

2023: The year of the total COVID cover-up

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As the year 2023 draws to a close, the contrast between the objective reality of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the delusional fantasy promoted by capitalist politicians and the corporate media has never been greater.

Surveying the official political and media landscape in the US and throughout much of the world over the holidays, there is virtually no mention of the pandemic anywhere. The last time President Joe Biden even publicly referred to COVID-19 was in September, when he jokingly flouted White House and CDC masking requirements after being exposed to his infected wife Jill.

After two years of continuous efforts to minimize the Omicron variant and all of its progeny as “mild,” the unstated policy towards the pandemic is now simply to ignore it.

Significantly, one of the only recent articles to break this wall of silence was a *Washington Post* Editorial Board statement titled, “Face it: A ban on ski masks can help fight crime without violating rights.”

While feigning concern over a rise in crime involving the use of ski masks, the article makes clear that the underlying aim is to legalize all masking in public, including the use of face masks that constitute one of the most important public health measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The editorial endorses a proposal floated by Washington D.C.’s Democratic mayor, Muriel E. Bowser, to impose a “prohibition on ski masks and face coverings.”

The editorial notes that Washington D.C. removed restrictions on face coverings “in 2020 to encourage the use of face masks during the coronavirus pandemic.” But, the statement concludes, “masks can be read as antisocial in the most basic sense.”

As has happened so many times over the past four years, this *Post* article signals what will likely soon become the official policy of the Biden administration. The banning of masks is the logical next step in the American ruling class’ drive to enforce its “forever COVID” policy, in which all of society is subject to unending waves of mass infection, debilitation and death. As stated bluntly by Anthony Fauci in August, the elderly and vulnerable will simply “fall by the wayside.”

Contrary to the official narrative that “the pandemic is over” and society must “learn to live with the virus,” the truth is that COVID-19 remains a substantial public health threat which must be addressed. This objective reality can now only be

cognized through the work of independent scientists who continue to monitor viral transmission through wastewater sampling, viral evolution, estimates of excess deaths and the impacts of Long COVID.

In the US, wastewater data from Biobot Analytics show that at present viral transmission nationally is rapidly approaching the second-highest level to date, behind only the initial wave of the Omicron BA.1 subvariant exactly two years ago.

According to the model of Dr. Mike Hoerger of Tulane University, current wastewater levels translate to roughly 1.66 million Americans being infected with SARS-CoV-2 daily, with 11.4 million people (1 in 29) now actively infectious. By January 10, there will be roughly 2 million daily new cases in the US, with nearly 14 million infectious people.

An even higher percentage of the population is currently infected in England and Scotland, where an estimated 4.2 percent of the population were infected with COVID-19 in the two weeks leading up to December 13, equivalent to roughly 2.55 million individuals, or one in 24 people.

Similar spikes in transmission have been recorded in the Baltic and Nordic countries, in Germany, Poland, Singapore, Canada and elsewhere.

This global wave of mass infection is being fueled by the Omicron JN.1 subvariant, a descendant of the highly mutated BA.2.86 variant (nicknamed “Pirola”) which is now dominant globally and was deemed a “variant of interest” by the World Health Organization (WHO) last week. Throughout much of the developing world, wastewater data are entirely unavailable, but it is safe to assume that JN.1 is causing similar spikes in transmission internationally.

Tracking excess deaths attributable to the pandemic has become increasingly difficult, as numerous countries have shifted their baseline to include 2020, thereby skewing their data. *The Economist’s* excess deaths tracker, long the most reliable, has not been updated since November 18. At that point, its cumulative total of excess deaths stood at a staggering 27.4 million people, roughly four times the official figure of 7 million.

In the US, the CDC stopped reporting excess deaths in September. One of the only up-to-date trackers using pre-pandemic figures as the baseline is run independently by health expert Greg Travis, whose figures indicate that excess deaths remain significantly above pre-pandemic levels, in particular

for younger age groups.

Thousands of scientific studies make clear that COVID-19 is the underlying cause of the vast majority of these excess deaths. The virus has been proven to persist in myriad body tissues, with the ability to damage virtually every organ, manifesting in over 100 different symptoms that are often debilitating. A COVID-19 infection places one at greater risk of heart attack, stroke, kidney disease, various neurological disorders, and more.

The WHO itself estimates that one in 10 infections leads to Long COVID and multiple studies have shown this risk is only compounded by reinfections. With each new wave of mass infection, the immense crisis of Long COVID only broadens in scope, with hundreds of millions now believed to be suffering globally.

Among the most alarming impacts of COVID-19 are those on the cardiovascular system, as highlighted in a study published last week in *iScience* titled, “Predicted risk of heart failure pandemic due to persistent SARS-CoV-2 infection using a three-dimensional cardiac model.”

The study created the first *in vitro* model of cardiac tissues impacted by SARS-CoV-2, finding that the virus “persistently infects the heart opportunistically causing cardiac dysfunction triggered by detrimental stimuli such as ischemia.” The authors conclude that “the population at risk of future heart failure due to persistent infection of SARS-CoV-2 is expected to exponentially increase.”

This echoes a similar warning made over a year ago by cardiologist Dr. Rae Duncan, who stated, “I am very concerned that we are going to have a tsunami of cardiovascular complications including heart attack and strokes and vascular dementia over the next few decades.”

None of this scientific reality is brought to the attention of the world’s population, who are instead systematically lied to by the powers-that-be. Throughout the pandemic, science has been continuously distorted and held hostage by an unholy alliance between governments, corporations, the media and the trade union bureaucracies, all of which are now colluding to enforce the “forever COVID” policy.

Over the course of the past two years, following the evolution of the highly infectious and immune-resistant Omicron variant in November 2021, there has been a total evisceration of all public health responses to the pandemic. By design, data collection and reporting on COVID-19 testing, hospitalizations and even deaths have become increasingly inaccurate.

The year 2023 witnessed the culmination of this process, with the WHO and the Biden administration ending their COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE) declarations in May. This was combined with the complete privatization of the government’s responsibilities to test, vaccinate and treat the population.

As a result of the ending of the PHE in the US, at least 13.4 million Americans have been disenrolled from Medicaid, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF). Rapid

antigen tests are unaffordable for most Americans, while more accurate PCR tests are nearly impossible to access. A growing number of Americans have had to pay over \$100 for their latest booster shots, and in October, Pfizer announced that it intends to charge nearly \$1,400 per five-day course of the life-saving treatment Paxlovid once the government’s stockpiles run out, likely in the coming year.

The ruling elites’ policy of simply ignoring the pandemic and forcing people to fend for themselves is untenable and will inevitably collide with reality. The basic functioning of society cannot be sustained amid unending body blows of mass infection and debilitation from Long COVID.

The refusal of the ruling elites to address or even acknowledge the pandemic is a glaring sign of the dead end of the capitalist system. The past four years of the pandemic have inured the ruling class to mass death, conditioning it to carry out the most savage barbarism. This is now on full display in the ongoing genocide of the Palestinians, carried out with utter ruthlessness and brutality, with the whole world watching live on social media.

The year 2024 will see a deepening of the global struggle against war, the pandemic and the capitalist system. There are growing calls for renewed mass protests against the genocide in Gaza, which have involved millions throughout the world over the past two months. In the US, tens of thousands have signed a petition appealing to the Biden administration to guarantee funding for Long COVID research, a sign of the intense ongoing opposition to the pandemic.

For these struggles against war and the pandemic to be successful, they must not be diverted into appeals to capitalist politicians—least of all “Genocide Joe” Biden, who is responsible for the deaths of over 700,000 Americans from COVID-19 and is fully complicit in Israel’s genocide—to change course.

Instead, there must be a turn to the international working class, the only social force capable of putting an end to war and the pandemic, and rebuilding society in the interests of the vast majority. The essential task is the building of a revolutionary leadership to fuse the growing struggles of workers and youth internationally in a conscious fight for world socialism. That leadership is the world Trotskyist movement, the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and its affiliated Socialist Equality Parties.



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