

Coronavirus deaths in Germany reach 150,000

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Last weekend, the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) officially reported the 150,000th coronavirus death in Germany. This shocking milestone is the result of the profits-before-lives policy that all federal and state governments, and governments throughout the world, have pursued since the beginning of the pandemic.

This catastrophic loss of life is unprecedented in peacetime. In two and a half years, as many people have died as there are residents of a medium-sized city. Life expectancy for girls fell by 0.4 years and for boys by as much as 0.6 years compared to 2019.

Behind the figure of 150,000 dead are millions of people who have lost friends, relatives, children, or parents. Millions more are suffering from the long-term effects of infection with the virus.

The actual extent of the deaths is much higher than the official figures indicate. A WHO study examining excess mortality because of the pandemic came to the conclusion that 195,000 people had already died in 2020 and 2021 in Germany--that is 42 percent more than the officially recorded deaths in the same period. Extrapolated from the 150,000 deaths now officially reached, that would be 213,000 actual deaths.

One would think that these shocking numbers should give cause to remember the dead and to seriously discuss the political decisions that led to this disaster. However, this is not even remotely the case. On the contrary, the establishment politicians react mainly with silence. Dying from the virus is to be accepted as something natural and inevitable.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz (Social Democrats, SPD) made no official statement marking the tragedy. And German Health Minister Karl Lauterbach (SPD) merely penned a tweet, "Now there are 150,000 corona dead. Too many, but without the solidarity and common

sense of the population, there would be many more. Keeping the death toll low must remain one of our goals."

This is as cynical as it is mendacious. The figure of 150,000 is anything but "low"; it is roughly equivalent to the population of Regensburg. And in fact, it was never the goal of the federal government—neither the previous grand coalition of the Christian Democrats (CDU) and SPD, nor of the current "traffic light" coalition of the SPD, Liberal Democrats (FDP) and Greens—to "keep the death toll low." From the beginning, it placed protecting profits above saving lives. The 150,000 deaths are the direct result of this policy.

Shortly after the pandemic began in March 2020, then-Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) declared she and her government assumed that 60 to 70 percent of the population would become infected with the virus. It was only because of protests and wildcat strikes by the working class, which spread through Italy and other southern European countries to the US and North America within a few days, that the government was forced to impose a limited lockdown.

The ruling class used this lockdown to transfer billions into the bank accounts of the large corporations and the rich in the form of so-called "rescue packages." All parties in the Bundestag (federal parliament), from the Left Party to the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), worked closely together on this. When Bundestag President Wolfgang Schäuble (CDU) declared at the end of April 2020 that the right to life was not "absolutely" protected by the constitution, all parties took this as a signal to lift the limited lockdowns and other protections.

The following winter of 2020/2021 was to be the deadliest winter of the pandemic so far, with nearly 900

people dying daily at its peak. At the same time, stock prices skyrocketed, and a fabulous orgy of enrichment took place at the top. According to the US business magazine *Forbes*, the number of German billionaires rose by 29 to 136 in the first year of the pandemic alone. Since then, this class policy has been steadily intensified.

When the traffic light coalition took over the government after the September 2021 federal election, it took the policy of allowing the virus to run wild to the extreme, in order to protect capitalist profit interests. On November 25, even before the traffic light government was officially in office, coalition officials ended the designation of an “epidemic emergency,” taking away the legal basis for lockdowns, school and business closures, and other life-saving measures.

As a result of the traffic light coalition’s criminal policies, Omicron emerged as the dominant variant in Germany, like the rest of the world, and infection rates soared to record levels. At the peak of the wave, hundreds of thousands were infected daily. The government responded by completely dropping the pretense it was trying to contain the pandemic.

In January 2022, the government shortened the quarantine period to seven days. In March, it passed a so-called “Protection Against Infection Act” that reduced the coronavirus measures to “basic protection.” In April, it rejected a policy of mandatory vaccination. In May, it shortened the quarantine period to five days, and in June, eliminated free testing.

Under the new Infection Protection Act that took effect October 1, the traffic light government is also eliminating the last protective measures, laying the groundwork for more mass fatalities this autumn and winter. Already, more than 500 people are dying from the virus each week, and new immune-resistant subvariants such as the Omicron BA 2.75.2 are spreading.

At the same time, the government is subordinating all areas of society to its war policy. While it is pouring 100 billion euros into the military via a “special fund for the Bundeswehr” (Armed Forces) and tens of billions more into arms deliveries for Ukraine, the health budget is being cut by dozens of billions of euros.

Lauterbach himself summed up the priority of the ruling class when he tweeted on Saturday: “We are at war with Putin, and not his psychotherapists. We must

continue to consistently pursue victory in the form of the liberation of Ukraine.” That is unequivocal. After more than 150,000 deaths in the pandemic, the ruling class is ready to sacrifice even greater masses of people in the war against Russia.

This must not be allowed to happen. The milestone of 150,000 coronavirus deaths, like the dangerous escalation of the NATO proxy war in Ukraine, must be taken by the working class as a wake-up call to discuss a political perspective that can end mass deaths in the pandemic and war.

As the emergence of more and more dangerous mutations shows, the only strategy to end the pandemic is to eliminate the virus. But since this runs contrary to the profit interests of the ruling class, this strategy can only be implemented by the working class and requires a socialist program. The enormous scientific and social resources available to fight the pandemic must be deployed and coordinated globally. The struggle against the pandemic, like the struggle against war, is at its core a struggle against capitalism.



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