

Germany's parliamentary parties criminalise COVID-19 protection measures

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Having already abolished all coronavirus protection measures, Germany's federal and state governments are now moving to counter all measures taken in the past. This is made clear by a survey of alleged "mistakes" in pandemic policy reported in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* newspaper, which conducted a survey of health spokespersons from all of the country's parliamentary parties.

"The most important lesson is that we have to meet outbreaks of disease with a sense of proportion," the *Rundschau* quotes Tino Sorge, health policy spokesman for the conservative CDU/CSU opposition parliamentary group. Lockdowns, school and day care closures caused "devastating collateral damage," Sorge said, adding, "This must not be repeated."

In similar vein, the health spokesman for the neoliberal Free Democratic Party (FDP, part of the ruling coalition along with the Social Democratic Party and the Greens), Andrew Ullmann, said that curfews, school and day care closures were "not necessary."

The German Health Minister Karl Lauterbach (SPD) had already declared in February on German television that the closure of schools and day care centres had been a mistake.

The Left Party shares this view. Its health spokesperson, Kathrin Vogler, stated that she finds it "incomprehensible" that schools and day care centres were closed instead of equipping them with air filters. It is "better to take low-key measures early than serious ones later," she said. She also described anti-corona restrictions for the unvaccinated, i.e., Germany's 2G and 3G regulations, as a "stopgap solution."

All of these parties are, in effect, adopting the position of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), whose health policy spokesperson Martin Sichert describes "the entire Corona period" as a "time of

excesses." The AfD's demand for a commission of inquiry into the official corona measures is now supported by broad layers from Germany's other main parties.

Sorge, for example, describes "an inquiry commission or a comparable body" as sensible in order to come to terms with "the deep scars in our society." The entire parliamentary group of the ruling FDP also calls for such a "reappraisal"—and health Minister Lauterbach agrees. "I really agree completely with every decision and if it came to such a commission, we would also participate," he told the news portal *The Pioneer*.

It is quite clear that such a commission would in no way contribute to a serious investigation of the efficiency of the COVID measures taken, but, on the contrary, result in their criminalisation. This is not surprising. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, the ruling class has always prioritised profit and capitalist interests over and above health and human life.

At the beginning of the pandemic, the ruling class was forced to impose certain lockdowns after facing spontaneous strikes by workers. However, it immediately lifted the lockdowns after handing out hundreds of billions of euros to the banks and big corporations as part of its so-called COVID-19 emergency package. The government then gradually dismantled all remaining protective measures.

When leading representatives of all Bundestag parties now condemn even these limited measures, which nevertheless demonstrably protected people from infection and saved lives, this reveals that in the event of a new pandemic or the emergence of a resistant mutation of the corona virus, the ruling class will refuse to take new measures and be prepared to accept even more deaths.

This is despite the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic is in no way over. According to the statistics of the Robert Koch Institute (RKI), which are, however, based only on voluntary corona virus tests, between 300,000 and 600,000 people in Germany are currently infected. The actual pandemic situation is even more dramatic. For example, Saarbrücken pharmacy professor Thorsten Lehr said he estimates the seven-day incidence of new infections to be between 1,000 and 2,000. That would mean that 1 to 2 percent of the population is newly infected every week.

The high number of COVID outbreaks confirms how widespread the virus remains. In medical treatment facilities there were 153 outbreaks last week, and 38 in old people's and nursing homes.

In hospitals, the trend is no better. The adjusted hospitalisation incidence has been rising steadily in recent days and now stands at nine, which is equivalent to around 7,500 hospitalisations per week. According to the MDR media outlet, corona virus is currently the main cause of hospital admissions. Twenty-two percent of patients admitted with a severe respiratory infection have COVID-19, compared to 6 percent for influenza.

The number of COVID patients requiring intensive care is just over 1,000, and almost 100 people succumb to the virus every day.

Particularly worrying is the emergence of new mutations. While the Omicron variant caused a massive increase in infections in February last year, the Omicron sub-variant XBB, which is mainly characterised by its high resistance, has been spreading since the start of this year.

Meanwhile, the XBB mutations account for about two-thirds of infections. This is under conditions where the most recent vaccines were adapted to combat the Omicron BA.5 variant, i.e., a variant that now affects only a very small number of victims.

Scientists are particularly concerned about the spread of the XBB.1.16 variant, which has been nicknamed "Arcuturus." Compared to the "Kraken" variant XBB.1.5, this variant has three more mutations on the spike protein that can suppress the immune system.

The *Deutsche Apotheker Zeitung* warns that "these mutations [are] thought to have the potential to undermine the immune defences even of vaccinated and recovered persons." In addition, a mutation could lead to the virus being better able to enter human cells

and take hold. This would make this variant even more infectious than its predecessors.

Overall, the XBB.1.16 variant has a 140 percent growth advantage over XBB.1.5. In India, its spread has already led to a 281 percent increase in infections and a 17 percent increase in deaths in 14 days.



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