

An open letter to all Brazilian workers: The pandemic must be ended and lives saved in 2022!

Socialist Equality Group (Brazil)
1 February 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The year 2022 has just begun and is already marked by a COVID-19 outbreak in Brazil and around the planet. Workers in Brazil and throughout the world must decide to act collectively and finally put an end to the COVID-19 pandemic. This must not be another nightmarish year of mass infections, illness and death!

The social catastrophe of the last two years is the outcome of the criminal subordination of public health to the relentless accumulation of corporate profits and the private wealth of mega-millionaires and billionaires.

In terms of its cost in human lives, this pandemic certainly ranks as one of the greatest tragedies in Brazilian history. 2021 was the most lethal year in Brazil's history, with more than half a million excess deaths compared to the years before the pandemic.

Officially, 25.3 million Brazilians have already been infected with COVID-19. Given the incredibly low testing in the country, the real number is many times higher. In addition to the growing death toll, millions of people are grappling with the effects of Long COVID. This affliction can impact every organ of the body, persist for an unknown period of time—possibly for life—and leave the infected individuals with serious physical health problems and brain damage even more severe than that associated with lead poisoning.

Virtually everyone has a friend or family member who has died from this horrible virus. Many of you reading this have yourselves been infected and may be suffering from Long COVID.

But even after two years, the rapid spread of Omicron carries with it the danger that the new year will be even worse than 2020 and 2021. For every day of the past two weeks, Brazil has recorded new record numbers of infections, with 257,000 new cases reported last Friday, more than double the record from previous surges! The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation estimates that the real number of infections in Brazil is already at around 4 million daily cases.

Despite the massive disinformation campaign promoted by the official media and the administration of fascistic President

Jair Bolsonaro, seeking to convince the population that Omicron is “mild”—or even “welcome,” representing the “end of the pandemic,” in Bolsonaro's words!—deaths are, once again, tragically exploding. This Tuesday, 929 new deaths were reported, with the curve of deaths in a full swing upwards.

The Omicron-driven global outbreak is taking an especially terrible toll on children. In Brazil, seven states have already reached full capacity in children's ICU beds. Children up to the age of 11 already account for 4.5 percent of patients in COVID-19 ICUs in the country, an all-time pandemic record, and deaths in that age group increased fivefold in January. Children may not only die, but also develop serious illnesses as a result of COVID-19, such as Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C), and chronic problems including cognitive damage and motor function problems.

Faced with this catastrophic scenario, the motto adopted by all the parties of the bourgeoisie—including the Workers Party (PT) and its allies in the governments of the Northeast -- is: “No step back in reopening the economy! Let the virus spread like a fire in a haystack!” They have unquestionably embraced the anti-scientific and eugenicist “herd immunity” strategy—advocated in the first place by Bolsonaro and the far right.

The results of the reopening of schools, which is being recklessly initiated across Brazil, are known to be catastrophic. As researcher Lucas Ferrante stated in a recent interview to the *World Socialist Web Site*, “The New Year holidays don't increase community and urban mobility by more than 40 percent, 50 percent, the return of in-person classes does.” Despite this, editorials in the corporate media urge maintaining “mandatory in-person classes” at all costs, and are forging—as *Folha de S. Paulo* did— terms such as “public health regression” to describe established scientific measures to break viral transmission.

Misinformation and falsehoods from these political forces feed a sense of discouragement, which is then used to promote outright defeatism towards the pandemic. The corporate-controlled media now argues that we have to “live with COVID,” which they say will inevitably become endemic.

What does this even mean? What is the end goal of this policy, and when will the needless suffering and deaths of millions stop?

In fact, with the appropriate measures, the virus can still be eliminated over the course of only a few months. In China, the Zero COVID strategy led to the elimination of the virus by April 2020, with only two recorded deaths since May 2020. The methods used in China are well known and developed out of more than a century of experience fighting infectious diseases.

The principles of science and public health are constantly being ignored and falsified to impose a narrative to justify fully reopening business and the economy. The reduction of quarantine and isolation periods, following the criminal new guidelines of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is only the latest in an endless series of destructive actions.

The criminal insistence on keeping factories and other workplaces open, and sending kids into school, flies in the face of everything that has been learned in the fight against infectious diseases. Centuries of scientific study have given humanity an arsenal of knowledge to fight disease. This knowledge was used in the 20th century, including in the Brazil, to eliminate diseases that were once leading causes of death, including polio, smallpox, measles, malaria and yellow fever. Some of these have returned, in outbreaks that are due to the destruction of public health, promoted by the ruling class.

Modern science has shown that the closure of all nonessential workplaces and the transition to remote learning for all schools for a period of two months could quickly bring viral transmission under control and lay the basis for the full-scale elimination of COVID-19. These necessary lockdowns must be accompanied by the provision of full financial and social supports for all workers and small-business people affected.

Two-month lockdowns must be combined with the globally coordinated production and distribution of vaccines and high-quality masks to all countries, as well as the use of mass testing, contact tracing, the safe isolation and treatment of infected patients, and a dramatic expansion of health care infrastructure. At every essential workplace and hospital, workers must have access to the highest quality N95 masks, or better, as well as modern filtration and ventilation systems. All nonessential domestic and international travel must cease immediately to allow for the elimination of the virus in each country.

The working class must take matters into its own hands. The fight to end the pandemic must be based on the following principles:

- The present policy of “herd immunity”—i.e., allowing COVID-19 to spread throughout the population—must be repudiated. A new strategy, directed toward the elimination and eradication of SARS-CoV-2, must be adopted.
- The policies implemented to stop viral transmission must be

determined by the needs of public health. The protection of human life and safety must take absolute and unconditional priority over all corporate-financial interests. The costs of fighting the pandemic—including the payment of wages and salaries, compensation to small business owners, full medical coverage for the ill, and payments to bereaved families—must be borne by corporations and via a 100 percent tax on the windfall pandemic profits obtained by large investors through the run-up in the stock markets.

- The fight against the pandemic must be conducted on a global scale. The pandemic cannot be stopped unless SARS-CoV-2 is eliminated in all countries.

The bourgeois parties, big business and the corporate-controlled media will declare that these policies are 1) impossible to implement and 2) incompatible with the existing capitalist system.

The answer to the first objection is that it is impossible to accept the infection of millions of people and the massive loss of life.

As for the second objection, the answer is simply this: If capitalism can offer no solution to a crisis that threatens the lives and well-being of the vast majority of the population, then it should be gotten rid of and replaced with a socialist system that prioritizes life over profits.

The fight against COVID is, in essence, a struggle against capitalism. The tragedy of the past two years has made the case for the reorganization of the world economy in the interests of the working class.

We urge all workers to circulate this statement, initiate discussion at your workplace, form rank-and-file committees and win support for collective action to stop the spread of the pandemic.

Contact the Socialist Equality Group and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees. We are anxious to discuss with you the situation in your workplace and to assist you in organizing the fight to end the pandemic.

Fraternally,
Socialist Equality Group (Brazil)



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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