The witch-hunt against Anthony Fauci and the war on public health

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Senate Republicans staged a McCarthyite witch-hunt against Anthony Fauci Wednesday, an inquisition against science convened for the declared purpose of provoking him into committing perjury. In response to an unending torrent of lies and slander, Fauci answered not a single question, invoking his Fifth Amendment right more than 100 times.

Fauci, who directed the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) for 38 years, appeared under subpoena from Republican committee chairman Rand Paul, who has pledged repeatedly to see Fauci imprisoned. Days earlier, Paul published more than 1,100 pages of Fauci's private diaries, together with a 465-page collection of records reaching back to 2001, which were provided by Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. in a blatant violation of Fauci's right to privacy.

Paul opened by telling Fauci that the pandemic lockdowns "could never have been inflicted without you aiding and abetting the crime." When Fauci's attorney David Schertler attempted to speak, Paul ordered Capitol Police to remove him, to applause from the fascist-filled gallery. For over two hours the committee's Republicans put questions to a witness they knew would not answer, on gain-of-function research and the Wuhan Lab Lie, on what one senator called "experimental gene therapy," and other far-right conspiracy theories. Paul closed by scheduling a committee vote for August 5 on a resolution certifying Fauci's contempt of Congress.

The press reported the spectacle and passed over its purpose, treating the hearing as one more round in a personal feud, in effect lending legitimacy to the proceedings. In reality, the hearing was the sharpest expression yet of a fascistic campaign to establish that scientific advice which constrains profit is a criminal act and to clear the political ground for the total destruction of public health now being carried out by the Trump administration.

The felony mechanism was announced by Paul and others in advance. Joe Biden's preemptive pardon of Fauci, issued in January 2025, covers offenses only through the date it was signed, so a false statement under oath Wednesday would have been a new crime beyond its reach. "If he lies to Congress, that's a new felony, committed in real time, with no pardon waiting to cover it," Paul wrote before the hearing. When the trap failed, Paul advanced the theory that a pardoned witness has no Fifth Amendment right at all, conceding the argument has "probably never been tested legally."

Paul has presided over this congressional crusade against science in close coordination with Trump and Kennedy. They have targeted Peter Daszak, whose EcoHealth Alliance conducted bat coronavirus surveillance in China, barring him from federal funding and shutting down his organization. David Morens, Fauci's longtime adviser, was indicted in April on charges relating to federal records, a prosecution the journal *Science* called unusual if not unprecedented. In June, National Institutes of Health (NIH) virologist Vincent Munster was charged over the import of biological specimens.

At the University of Michigan, the Justice Department has jailed one Chinese researcher after another for shipping harmless roundworms and plasmids without customs paperwork, branding one doctoral student an "alien from Wuhan" before dismissing the charges against three others in February. Last year, the White House replaced a federal public health website with a page declaring the laboratory origin of COVID-19 as a settled fact.

More broadly, Kennedy has forced out more than 20,000 HHS employees since taking office, including roughly a quarter of the workforce at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In June 2025, he dismissed all 17 voting members of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and replaced them with anti-vaccine loyalists. He has terminated 49 scientific advisory committees at the NIH and canceled $500 million in mRNA research, the platform on which rapid response to the next pandemic depends.

Kennedy has built a career and a personal fortune on spreading anti-vaccine disinformation, drawing $326,056 from Children's Health Defense and nearly $2.5 million in referral fees from a law firm suing Merck over its cervical cancer vaccine, a stake he retained on entering Trump's cabinet. On January 5 of this year, he cut the childhood immunization schedule from 17 diseases with universal recommendation to 11, a decision stayed by a federal judge in March. The *Wall Street Journal* reported this week that Trump has been pressing him to go even further and faster.

The consequences are already measurable. There have been

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2,318 confirmed measles cases in the United States so far this year, more than in any year since 1991, and the country is expected to lose the measles elimination status it has held since 2000 come November.

The underlying aim of the attacks on Fauci and the HHS more broadly are to subordinate science to religious obscurantism, conspiracy theory and the demands of the market. This found expression at Wednesday's hearing with Senator James Lankford's grievance that "churches and places of worship were forced to be closed down," Senator Joni Ernst's denunciation of the use of fetal tissue in federally funded research, and other fundamentalist proclamations.

The Democrats mounted no serious opposition to this reactionary freakshow. Senator Gary Peters, the committee's ranking member who last week demanded that Trump "win the war" against Iran, merely complained that the Fauci hearing "looks backwards" and diverted the panel from "national security challenges." Senator Richard Blumenthal praised the COVID-19 vaccines now under attack as "undoubtedly President Trump's greatest accomplishment."

The *World Socialist Web Site* unequivocally defends Fauci against this witch-hunt, while retracting nothing we have written about him. He is not being persecuted for the policies he actually carried out. Fauci issued genuine warnings in early 2020 and was vilified by the fascistic right for them, but he never broke with Trump. When the Democrats took office in 2021, he supplied scientific authority for every attack on public health they carried out: the unsafe reopening of schools, the denigration of masking, the dismantling of testing and reporting, and finally Biden's premature declaration that the pandemic was over.

In an interview with the BBC in August 2023, at the start of the seventh wave of the pandemic, Fauci said that "the vulnerable will fall by the wayside, they'll get infected, they'll get hospitalized and some will die." This was a justification for ongoing mass death and debilitation with Long COVID.

When Biden took office on January 20, 2021, roughly 400,000 people had officially died of COVID-19 in the United States. By the end of his term the official toll had passed 1.2 million, with two out of every three American deaths occurring under his administration. Excess mortality estimates, a far more accurate measure, place the real US toll at roughly 1.4 million and the global toll at some 30 million. The dying has not stopped. The Pandemic Mitigation Collaborative estimates between 109,000 and 175,000 excess deaths in 2025 alone, comparable to annual US deaths from lung cancer.

The diaries Paul released to humiliate Fauci disclose something he did not intend. "The situation with my national and international fame is explosive and really unimaginable," Fauci wrote on May 21, 2020, as the US death toll approached 100,000. On Trump: "POTUS seems to be enamored of me even though I am taking the spotlight away from him. We are developing a very unique and interesting relationship."

There are entries on the Fauci bobbleheads, the murals, and his Hollywood admirers. This is the outlook of a definite social layer, a once serious scientist absorbed into the affluent milieu around the Democratic Party, for whom a social catastrophe became an occasion for personal elevation. Undoubtedly, these social pressures had a corrupting effect, priming Fauci to play his assigned role in normalizing the pandemic.

The fascistic campaign against Fauci must be opposed unconditionally, and its purpose understood. Its aim is not to establish how the pandemic began but to criminalize science and public health as such, leaving society defenseless before the next pandemic. Measles is already spreading unchecked. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the fastest-growing Ebola epidemic on record has killed 1,437 people since May, caused by a strain for which no vaccine or treatment exists. Deforestation and climate change are accelerating the spillover of pathogens from animals to humans that could produce the next pandemic at any point.

The war on science is one front of a general social counterrevolution directed against the international working class. The government dismantling the HHS is the same government destroying Medicaid, arming the genocide in Gaza and waging war against Iran. Resources that could eradicate infectious disease are consumed by armaments, and the scientists who object are prosecuted.

Neither capitalist party will defend science. The Democrats prepared the ground for this assault and answer it with appeals to bipartisan decorum, while the scientific establishment, picked off institution by institution, answers with open letters.

The defense of scientific truth falls to the only social force with an objective interest in it, the international working class, and it requires the reorganization of society on socialist foundations: production for human need rather than private profit, public health conducted as a global enterprise, and the vast resources now devoted to war turned to medicine and research. This is the perspective for which the Socialist Equality Party and the International Committee of the Fourth International fight.

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