

One year since WSWS webinar, “How to end the pandemic”

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Today marks one year since the *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) hosted a powerful webinar titled, “How to end the pandemic.” The event brought together a panel of leading scientists and workers to present the case for the global elimination of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. The speakers warned that unless this strategy were adopted, millions more people would needlessly die.

In the year since the webinar was held, over 386 million people have officially been infected and 1,581,168 have officially died from COVID-19 globally. Due to inadequate testing and data collection throughout the world, these figures are known to be vast undercounts. Experts estimate that the majority of the world’s population has now been infected with COVID-19, including billions of infections in the past year, while the number of excess deaths attributable to the pandemic stands at 21.7 million people. Since the October 24 webinar, there have been roughly 6 million excess deaths, according to *The Economist*.

The October 24, 2021 webinar was viewed by several thousand people from over 100 countries throughout the world. It took place after a series of global school strikes initiated by British parent Lisa Diaz in opposition to the reckless reopening of schools. The webinar marked a major milestone in the fight of the international working class to stop the needless suffering and death from COVID-19.

The webinar was held exactly one month before the emergence of the highly infectious and immune-resistant Omicron variant caused an unprecedented wave of infections globally. Over the past year, the waves of infection produced by this new variant and its subvariants were seized upon by world governments to scrap all remaining mitigation measures and embrace the homicidal “herd immunity” strategy pioneered by the far right in 2020.

The world now stands at the beginning of yet another surge of the pandemic, driven by numerous “escape variants” that evolved from Omicron. These variants are the most immune-evasive and infectious to date, and threaten to cause massive numbers of infections, reinfections, hospitalizations and deaths globally.

At the end of the October 24 webinar, WSWS International

Editorial Board Chairman David North stressed the warnings made by the panel of scientists and called on all viewers to take action to stop the pandemic. The significance of this summation and the entire webinar have only deepened over the past year, and the scientific case for a global elimination strategy must still be brought into the working class in every country.

In his summation, North stated, “Our aim was to review the science, for there to be a clearer understanding of how this virus spreads, the significance of aerosols as opposed to droplets, how all talk of ‘mitigation’ separated from a strategy of elimination is ineffective and in fact nothing more than an apology for so-called ‘herd immunity.’ Moreover, it was our aim to demonstrate, and the scientists have shown this, that the policy of elimination cannot be regional, it cannot be national, it must be global.

“Now, I think it’s easy enough at this point to identify the interests which block the implementation of an eliminationist strategy. There is an old saying, that ‘if geometric axioms impinged on material interests, an attempt would be made to refute them.’ And so, we must ask, ‘what are the material interests which block the implementation of policies which science has demonstrated are necessary?’ It’s the interests of profit, it’s the interests of private wealth accumulation.

“We can’t get around the fact that we live in a society which hails the mindless, ridiculous, useless extravagance of a ruling elite which can’t think of any other better way to use its money than to blast itself into space. That’s not how resources should be used. All these resources ultimately come from the working class. And here we come to the other side of the equation.

“We know that there exist social forces which oppose the implementation of the necessary policies. What are the social forces in whose interests science works? Is there a class in society whose interests intersect with scientific truth? That class is the working class, the great mass of people.

“Now if there’s one critical change that’s taken place since our last webinar on August 24th, and a cause for great encouragement, it is the fact that we’re now beginning to see the working class move on a world scale. And there are many similarities in this situation to previous global crises.

“In its coverage of the pandemic, the *World Socialist Web Site* has often made the comparison between the pandemic and

World War I, the great catastrophe which erupted suddenly in the summer of 1914. To everyone's surprise, everyone thought this would rapidly be over, the boys would be back by Christmas, they weren't back by Christmas. The dying began in massive numbers and it continued, and it continued, not just for one year, not just for two years, but into the third year.

"And by that third year, popular opposition began to emerge. Strikes began to break out over the war, over social questions, over deteriorating economic conditions at home. And finally, in the most important events of all, in the Russian Revolution, which the great American radical Max Eastman describes so well in the film *Tsar to Lenin* as 'the beginning of the end of the World War.'

"The initiative taken by Lisa Diaz, the efforts made by workers in rank-and-file committees to take control of their own struggles, and also to take control of the fight against the unsafe conditions in their factories, in the schools, is an indication of a profound change. Because in the end, if this pandemic is to be stopped, it will be stopped by the intervention of a social force which has a direct and pressing and urgent interest in ending it, and that's the working class.

"The *World Socialist Web Site*, the Socialist Equality Party, the International Committee of the Fourth International with which it is affiliated, firmly believe that the working class has the power to bring about a change in this situation. It needs policies, it needs an understanding. This is the role, of course, that science plays. And again, I want to express my appreciation for all the scientists, those who are here with us today and the many others working in the background, who are trying desperately to come up with answers to this crisis. But in the final analysis, science cannot stand alone. It requires the support of a powerful social force, and that is the working class.

"Howard, quite appropriately, quoted from Engels. His close associate, of course, was Karl Marx, who famously wrote in the 11th Thesis on Feuerbach, 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world, though the point is to change it.' Well, we can now say, paraphrasing those famous words: The scientists have explained the pandemic. They have shown how it is transmitted and how that transmission can be stopped. But the challenge of the working class is to end it.

"And so, I would like to urge as we conclude this event, that all those of you who want to become involved in this fight, please contact us. The address to which you may make contact is on the screen. This fight must be carried forward on an international scale.

"Again, let me reiterate the point, this virus does not attack individuals. The evil genius of this virus, if one could, in a certain sense, attribute genius to what is in fact an unconscious biological process, but the character of this virus is that it attacks society. It depends not on infiltrating just an individual. It must spread through communities. And therefore, it can only be fought at the level of society, not at the level of the individual. And here again, the working class and its historical

role, finds the most acute expression.

"The working class is an international class. It acts socially. Its power is expressed not individually, but through collective action. And that collective action, that collective force, must be brought to bear to bring an end to this pandemic, to stop the dying, and to change the conditions in society which allow such tragedies to occur.

"The pandemic which we are now going through is a powerful, powerful warning. It's not the only threat we face. Others lurk not all that far ahead in the future. Some are already in the process of development. Climate change and, of course, the ever-present and growing danger of war, to which so much of our global resources are directed, uselessly, preparing for mass killing rather than for the development of society, the development of civilization, and the creation of a world in which we can all live in peace, in brotherhood and friendship, concentrated on the future, the future of our children and our grandchildren.

"Again, to all the scientists, public health, teachers, activists who participated, thank you very much. To all of you who are listening, watching this program, don't stand on the sidelines. Get involved. This is a life-and-death struggle. The world we live in will not survive unless there is a fundamental reordering of society, away from private wealth, the accumulation of private fortunes, anarchy in production. It is a fight for the future. It is a fight for socialism. Thank you very much, and good evening."

We encourage all of our readers to watch the entire event below and to share this page, which has chapters for each of the speakers, as widely as possible. To get involved in the fight to end the pandemic, fill out the form at the bottom of this page.



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