

# The billionaires at Davos protect themselves from COVID-19, while declaring the pandemic “over” for working people

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World leaders met this week (January 16 to 20) at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, an exclusive and remote mountain ski resort in the eastern Alps region of Switzerland, to discuss the bleak state of world affairs.

It was the first in-person meeting of the WEF at Davos since the outbreak of COVID-19, but the assembled heads of state, billionaires and their minions did not treat the pandemic as a thing of the past. On the contrary, they were exceedingly vigilant, and participants had to be tested for coronavirus as a condition of attendance.

There was the usual massive entourage of security personnel, with more than 5,000 armed guards, including snipers, at a cost exceeding 30 million Swiss francs, provided by the Swiss army to ensure the heads of state and global business leaders were kept safe from protests. More importantly, every conceivable means to protect them against COVID-19 infection has also been employed.

The measures to protect these billionaires, world leaders and their staff from COVID-19 were kept under wraps until leaked to the press towards the end of the assembly, raising a storm of online controversy. Statements like “Do as I say, not as I do,” “let them eat cake,” and “although we are in the same storm—the same pandemic—we are not in the same boat” are just some of the comments that have exploded on social media.

This outpouring underscores the deep divide that separates the thin layer of fabulously wealthy parasites from the billions among the working class whose labor is exploited 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to ensure the capitalists’ coffers are overflowing with riches. The revolutionary sentiment and comparisons between the global capitalist elite and the doomed French monarchy and aristocracy cannot be missed.

The hypocrisy couldn’t be more vivid as many of those in attendance have been openly declaring an end to the COVID-19 pandemic and calling for the elimination of any public health measures in support of protecting the

population from the continuous assault of a deadly virus that is constantly mutating. Their slogan appears to be: “A pandemic for thee but not for me.”

While these attendees bask in fresh, disinfected air, on their agenda was how the world could shift its COVID-19 strategy from pandemic mitigation to managing it as “endemic,” i.e., permanent. In other words, declare the pandemic over and move on! No one can believe their rhetorical call for equitable distribution of vaccines and therapeutics or equitable access to health care is even remotely serious.

Perhaps the only comment that approached reality came from UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who warned that the world’s failure to prepare for future pandemics was “straining credulity.” He added, “Somehow—after all we have endured—we have not learned the global public health lessons of the pandemic. We are nowhere near ready for pandemics to come.”

As a recent WSWS perspective on Davos declared: “[The] ruling elites … with a collective wealth of trillions of dollars, whose actions over decades have led to an existential crisis for humankind, … have no policies to halt the deepening catastrophe, nor can they develop any, because, in the final analysis, it is rooted not in their psyche, but in the objective contradictions of the capitalist mode of production, which they defend above all else.”

Hence the high level of security to protect the assembled elites both from protesters and the coronavirus.

Every participant at the meeting had been strongly encouraged to be vaccinated with the latest booster jabs prior to their arrival. At the meeting they were given unique identification badges that allowed them access to several testing centers where they were offered free PCR test to ensure they did not have COVID.

In their *Guidance on Health Measures*, organizers of the WEF wrote, “Participants are required to get tested in one of the Forum testing centers after arriving in Davos and picking

up their badges. Conducting a test will keep the badge active and grant the access to the Annual Meeting's venues. Failing to conduct an onsite test or a positive test result will lead to the badge being deactivated."

One should note that these same individuals have private physicians at their beck and call and access to the best healthcare services imaginable should they have been identified as infected with the virus.

Additionally, state-of-the-art ventilation and HEPA air cleaners have been made available in common spaces and private rooms and the over 3,000 attendants will ensure these areas are cleaned and disinfected several times a day. Free access to N95s and respirators was provided because the participants, who have called such measures useless (for working people), know very well that they work. In fact, meeting organizers said that on "Forum-provided official transport," the requirement is for "all drivers (chauffeurs) [to] wear masks at all times."

And if this wasn't enough, there have been reports that Upper Room Ultraviolet Disinfection systems and Far-UVC lights have been installed to disinfect the spaces and remove any virus that gains unauthorized access to the meeting.

Though they misused the term ventilation when they wrote, "Additional state-of-the-art ventilation systems have been installed in areas with restricted air circulation," the photos of these UV devices, which are more efficient and faster at disinfecting spaces than HVAC systems, reveal the real situation. Photos have been seen that indicate such technology is par for the course.

In a recent review on the history of UV air disinfection, the *World Socialist Web Site* explained that this technology was first deployed on a broad scale against COVID-19 in the US Air Force and later among White House staff such as Dr. Ashish Jha, who has been seen using it during his lectures or speeches. Even the UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) commissioned Purified Air towards the end of 2020 to supply it with mobile virus irradiation units (VIU Mobile) in order to reduce airborne SARS-CoV-2 in indoor spaces.

Even though these significant precautions are available to prevent the wealthiest and most powerful from catching COVID-19, they in turn have called such measures meaningless and useless when applied more broadly. Schools and health care systems are crumbling from lack of funding, with burnt out teachers and health care workers facing the prospects of forever COVID, Long-COVID, permanent poorer health and financial impoverishment.

The objective fact is that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to take a significant toll every day on the lives of the most vulnerable. In 2022, it remained the third leading cause of death in the US, with approximately 600 daily

coronavirus deaths on a seven-day average, as XBB.1.5 continues to dominate all other subvariants of Omicron.

Globally, in the last four weeks, 53,000 deaths were reported, a 20 percent increase from the previous month. A review of the excess death figures for much of 2022 demonstrates that these are 10 to 20 percent above pre-pandemic baselines for many countries in Europe and North America.

Even more devastating is the rapidity and ferocity with which the virus has exploited the Chinese government's decision to abandon Zero-COVID to join in this pack of criminals and subject the Chinese people to a virus they had previously pushed back and eliminated.

While his country was facing a harrowing rate of infections and deaths, China's Vice Premier Liu He stood before the world's billionaires at Davos to assure them China was quickly opening for business and ready to pursue "common prosperity." With more than 2 billion travelers ready to begin Lunar New Year celebrations and bring the virus home to their families, the toll of infection and death is certain to increase dramatically.

The *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Committee of the Fourth International are the only forces, through the mechanism of the Global Workers' Inquest into the COVID-19 Pandemic, to investigate the pandemic policy of the capitalist elite and alert the working class against it. The working class must unite and strengthen its forces across all national boundaries and hold these criminals accountable and put an end to the profit system, which is incapable of a genuine mobilization of humanity's resources to defeat the pandemic.



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