt am Main, 1,080; and in Hamburg, 1,056.

This mass infection is deliberate, open and ruthlessly enacted. Governments at the federal and state levels are responding to the explosion in case numbers not with the necessary protective measures, but by doubling down on the policy of contagion. They expect the working population to bear the consequences.

Health Minister Karl Lauterbach (Social Democratic Party, SPD) summed up these consequences in *Bild am Sonntag*, saying, “We are facing very difficult weeks in Germany.” He warned that the situation in clinics would worsen, and pointed out that although it was now mainly the younger people with many contacts who were falling

ill, once more older people become infected the number of admissions would increase, not only in intensive care units but throughout hospitals as well. “There is a threat of entire departments closing,” Lauterbach said. “Mass infection means that hundreds of thousands will become seriously ill and we will again have to mourn many thousands of coronavirus deaths.”

Lauterbach describes the consequences of his own policy. Already, hospitals and ICUs are facing massive overload as rising patient numbers coincide with high absenteeism due to infections among hospital staff. More and more nurses are deciding to leave the profession because of the constant overwork and poor pay.

On Monday, state health ministers decided to change the coronavirus testing strategy in response to the high incidence rates. They no longer want to make the PCR tests available to everyone. Only “symptomatic individuals and, where appropriate, vulnerable groups” are to get them, according to minutes of the decision.

At Friday’s press conference, Lauterbach and the leader of the Robert Koch Institute, Lothar Wieler, explained that health authorities were in some cases so overtaxed that they could keep up neither with testing nor reporting. Instead of massively expanding laboratory capacity, testing is being restricted. In the future, even if Germany’s coronavirus app signals red (contact with the virus), only the less reliable rapid antigen test will be used, if any test at all.

The government’s reaction is telling. On January 7, federal and state governments decided to “adapt” quarantine regulations to the high incidence figures, in other words, to shorten them dangerously. They did so in response to committees of experts that predicted that the explosive spread of the pandemic could cripple the functioning of society as a whole. They anticipate that staff at hospitals and nursing homes, schools and public transportation, garbage collection, energy plants, etc.,

could be absent en masse due to COVID infections.

In practice this policy means sending sick and/or contagious people and their contacts to work. “Colleague’s dad is positive. Colleague, because boosted, is not allowed to quarantine. Colleague works with us in confined space for four days. Colleague becomes positive. We are not allowed to go into quarantine because we are boosted. Why is our health care system so screwed!” writes a user on Twitter.

To help impose this criminal policy on the population in the midst of the pandemic, the media has been claiming for days that the Omicron variant, while highly contagious, is less dangerous, and even “mild.” It is the long-awaited opportunity that will allow society to “live with the virus.”

This propaganda has even been taken up by Charité virologist Dr. Christian Drosten, part of the government’s expert committee, who is succumbing more and more to political pressure. When asked by the *Tagesspiegel am Sonntag*, “We all will and must be infected with SARS-Cov-2 sooner or later?” Drosten replied, “Yes, we have to pass through this straight, there is no alternative.” Omicron has “reduced disease severity,” he said. More vaccination is still needed, he said, but, “Now would be a chance, assuming broad immunity.”

In contrast, US epidemiologist Eric Feigl-Ding issued a firm warning about the dangers of the policy of “living with the virus.” On Twitter, Feigl-Ding wrote: “#Omicron is a potentially really dangerous Trojan horse. It lulls people into complacency but eventually hits them hard with #LongCovid!!!”

Feigl-Ding participated in the *World Socialist Web Site*’s global webinar in October, where leading scientists argued for the elimination of the coronavirus. Feigl-Ding condemned private-sector control of vaccine production and distribution, as well as governments’ overall response to the pandemic. “We now know well,” Feigl-Ding said, “that the political forces that are for the policy of ‘opening up’ the economy, for the spread of the virus, the mass infection and ‘living with the virus,’ obviously don’t give a damn about scientific arguments.” He concluded that, as a result, around the world “we will still be counting bodies” for months to come.

A recent study at Mainz University Hospital demonstrated the long-term effects the coronavirus can have on those infected, including children and adolescents. According to the study, up to 40 percent of people infected with SARS-CoV-2 will still suffer six months later from symptoms such as fatigue, disturbed

sense of taste and smell, exhaustion, poor concentration and poor performance. This gives a sense of the consequences that the current deliberate mass infection in schools will have on the entire younger generation.

In the third year of the pandemic, it has become clear that the lives, health and well-being of the working population count for nothing to those in power. The pandemic cannot be defeated without taking up the struggle against the prevailing social system, the capitalist profit economy.

Just recently the latest Oxfam study confirmed that profits and stock prices are rising in parallel to counts of deaths and infections. “For billionaires, the pandemic is a gold rush,” writes the *Tagesschau*. The social divide is wider than ever.

Resistance is growing to the deliberate infection of the population. Greek students occupying their schools inscribed on their banners, “We will not allow you to play with our health and lives as if they don’t count!” Hundreds of schools are occupied in Greece. At the same time, students and teachers are protesting in U S cities. For the first time, elementary school teachers in France have organized a national strike, and students in Austria called for a school strike on January 18.

Resistance is also growing in Germany. The courageous protest of a 13-year-old schoolgirl in the city of Hagen has triggered a wave of solidarity across the country. On Twitter, the hashtags #Nichtmituns (not with us) and #Wirstreiken (we are striking) are trending. Medical students in several cities have called for “Impfen-statt-Schimpfen” (vaccination instead of complaining) rallies against the right-wing “walks,” i.e., unregistered protests. Demonstrations in solidarity with nursing staff have taken place in Dresden, Hildesheim, Karlsruhe and elsewhere just in recent days.

The WSWs, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP) and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) call on workers, teachers, educators, parents and students to consciously organize this resistance.



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