

Germany continues to relax protective measures despite 250,000 new coronavirus infections every day

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As coronavirus infections reach new daily highs, the German ruling class is discussing lifting even the last protective measures. On Friday, nearly 250,000 people nationwide became infected with the virus, and the seven-day incidence rate rose to 1,350 per 100,000 inhabitants.

The incidence level is highest in Berlin (1,803), Bavaria (1,695), Brandenburg (1,683) and Hesse (1,622). In 17 districts, the incidence rate is already above 2,000. In Berlin Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf it is 2,705. The number of positive tests has increased to 41 percent, up by 9 percent compared to the previous week, which suggests underreporting of the actual infection figures.

The number of outbreaks in medical treatment facilities, as well as old people's homes and nursing homes, also continues to rise. Last week, there were 154 outbreaks in medical treatment facilities (29 more than the previous week) and 246 outbreaks in nursing homes and homes for the elderly (15 more than the previous week). This refutes the claims of Health Minister Karl Lauterbach (Social Democratic Party, SPD) made at the last federal press conference that the older generations had been successfully protected from the Omicron wave.

Particularly ominous is the rising number of hospitalisations. The adjusted hospitalisation incidence rate is already between 8 and 9 per 100,000 and is showing a strong upward trend. Over 1,200 people are hospitalised every day. The proportion of free intensive care beds is currently just over 10 percent on a national average, considered the threshold for hospitals' ability to respond. Since the beginning of the week, more than 600 people have already succumbed to the virus.

Contrary to official propaganda, schools are a central driver of infection. The incidence rate in the 15- to 34-year-old age group is 1,684. Among 5- to 14-year-olds it is already 3,818, which means that almost 4 percent of students in this age group are newly infected with the virus every week. In the last four weeks alone, 1,566 outbreaks were reported in schools, although the last two weeks cannot yet be conclusively assessed due to late reporting.

The ruling class is responding to this tsunami of infections in the biggest wave of the pandemic so far with an even more ruthless policy of deliberate mass infection. The remaining protective measures are gradually being ended. In the process, politicians and the media are competing with their calls for the lifting of all measures, as has already been implemented in Denmark.

On Wednesday, all the federal states uniformly decided to massively increase the upper limit of spectators allowed at large events. This means that up to 4,000 spectators are now permitted indoors and as many as 10,000 at large outdoor events. In states such as North Rhine-Westphalia, the maximum number of spectators had previously been 750. Bavaria, Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt have already announced that they will allow more than 10,000 spectators at events.

Numerous government representatives are already calling for more far-reaching relaxations. Last week, Bavarian Prime Minister Markus Söder (Christian Social Union, CSU) demanded "consistent steps in opening up [society]" and a staggered plan for relaxing the rules in large events and in hospitality. Specifically, he called for an end to the "2G rule" (proof of vaccination or a negative test) in retail and the

obligation to show a test result in restaurants. Basically, he said, one should proceed according to the principle, “Where FFP2 masks are worn, contact restrictions can be lowered.”

Finance Minister Christian Lindner (Liberal Democratic Party, FDP) has also called for an end to the 2G rule in the retail sector. He told *Der Spiegel*, “We already have to work concretely on when and under what conditions there can be a gradual opening up.”

The first federal states are already beginning to implement the relaxations. For example, the state administration in Schleswig-Holstein is planning to lift the 2G regulation in shops and to abolish the curfew in restaurants as of February 9. State Premier Daniel Günther (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) praised the “Danish way” and declared that his state wanted to “move a bit towards normality.” A short time later, the Hesse state government also declared it plans to end 2G rules throughout the retail sector.

Commentary in the press openly makes clear in whose interests the policy of deliberate mass infection is being implemented. Already, more than 118,000 lives have been lost in Germany alone. “Ending coronavirus rigidity—for the sake of the economy” is the headline of a commentary in *Die Welt*. To get out of the “coronavirus trap again,” the newspaper opines, “one thing above all is needed: a shrewd plan on how the country can gradually open up—following the example of other countries.”

This book compiles the most critical programmatic statements, polemics, scientific analyses, interviews, and news articles published by the World Socialist Web Site on the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a social and political chronology of this world historic event based on a Marxist and Trotskyist perspective.

In fact, this has been happening for a long time. The first official act of the “traffic light” federal coalition of the SPD, FDP and Greens was to officially end the designation of a “national epidemic situation.” Since then, the government parties have proven they are even more ruthless in pushing through the interests of finance capital than the grand coalition of the CDU and SPD before. The quarantine period has been shortened and contact tracing and testing reduced. Now the government, with the support of all the parliamentary parties and the media, is systematically working to fully

“normalise” the pandemic.

The campaign claiming that the pandemic would peak and become “endemic” by the end of February is aimed at accustoming the population to widespread infection and deaths indefinitely. Already, the more than 150 deaths per day hardly find a mention in the news. Reporting on the situation in hospitals or even severe and fatal COVID-19 cases among children and young people are systematically ignored.

In the process, an ever greater catastrophe is unfolding. As the entire course of the pandemic so far has shown, the herd immunity policy does not lead to an “endemic” end to the pandemic but to the emergence of ever more infectious and resistant variants. Already, the Omicron subvariant BA.2, which has 80 to 90 mutations, is spreading rapidly.

The only way to end the pandemic and stop the mass deaths is a Zero COVID strategy to eliminate the virus globally. The example of China, in particular, shows that this is possible. However, the governments of the imperialist countries vehemently oppose the Zero COVID strategy because it cuts across the profit-grubbing of the corporations and a small parasitic financial elite. Only an independent movement of the working class can push through the necessary measures—lockdowns combined with vaccination, contact tracing and the isolation of infected people.

In the US, France, Greece, Austria and around the world, student and teacher struggles are increasingly developing against the policy of herd immunity. In Germany, too, a petition by more than 100 student representatives is currently going viral, opposing the policy of deliberate mass infection in schools. However, a struggle for safe education can only be successful if it is armed with a socialist perspective and does not appeal to the governments that have been deliberately implementing this policy for two years.



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