

PSOE-Podemos government ignores surge of COVID-19 cases in Spain

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A new wave of COVID-19 is developing across Spain, part of the next global wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government's complete dismantling of testing and data reporting makes it impossible to measure the evolution of the pandemic, cases are clearly rising.

The only data available is on the accumulated incidence level of the virus in people over 60 years of age. In September, it stood at 150 cases per 100,000 inhabitants during 14 days. It has now reached 221 cases. Hospitalizations are also rising rapidly, going from 4.8 per 100,000 inhabitants at the end of September to 7 patients per 100,000 inhabitants. In addition, after a month of October with very high temperatures due to climate change, immunologists warn that the arrival of the cold could rapidly increase infections and hospitalizations.

The deaths are hardly ever commented upon in official circles, part of the ruling elite's new strategy of simply ignoring a pandemic that has already killed at least 20 million people globally and over 115,000 in Spain, 160,000, measured in the more reliable excess-death statistics. However, several hundred people continue to die of COVID-19 every fortnight in Spain.

The criminal downplaying of data is seen in excess mortality. Spain registered a record excess mortality of 32,058 people from January 1 to September 30, 2022, according to data from the Daily Mortality Monitoring Report, prepared by the Carlos III Health Institute. That is, there is an excess of 117 deaths per day without the causes of this increase being known. The alarming figures show an increase in deaths of 94 percent compared to 2019, the year before the pandemic, when 2,862 were recorded as excess deaths.

There is a suspicion that these may be due to cardiovascular diseases linked to Long COVID. José Luis Carrasco, expert in cardiovascular diseases, told the

Antena3 news channel that heart diseases have increased by 20 percent. The origin, he observed, "are the effects of COVID-19". He said: "In Spain the numbers of people who have had COVID are very high", referring to the fact that over 13.5 million Spaniards have been infected, 29 percent of the population. Segura added: "Anyone who has had the disease has a higher vascular risk."

Long COVID victims are being abandoned to their fate. In 2021, the Ministry of Health refused to consider Long COVID a disease. This means that most patients with Long COVID are discharged or do not receive any type of pension for work disability when their maximum period of temporary work disability ends. These patients suffer from multiple disabling conditions: fatigue, fever, breathing problems, muscle, stomach, chest or headache pain, difficulty thinking and concentrating, headaches or sleep problems, among others.

The worst part is borne by health workers, 30 percent of whom suffer from this disease and most of whom were infected during work, treating COVID patients, often without adequate protection. They are not recognized as having suffered a professional illness.

A health care worker with Long COVID, 41-year-old Carolina Sánchez, explained to *La Razón*: "The pain is as if your legs and hands were being pierced with knitting needles, and with small needles in your muscles." She added: "I cannot keep my daughter with 70 percent of my salary [what she receives under sick leave], I go to work dragging myself."

Spain's union bureaucracies have taken no action to defend workers with Long COVID. The large trade union federations, Podemos-linked Workers Commissions (CCOO) and the social-democratic General Union of Workers (UGT), are joining in the silence of the media and the PSOE-Podemos government.

Long COVID victims have organised themselves in the Long COVID Mobilization Platform, calling for protests

both in person and online to denounce the situation of these patients. Its manifesto points to the complete abandonment by the PSOE-Podemos government:

“One year has passed since the World Health Organization published the first official clinical definition of Long COVID-19 disease. This definition being agreed upon worldwide and published to facilitate the treatment of those affected, HAS NOT TRANSLATED into research, monitoring or recognition of a disease that already affects more than 17 million people throughout Europe, and continues to increase due to growing infections”.

But if the PSOE-Podemos government does not care about Long COVID victims, it is also indifferent to the rise of COVID-19 infections. The eighth wave is aggravated by its coincidence with the seasonal flu epidemic and also with the arrival of the new variants BQ.1 and BQ.1.1 to Spain, which are expected to be predominant for the month of December. It is unknown if the immunity the vaccines provide will be able to resist the new variants.

Minister of Health Carolina Darias has recently declared in parliament that the new variants could mean “more immune escape.” Nonetheless, the PSOE-Podemos government’s reaction has been to reduce the information available and restrictions.

The monitoring of COVID-19 variants has lost much of its reliability. It is now carried out with fewer than 50 weekly samples compared to 2,000 in summer and 3,500 in January. In addition, the Ministry of Health has reduced the weekly bulletins reporting on the evolution of infections and deaths from COVID-19 from two to one. Until last April, those bulletins appeared daily.

The accumulated incidence data is also unreliable because since April it has only been collected in people over 60 years of age. Lorenzo Armenteros, spokesperson for the Spanish Society of General Practitioners (SEMG), commented bitterly: “There is an information blackout to justify not taking unpopular measures, such as the obligation to wear a mask indoors. We need to know how the virus is circulating, but some think it is preferable not to know.”

Armenteros also stressed that while medical centers are seeing a significant growth in infections, these are only

partially reflected in the statistics: “We do not have the real dimension of the disease because we lack, for example, information on young people.”

The role of the PSOE-Podemos government and the media in downplaying the virus is having a terrible impact on mass consciousness. Global society is wholly unprepared for the current surge. According to polls by the Carlos III Health Institute, the public’s perception of COVID-19 has rapidly declined, going from 43 percent of people who in the summer of 2020 thought that, if infected, their disease would be “very serious,” to 13 percent registered in this last round.

All this comes amid a completely overwhelmed public health system. According to the Ministry of Health’s own reports, with the pandemic, the workload among doctors increased by 24 percent and among nurses, 44 percent, while the workforce is stagnant. In reality, the situation is much worse because of the large number of casualties due to COVID, anxiety or depression.

The government claims it will implement a paltry €434 million plan to improve health care, a totally insufficient and ridiculous figure, especially when compared to the €26 billion spent on the Spanish military or the €70 billion of European bailout funds being handed out to the banks and corporations.

The PSOE-Podemos’ response has evolved from vaccine-only strategy to “let it rip” to now, complete silence. These policies are all grounded in allowing companies to continue to extract profits out of workers, even at the cost of workers becoming infected, having to work sick, suffering serious consequences or even dying. Above all, it exposes the pseudo-left Podemos Party, which has claimed to defend “those from below,” but in fact shares the contempt for workers of social democratic, right-wing and neo-fascist tendencies, while working to enrich large corporations.



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