

Herd immunity policy leading to several hundred thousand cases daily in Germany

Tamino Dreisam
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The Omicron wave in Germany is spreading massively. On Friday, for the third day in a row, more than 100,000 people became infected with the coronavirus. Within one day, 140,160 new cases were confirmed, and the 7-day national incidence rate jumped to 706 per 100,000 inhabitants. The number of active cases currently stands at almost 1.2 million.

In 229 districts—more than half in the country—the incidence level is currently over 500. In 25 districts, the incidence level is already over 1,000. The city-states are particularly affected. In both Bremen and Berlin, the incidence rate is 1,258. In Hamburg it is 1,221 and in Berlin Mitte it is as high as 2,286.

The positive test rate of 24 percent and the high load on testing laboratories indicate that the actual incidences of infection are still far above the recorded figures.

The number of daily hospitalisations and deaths is dreadful. On Wednesday, as well as on Thursday and Friday, the number of new hospitalisations exceeded 1,000. About 2,500 patients are currently struggling for their lives in intensive care units. Over the course of last week, some 1,000 people died from COVID-19.

In the next few weeks, a much greater catastrophe threatens. Federal Health Minister Karl Lauterbach (Social Democratic Party, SPD) said on Wednesday on broadcaster ZDF's *Markus Lanz* programme that “the wave will roughly peak in mid-February, and that we should then expect several hundred thousand cases per day.”

In other European countries, the Omicron wave is already hitting with full force. In France, about 300,000 people are currently being confirmed infected every day, in Italy almost 200,000 and in Spain about 150,000. In Britain, the health system is on the verge of collapse.

Cursorily, Lauterbach pointed out that such high case numbers in Germany will have particularly catastrophic consequences. “Because we have a high number of

unvaccinated elderly people in Germany, it can turn out very differently in our country than in Italy, France or England, for example,” he explained. “I would expect the real burden in the intensive care units to come in the middle, end of February.”

Lauterbach's appearance throws a spotlight on the criminal character of government policy. While the health minister warned of a tsunami of infections and overloaded hospitals, he did not announce any measures to prevent the catastrophe. The federal and state governments are subordinating every aspect of pandemic policy to private profit—no matter how cruel the consequences.

To keep the profits of the banks and corporations flowing, schools and businesses must remain open. Even industries like automobile manufacture and the arms trade have not been shut down once throughout the pandemic. When there were outbreaks in factories, production was maintained as far as possible.

To keep the economy running despite the exponential rise in infections, governments around the world are dismantling the most basic coronavirus protections. In Germany, the government has reduced the quarantine period to 10 days with a release option after just seven days, and even after five days for children and young people.

Now the federal coalition government is preparing measures limiting the use of PCR tests to certain settings. A corresponding draft resolution is to be agreed at the next State Premiere's Conference on 24 January. For example, the better PCR tests are to be used only for essential workers. For all others, the less accurate rapid lateral flow tests will suffice for free testing. As a result, sick and/or infectious people and their contacts will continue to go to work in the future.

Politicians and the media are openly preparing to end all protective measures. “We cannot react to Omicron with lockdowns alone,” declared Bavarian Prime Minister

Markus Söder (Christian Social Union, CSU) on Thursday, announcing a “change of strategy.” Specifically, the state government is planning further relaxations for the culture and sports sectors.

In a recent *Der Spiegel* article, Andreas Gassen, chairman of the Federal Association of Statutory Health Insurance Physicians, calls for “a comprehensible exit strategy” and “an end to the restrictions on basic rights.” Gassen's declared role model is British prime minister Boris Johnson, who announced the end of compulsory mask wearing on Wednesday and wants to lift the last restrictions on social contacts on January 26.

In Germany, too, the ruling class is pursuing the strategy of deliberate mass infection. “Contact restrictions” were “only there to prevent the health system from being overwhelmed,” *Spiegel* quotes Andrew Ullmann, a Liberal Democratic Party (FDP) member of parliament.

Schools form a central building block of the herd immunity policy, which are to be kept open with the full support of the Education Trade Union (GEW). The incidence level in the 15 to 34-year-old age group currently stands at 958. The incidence level in the five to 14-year-old age group has doubled in the last week and now stands at 1,383. Since the end of the winter holidays, almost 300 outbreaks have been officially recorded in schools.

The deliberate infection of children is having a dramatic impact. Already, about 200 children under the age of fifteen are being hospitalised every week. The official propaganda that the virus cannot harm children is based on lies. In the US, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1,127 children have now died from COVID-19.

The latest Oxfam report, entitled “Inequality kills,” makes clear in whose interest the murderous policy of deliberate mass infection is being pursued. While the incomes of the bottom 99 percent of the population fell and an estimated 17 million people died from COVID-19, the fortunes of the world's ten richest men doubled. According to the German preface to the report, inequality has risen particularly sharply in Germany:

The ten richest individuals have increased their cumulative wealth since the beginning of the pandemic from about 144 billion to about 256 billion US dollars—an increase of about 78 percent. This gain alone is almost equal to the total wealth

of the poorest 40 percent, i.e., of 33 million Germans. Meanwhile, the poverty rate in Germany is at an all-time high of 16.1 percent.

These figures alone make clear that the fight against the pandemic requires a fight against the capitalist system. By its very nature, capitalism stands in opposition to the basic needs of society. Yet both the knowledge and the medical possibilities exist to contain the virus within a few months and end the pandemic.

What is needed are strict lockdowns—especially for schools and non-essential businesses—combined with vaccinations, mass testing and isolation of all infected people and their contacts. However, the measures are not being taken because they run counter to the profit interests of the corporations and a small parasitic financial elite.

Around the world, the struggle to end the pandemic is developing. In the past few days alone, teachers and students in France, Greece, Austria, the UK, Canada, and the US have launched protests and gone on strike against keeping unsafe schools open.

Resistance is also growing in Germany. Last week, the protest of 13-year-old student Yasmin from Hagen against attending unsafe in-person classes triggered a wave of solidarity. Parents, students, teachers, and other workers are taking to social media to condemn the “profits before lives” policy that has already led to more than 116,000 deaths in Germany alone.

This resistance must be organised independently of all bourgeois parties and the trade unions and needs a clear anti-capitalist strategy and orientation.



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