

The COVID cover-up, or how the ruling class learned to stop worrying and love the virus

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Over the past two months, the cover-up of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic by the capitalist political establishment and media in the United States and internationally has reached a new level. The fact that millions of people continue to be infected with COVID-19 and thousands die each week is now met with total indifference by the ruling elites, with virtually no reporting on this deepening world crisis.

US President Joe Biden, who falsely claimed last September that “the pandemic is over,” embodies this official apathy to the suffering of the population. Last month, in an offhand comment on the fact that over 1 million Americans have died from COVID-19, Biden bluntly told a conference of city mayors, “I sometimes underestimate it because I stopped thinking about it.”

This was not simply a sign of Biden’s declining mental acuity, but an expression of the capitalists’ sociopathic outlook towards the working class, who account for the vast majority of deaths from COVID-19. It was also a backhanded admission of their intent to kill more.

One week after Biden’s comment, the White House announced that it will allow the COVID-19 national emergency and public health emergency declarations to expire on May 11, which will have broad ramifications.

The Kaiser Family Foundation estimates that between 5 million and 14 million Americans will lose access to health insurance through Medicaid when the declarations of emergency expire. Hospital systems across the US will face growing financial pressures, with the Center for Healthcare Quality and Payment Reform forecasting that 200 rural US hospitals could be forced to close in the next two to three years.

The distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, tests and treatments will be privatized and roughly 30 million uninsured Americans forced to pay in full for these life-saving services. Pfizer intends to sell its vaccine for up to \$130 per dose, unaffordable for the vast majority of the uninsured.

One week after the White House announcement, Johns

Hopkins University stated that its Coronavirus Resource Center will shut down on March 10. The university justified this drastic move by noting that local, county and state jurisdictions across the US no longer report COVID-19 data adequately, the result of deliberate policy decisions by both the Democratic and Republican parties.

The ending of the Johns Hopkins University tracker is the final nail in the coffin of what little remains of accurate COVID-19 data reporting in the US. Other widely used trackers, including Worldometer and Our World In Data, have relied on the Johns Hopkins tracker.

Health data analyst Gregory Travis told the WSWs that the Johns Hopkins tracker “is as close to ‘real time’ as you can get.” He added, “Data in the form of death certificates being forwarded to the CDC have a lag of at least six months and often much longer, particularly for pediatric cases. Right now we can say with some confidence that we know what is going on now. In the future we will only be able to say with confidence what happened half a year ago.”

According to a tracker maintained by Travis, 36 US states, or 72 percent, as well as Washington, D.C., have already “gone dark,” meaning they report COVID-19 cases and deaths only once a week or less. This is the end result of the official response to the emergence of the Omicron variant in November 2021, whose rapid spread was seized upon to systematically undermine COVID-19 testing and data reporting, a process which only the *World Socialist Web Site* has continuously exposed.

Going forward, the only reliable tools to track COVID-19 infections and deaths will be rough estimates from wastewater sampling and excess deaths, respectively. Although imprecise, both of these metrics make clear that COVID-19 continues to exact an enormous toll globally.

Wastewater data from the US and internationally shows that the lifting of all mitigation measures in response to the Omicron subvariants has created a new, highly elevated baseline of mass infection near the peak rates reached during the surges of the Alpha and Delta variants. As a result, millions of people are continuously being infected and

reinfecting with COVID-19 throughout the world, with growing long-term ramifications.

The world's most comprehensive study on the impact of reinfections shows that each reinfection compounds one's risk of hospitalization, Long COVID, and damage to nearly every organ system, as visualized in the graphic below.

These health impacts, combined with the body blow that the pandemic has dealt to the health care system, have dramatically increased excess deaths above their pre-pandemic baseline. Throughout the world, hospitals are in a state of collapse. Emergency room (ER) "boarding," in which patients remain untreated for hours, days or even weeks in ER hallways, is increasingly common, primarily the result of severe understaffing due to the pandemic.

According to *The Economist*, there are now 20.5 million excess deaths attributable to the pandemic. At present, there are over 10,000 excess deaths globally each day, making COVID-19 the world's third-leading cause of death. In the European Union countries, excess deaths in December were 19 percent higher than before the pandemic, with Germany experiencing the highest increase at 37 percent.

The universal efforts to conceal this horrific reality show that the capitalist class of every country has drawn fundamental lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic.

First and foremost, public health is an impediment to the accumulation of profits. From the beginning, the use of lockdowns, mass testing, contact tracing and the quarantining of workers to prevent viral transmission was immediately recognized as a hindrance to the production process and the exploitation of the working class.

While Trump spearheaded the back-to-work campaign, he drew inspiration from *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman, who coined the anti-lockdown mantra, "the cure cannot be worse than the problem." The full reopening of businesses and schools, combined with the lifting of mask mandates and all other mitigation measures, and now the complete ending of any official response to the pandemic, was then overseen by Biden and the Democrats.

Second, for the ruling elites the pandemic has reaffirmed their interest in lowering life expectancy in order to cut pension obligations and other social spending to the bone. The eugenicist and reactionary screeds of Ezekiel Emanuel, who in 2014 denounced Americans' efforts to "cheat death and prolong life as long as possible," have become the guiding ideology of the capitalist class globally.

All excess deaths above pre-pandemic levels, whether directly from COVID-19 or due to related effects, are a net gain for the ruling class, as over 90 percent of COVID-19 deaths are affecting those older than 65 who no longer generate profits. Underlying the efforts to cover up the ongoing impacts of the pandemic is a eugenicist strategy of

killing older people in perpetuity.

Flowing from these two, the third fundamental lesson drawn by the ruling class is that nothing should be done to prevent or prepare for future pandemics. With access to the best medical care money can buy, as well as private bunkers to wait out the next disaster as they did at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the billionaires would welcome the next deadly pathogen as a means to further "decrease the surplus population."

With climate change and unplanned urbanization, the threat of future pandemics is not stable, but rather steadily rising each day. Just in the past year, the monkeypox virus rapidly spread to over 100 countries where the virus had never been detected, infecting over 85,000 people and killing 266 so far. At the same time, over 140 million birds have been killed or culled by the highly pathogenic H5N1 influenza A "bird flu."

Just this week, an 11-year-old girl in Cambodia was killed by the bird flu, and the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the situation "worrying," calling for "heightened vigilance" globally. Should H5N1 develop mutations that allow it to spread quickly from human to human, the results would be catastrophic. The airborne virus has a fatality rate of at least 30 percent, far higher than that of COVID-19. Already crumbling health care systems would disintegrate overnight.

While the capitalists have drawn their reactionary lessons from the pandemic, the international working class must consciously assimilate their own. Above all, the future and progressive development of mankind is impossible under capitalism. At the same time as they falsely proclaim the pandemic over, the imperialist powers are rushing headlong towards World War III, which would inevitably involve the use of nuclear weapons.

To prevent the looming catastrophes that capitalism has in store, workers must unite internationally on the basis of a revolutionary socialist program. Through the reallocation of society's resources from war and private profit towards global economic planning and public health, a future socialist society could stop the threat of war, rapidly end the COVID-19 pandemic, halt and reverse climate change, prevent the development of future pandemics and provide a decent standard of living for all. These principles must animate the coming revolutionary struggles of the international working class.



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