

Biden ends COVID-19 emergency declaration, codifying perpetual mass death and debilitation

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With no public speech or even a written statement, the Biden administration allowed the US national COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) declaration to expire on Thursday. In effect, the White House has codified into law that COVID-19 will remain permanently embedded in society, continuing to infect, disable and kill masses of people for the foreseeable future.

The expiration of the PHE was the third and final measure formally dissolving all official response to the pandemic in the US. It follows the April 1 lifting of Medicaid disenrollment restrictions and the April 10 ending of the COVID-19 national emergency declaration. Collectively, these three measures have vast, immediate ramifications for millions of Americans and will cause untold further suffering and death.

The most consequential was the cutoff of Medicaid disenrollment restrictions, which the Kaiser Family Foundation estimates could cause up to 24 million Americans (including 7 million children) to lose access to Medicaid over the coming year. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 6.1 percent of American adults presently have Long COVID, meaning that over 1 million adults suffering from this often debilitating affliction could now lose health care coverage.

Allowing the PHE to expire will privatize the future distribution of COVID-19 tests, treatments and vaccines once existing supplies are used up in the coming months. Manufacturers like Pfizer plan to sell their vaccines for up to \$130 per dose and the antiviral Paxlovid for potentially upwards of \$500, while at-home rapid tests will each cost \$10. For roughly 30 million uninsured Americans, the poorest and most at-risk sections of the population, these costs will be totally unaffordable.

Across the US, hospital systems will face growing financial pressures. The Center for Healthcare Quality and Payment Reform forecasts that more than 200 rural hospitals could be forced to close in the next two to three years. The Department of Housing and Urban Development's COVID-19 mortgage forbearance program will soon expire, threatening an unspecified number of Americans with eviction from their

homes.

Last Friday, the CDC announced that it will seize upon this public health wrecking operation to dismantle its COVID-19 infection data reporting system. As has taken place throughout the pandemic, this now thoroughly discredited agency is once again toeing the line of the White House to cover up the spread of COVID-19.

The ending of the PHE in the US takes place less than a week after the World Health Organization (WHO) abruptly lifted its declaration of a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) for COVID-19. Undoubtedly, US imperialism exerted pressure behind the scenes on the WHO to end the PHEIC in order to justify the lifting of the PHE in the US.

The global ending of these declarations of emergency has nothing to do with science, but rather it expresses the economic and political imperatives of the capitalist ruling elites, who are determined to force a "return to normal" in order to maximize the production of profits. It marks the culmination of the past year and a half of unrelenting propaganda in response to the November 2021 emergence of the highly infectious and immune-evasive Omicron variant, which was falsely proclaimed "mild" and essentially no more harmful than the flu.

In reality, COVID-19 has always been and remains a highly dangerous pathogen, which is now mutating at an accelerating rate. While official figures on infections and deaths are meaningless due to the dismantling of testing and data reporting, wastewater monitoring and excess death estimates indicate that viral transmission and lethality remain high globally.

For this week, *The Economist* estimates that there have been 14,000 excess deaths per day attributable to the pandemic, while the cumulative total now stands at 22 million, making COVID-19 still the third-leading cause of death globally. In the US alone, there have been an estimated 1.4 million excess deaths, far above the official figure of 1.1 million, with 860 excess deaths per day at present.

In numerous articles and interviews in recent weeks,

scientists have warned of the ongoing dangers of viral evolution. A May 1 article in *Nature* noted, “Currently, SARS-CoV-2’s spike protein, in which most immunity-evading mutations occur, is evolving at twice the rate of a similar protein in seasonal influenza and about ten times as quickly as those of cold-causing ‘seasonal’ coronaviruses.”

At any point, a far more dangerous variant could evolve which is more deadly, transmissible and immune-evasive, essentially restarting the pandemic at square one by nullifying the life-saving impacts of existing vaccines and treatments.

Then there is the historically unprecedented “mass disabling event” of Long COVID, which scientists have compared to the underwater portion of an iceberg. An article published Tuesday in *Foreign Policy* notes, “Tens of millions of cases of long COVID-19 have been diagnosed worldwide—certainly an undercount—with at least a third of those impacted suffering neurological or cardiovascular damage that is proving disabling.”

Scientific evidence continues to indicate that COVID-19 reinfections, which are increasingly common, heighten one’s risk of developing Long COVID.

The response of the corporate media to the public health implications of ending the PHE has been largely muted, with far more commentary on the associated lifting of Title 42 immigration restrictions and the militarized crackdown on immigrants at the US-Mexico border. In this, the media are deepening their sinister role played throughout the pandemic of deliberately misinforming the public.

The abandonment of public health by the ruling elites globally must be taken as a warning by the international working class. There is no limit to the level of mass death and suffering that they are willing to tolerate to maintain their power and the flow of profits. Over the past year, this has found sharp expression in their efforts to normalize the use of nuclear weapons amid the escalating US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine.

The ruling elites have viewed the pandemic as a positive good for lowering life expectancy and reducing pension obligations, and there are growing indications that future pandemics—which scientists warn are increasingly likely due to climate change—will be met with total inaction.

In one of the few articles on the ending of the PHE, the *New York Times* published a statement Thursday by Ezekiel Emanuel, Michael Osterholm, and other members of Biden’s post-election COVID transition team. Emanuel is a well-known advocate of lowering life expectancy, whose long-held eugenicist beliefs have only become more open during the pandemic.

Calling into question the life-saving policy of school closures, which were haphazardly implemented in 2020 and lifted by early 2021, they claim that in future pandemics, “In-person education can continue during a respiratory pandemic like Covid, even before a vaccine is developed.” They added,

“Even in pandemics, public spaces should remain open unless they are driving surges.”

It is now abundantly clear that the only limit to the level of deaths from COVID-19 and future pandemics will be resistance in the population. This requires the systematic education of the working class and progressive layers of the middle class in the principles of public health and a Marxist political understanding of the nature of the capitalist system.

The ending of the PHE marks the crossing of the Rubicon. It is synonymous with the terminal crisis of capitalism, in which public health has been abandoned forthwith. There is no precedent for this in modern history. It is a decisive moment that has confirmed the previous political analysis that the COVID pandemic was a “trigger event” in world history.

Throughout the pandemic, the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and its affiliated Socialist Equality Parties are the only political movement which has continuously opposed the homicidal pandemic policies of every capitalist government and sought to arm workers with a scientific understanding of what must be done to stop the pandemic globally.

In November 2021, the *World Socialist Web Site*, the organ of the ICFI, launched the Global Workers’ Inquest into the COVID-19 Pandemic, which remains the only independent investigation into the crimes that have been committed by capitalist governments and corporations. In the face of the deepening COVID-19 cover-up, the Inquest will continue its work globally, and we urge all workers and scientists to participate.

The Inquest is a critical component of the fight to rebuild a socialist culture within the working class. The life-and-death character of this struggle is underscored by the experience of the pandemic and the escalating danger of World War III. Only through the socialist overturn of the outmoded capitalist system will the threat of pandemics, nuclear annihilation, climate change, fascism and ever-deepening social inequality be stopped, and the social rights of the international working class—including the right to public health and longevity—be secured.



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