

Biden's third COVID infection and the ongoing dangers of the pandemic

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In the public statement announcing his withdrawal from the 2024 US presidential elections, Joe Biden claimed, "Together, we overcame a once in a century pandemic." Out of a series of delusional claims about his presidency, this was the most glaringly absurd, as Biden issued the letter while still in isolation with his third COVID-19 infection.

Undoubtedly, Biden's bout with COVID played a role in his decision to withdraw from the elections. While official pronouncements on his infection have stated that he is on the way to recovery, COVID-19 remains a dangerous pathogen for anyone, especially those above 65 years old.

Now at 81, Biden's body and mind were clearly impacted by his first infection and subsequent rebound in July-August 2022. While one cannot say with certainty that his mental decline is directly attributable to his prior COVID infections, it is entirely possible that he could be showing symptoms of "brain fog," fatigue and other neurological symptoms commonly associated with Long COVID.

The fact that Biden, the most protected person on the planet, was allowed to contract COVID-19 last week underscores the growing recklessness and self-delusion of the American ruling class. Having fallen for their own lies that "the pandemic is over," the last remaining testing measures were lifted in the White House in March.

Great pains are being taken to care for Biden round the clock, including checks on his vital signs led by a team of highly trained healthcare practitioners and access to costly anti-viral medications. Additionally, Biden is isolating, not according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) anti-public health policies, but based on actual scientifically grounded recommendations.

The double standards for the American and international working class are glaringly obvious. Anti-viral medications and vaccines have become cost prohibitive or entirely inaccessible for the vast majority of the world's population. For workers in the US, attempting to obtain a prescription for the anti-viral Paxlovid usually means waiting days for a call back from your physician.

Meanwhile, regardless of the infectious nature of the

constantly evolving virus, those with asymptomatic infections or mild symptoms are forced to return to work, risking the well-being of colleagues. Without proper rest and treatment, which the medical community emphatically endorses, workers raise their risk of developing Long COVID, which can have tremendous consequences on their ability to earn wages and provide for their families.

Biden is one of millions of Americans who have been infected in recent weeks amid the deepening annual summer surge. According to the latest wastewater data released Friday, the US now has the highest concentrations of the coronavirus in wastewater for this date of any year in the pandemic, with current estimates placing daily infection rates somewhere between 780,000 to 850,000 per day. The surge is deepest in the West and South, but spreading to every region of the country.

The 9th wave of mass infection in the US is being driven by the KP.3 and KP.2 subvariants and their daughters, which account for more than 75 percent of all recently sequenced viral genomes. In particular, the emergence of KP.3.1.1—with high ACE2 binding affinity and considerable immune evasive characteristics—and its ability to outcompete its recent descendants, underscores the tremendous capacity for this virus to continue to evolve and infect humanity.

Test positivity rates are now at a highly elevated 12.6 percent across the US, while in the Southwest this has reached 16.4 percent. Both hospitalizations and emergency room visits for COVID have been climbing once more, despite the concerted efforts to cover-up these data. Official weekly fatality rates are up 31 percent over two weeks at nearly 400 deaths per week, while more than 25,000 people have already died of COVID in the first six months of 2024.

These limited statistics, which are no longer being addressed in the media, underscore the complete lie being promulgated by Biden and the entire state that the pandemic is over.

Now in the fifth year of the pandemic, as the world faces yet another massive wave of infections, a report released by

the World Health Organization (WHO) last month demonstrated that uptake of the anti-COVID vaccines across the globe has by all accounts come to a virtual halt.

Given the known benefits of vaccines, which have been proven to reduce severity of disease and one's risk of Long COVID, these developments are deeply disturbing from a public health perspective.

In the first quarter of 2024, across 73 WHO Member States, only 9.8 million doses of the vaccines were given, representing 0.12 percent of the general population. Only 4.9 million older adults from 60 Member States (0.42 percent)—people who are at higher risk for severe disease, hospitalization, and death—received the COVID-19 vaccines. Most egregious of all, only 0.17 percent of healthcare workers across 40 Member States reported being inoculated against COVID in the first quarter of 2024.

The downward trends in immunization became firmly established after May 5, 2023, when Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the Director-General of the WHO, declared the end of COVID-19 as a global health emergency. At the time, the WSWS wrote, "This decision has no scientific basis, but rather serves to provide *ex post facto* justification for all capitalist governments' scrapping of anti-COVID public health measures since the emergence of the Omicron variant in November 2021."

Dr. Nilufar Ahmed, a psychologist in social sciences at the University of Bristol, attributed the decline in vaccinations to the lack of any media coverage of the virus and opaque public health directives that have created a false sense that the pandemic is in the rearview mirror. Ahmed added, "It's very low in public communications. We see very few people masking, and the response if you see someone wearing a mask is that you assume they must have COVID – not that they're wearing it as a preventative measure."

Indeed, even as the ink was drying, Ghebreyesus admitted then that COVID was claiming a life every three minutes, "and that's just the deaths we know about." In his comments to the press just over one year ago, he stated that COVID was here to stay, even though "it is still killing, and it is still changing. The risk remains of new variants emerging that cause new surges in cases and deaths."

The ending of the vaccination campaigns are not just a byproduct of an anti-public health campaign and blackout in the media that have promoted the false notion that the pandemic is over. They are also due to the profit imperatives of the pharmaceutical monopolies, whose executives calculate that the profits their shareholders can expect no longer make their manufacturing and distribution lucrative.

The criminality of the capitalist denigration and denial of vaccines was underscored by the latest study published by Dr. Ziyad Al-Aly and colleagues, which showed that the

incidence of Long COVID in the era of Omicron can be lowered to 3.5 percent if people are vaccinated. Without vaccination, the risk of Long COVID rises to 7.76 percent if someone is infected with an Omicron subvariant of the virus. Given the stalled rates of vaccination and the high rates of transmission now being experienced, these will have untold consequences for the world's population.

Based on modeling estimates from wastewater data, two-thirds of all Americans will be infected this year. If one projects these rates to the rest of the world and employs the incidence of Long COVID from infections as illustrated by Al-Aly, this would mean well over 200 million more people may face some level of debilitation this year alone, irrespective of the severity of their acute infection. In 2020, the global estimate of Long COVID cases was at least 65 million.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a trigger event in world history, proving that capitalism has no progressive solution for the broader issues raised by climate change and unplanned globalization, both of which raise the threat of pandemic pathogens. In their use of imperialist war to prosecute their economic interests, the financial oligarchy eviscerate all the gains made by more than a century of developments in public health infrastructure.

Not only have infectious diseases skyrocketed internationally this year, but there has also been a historic backslide in providing routine immunizations to children, according to Dr. Katherine O'Brien, director of the Department of Immunization, Vaccines and Biological at WHO. World targets for diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis vaccinations have fallen two percentage points from 2022 to 2023 and stand at 84 percent, far short of the agenda goal of 90 percent set for 2030.

These setbacks are part of the broader disruptions in health services, growing logistical challenges especially in places like Gaza where the genocide is deepening, and, to a significant degree, anti-science and anti-public health campaigns being proffered to discredit outlooks based on science and socialism. These are part of the deepening promotion of fascistic politics that sees scientific truth and socialism as a threat to the capitalist profit system.

Biden, literally exhausted in his service to the capitalist state, has fallen victim to his own "herd immunity" policy and is now being put to pasture.



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