

Chinese health authorities declare COVID infection peak has passed

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With holiday travels during the Lunar New Year celebration in China having reached 90 percent of their pre-pandemic levels and tourist locations packed with vacationing revelers, the corporate press is claiming that COVID is finally over.

Such distortions only promote a completely anti-public-health sentiment that places supposed personal liberties above the well-being of community, threatening the physical survival of those now “free” to move about and mix socially. This will have significant repercussions for populations of every country and entrench the oft-stated policy that the “cure can’t be worse than the disease.” The international default policy openly values the economy, i.e. profits, over the lives of people, in this and any future pandemic.

China’s Ministry of Culture and Tourism has reported there have been more than 300 million trips thus far during the holidays. The chief China economist at Nomura Holdings inc., Ting Lu, told Bloomberg News, “Pent-up demand is being released as many people rush to scenic spots, watch firework shows and crowd into restaurants and hotels. He added that government-released data “suggest the ‘exit wave’ is quickly coming to an end.”

The former editor-in-chief of the *Global Times*, Hu Xijin, wrote on social media, “The epidemic seemed to disappear from the vast majority of people suddenly. The Chinese Lunar New Year is very lively. The consumption has resumed rapidly.”

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) official figures for the week ending December 19, 2022, the world saw a single-week pandemic high of 45 million COVID cases, nearly twice that of the BA.1 Omicron wave that ran roughshod across the globe a year ago. This is the result of the demise of the Zero-COVID policy that had kept deaths to an enviably low figure in China of just over 5,000 in a country of 1.4 billion people.

Since the surge in December throughout China, global COVID deaths jumped fourfold to over 40,000 for the week ending January 2, 2023, with “more than half of them from

China,” as noted by WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. Official figures from Chinese health authorities have reported the following numbers of COVID-related deaths:

- December 8 to January 12: 59,938 deaths
- January 13 to January 19: 12,658 deaths
- January 20 to January 26: 6,364 deaths
- Total: 78,960

China’s Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has claimed that COVID-related deaths and severe cases at hospitals have declined by more than 70 percent since the peaks in early January. However, the WHO has indicated these figures grossly underrepresent the actual toll and has persistently called for China to be more transparent with their reporting.

As part of their policy to openly conceal the real estimates of the “exit surge,” the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has chosen to adhere to an extremely narrow definition of COVID deaths. People dying at home or from other than respiratory consequences of their COVID infection are not counted. Additionally, rules and procedures are in place at hospitals that prevent or delay annotating COVID-related mortalities on death certificates.

Such a maneuver greatly lowers the real extent of fatalities and severe disease caused by the “Let it rip” policy that has characterized the ruling class response to the pandemic. The fabricated figures provide a cover for the fraudulent “Omicron is mild” farce. Every country that has lifted their mitigation strategies has experienced a far deadlier surge than what is being reported by Chinese authorities.

Epidemiologic models analyzed by the *Economist* utilize information such as estimates of the rate at “which people become infected, get sick, recover or die (known as a SEIR model [susceptible-exposed-infectious-recovered]).” The magazine found that allowing the virus free rein across China would result in 1.5 million deaths.

As for their assumptions in modeling their estimates, the *Economist* wrote, “Our model builds upon work by Jun Cai

of Fudan University and others. We account for how people of different age groups are affected by COVID and how protected they are by Chinese vaccines. We looked at when the jabs were administered and assumed that they wane at the same rate as Western ones, though there is little evidence on this. We take China at its word when it comes to vaccination rates and intensive-care-unit (ICU) capacity because there are no alternative statistics.”

Another frequently cited British-based analytic company, Airfinity, has placed cumulative deaths since December 1, 2022, at 955,000. They forecast that deaths passed their peak as of January 26, during the Lunar New Year festivities.

A recent report published by the National School of Development of Peking University estimates that as of January 11, around 900 million people in China had been infected. Chinese CDC’s chief epidemiologist, Wu Zunyou, who used his social media post to calm fears during the New Year festivities, estimated that the peak of infections had passed. And with 80 percent of the country having already been infected, the resurgence of another wave was unlikely, he argued.

Although the source of his sentiments is clearly located in and emanates from the Chinese Stalinist bureaucratic apparatus, they provide context to the modeling estimates being provided by various analytic groups working on concretizing the impact of abandoning Zero-COVID on the country’s population.

Attempts by Western media to vilify and discredit the handling of COVID by Xi Jinping and the CCP are motivated ideologically by the hostility of imperialism to the Peoples Republic. First they malign Beijing for adhering to Zero-COVID, now they attack the regime for adopting the very same policies as all the other countries, expressed most crudely in then British Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s declaration that he would “let the bodies pile high.”

To place the statistics into stark relief, though the official COVID deaths after three unrelenting years have reached 6.8 million, excess deaths, which are far closer to reality in capturing the social devastation caused by the pandemic, now exceed 21 million. And in the context of scientific breakthroughs and treatments at the world’s disposal, such a magnitude of death, seen only in periods of world wars, is deliberate.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* recently wrote, “While the CCP bears responsibility for this disaster, the mass infection policy was implemented under the demands of the US and the other imperialist powers ... However, having adopted the mass infection policies demanded by global finance capital, the Chinese government is being further attacked and denounced by the US media. If President Xi Jinping and the CCP leadership thought their acquiescence would win them

breathing space, they were wrong.”

The reopening of China will not halt the drive by US imperialism towards war with China. Indeed, the war with nuclear-armed Russia being waged in the Ukraine is only a prelude for the confrontation further east. A memo obtained by NBC News from General Mike Minihan, head of Air Mobility Command, predicted a shooting war with China in 2025 in remarks to his subordinate command team.

Considering these recent developments in China’s response to COVID, Morgan Stanley has raised their GDP forecast for 2023 to 5.7 percent. As they wrote, “The near-term pain of a fast reopening will likely be compensated by an earlier and stronger recovery. The market is under-appreciating the far-reaching ramifications of reopening.” However, these assurances are not unanimous and the current projections by financial institutions are for the most part guarded and pessimistic.

Indeed, regardless of the state of the pandemic, there is a unanimous effort by the financial institutes to end any and all pandemic mitigation measures. Last month’s comments by German virologist Christian Drosten that the COVID pandemic is entering an endemic phase were revealing. “We are experiencing the first endemic wave with SARS-CoV-2 this winter; in my estimation the pandemic is over,” he told *Tagesspiegel*. Meanwhile, the country is experiencing a surge in excess deaths that remain unaccounted.

Additionally, there are pressures placed on the international United Nation’s health agency to end the declaration of “public health emergency of international concern” regarding the COVID pandemic. However, WHO director Ghebreyesus has not indicated this proposal will be on the table when the WHO’s emergency committee meets on Monday, the 14th such meeting since the start of the pandemic.



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