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Delta variant surge explodes claims that the pandemic is over in the US

For months, the Biden administration, the media and major US corporations have promoted the fiction that the COVID-19 pandemic is all but over.

Last month, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reversed its guidance on mask-wearing, urging vaccinated people to stop wearing masks and socially distancing in crowded areas. Biden claimed vaccinated Americans had reached the “finish line” in the pandemic, encouraging the public to “take your mask off, you’ve earned the right.”



US President Joe Biden takes questions from reporters on May 13 after the CDC recommended that vaccinated people should not wear masks. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci, File)

“America is headed into a summer dramatically different from last year,” the White House wrote earlier this month. “A summer of freedom. A summer of joy. A summer of reunions and celebrations.”

But the absurd pretext that the pandemic is over, even as over 300 people continue to die every day in the United States and as the disease continues to surge throughout the globe, was exploded Monday when Los Angeles County—the most populous county in the US—issued a recommendation that residents disregard the CDC order on mask-wearing and social distancing and take health measures recommended by scientists.

“Until we better understand how and to who[m] the Delta variant is spreading, everyone should focus on maximum protection,” the county health department said.

The move by Los Angeles County came after the World Health Organization (WHO) repeated its calls that vaccinated people should continue to wear masks in public, openly clashing with the Biden administration.

“Vaccines alone will not stop the community transmission, and we need to ensure that people follow public health measures,” WHO Assistant Director-General Mariângela Simão said at a press briefing Friday.

Last year, the Trump administration justified its promotion of “herd immunity” policies, including the premature reopening of businesses and schools, by falsely claiming that the pandemic was over. Trump’s priorities were to get workers back into the factories and students back into the schools in order to pump up the stock market.

Biden has continued to enact the same set of priorities, for the same reasons. He has demanded the resumption of 100 percent in-person instruction and denied OSHA pandemic protections to nearly all workplaces, while falsely claiming that children are not vulnerable to COVID-19 and that schools are not major centers of the disease.

Over the past week, it has become clear that the world is in the grips of a third wave of COVID-19, caused by a new Delta variant of the disease first discovered in India.

In individual countries, the new variant has caused surges in new cases and deaths. In the UK, the variant is behind an eightfold increase in cases in just the past six weeks. In Russia, the number of daily deaths has surged to the highest level ever, while in South Africa, the number of daily new cases is approaching a record.

These outbreaks in individual countries are producing a global resurgence of the disease, with the seven-day average of new cases around the world increasing 4 percent over the past week.

Scientists and public health experts are sounding the alarm, demanding that governments reverse their efforts to dismantle remaining safety protocols to stop the spread of the disease.

“It is the most hypertransmissible, contagious version of the virus we’ve seen to date, for sure—it’s a superspreader strain if there ever was one,” Eric Topol, a professor of molecular medicine at the Scripps Research Institution, told Scientific American. “We’ve been warned three times by the UK,” Topol added, referring to previous surges in early 2020 and last winter. “This time is the third warning.”

Studies have shown that the Delta variant is twice as infectious as the original version of COVID-19 and 40 to 60 percent more transmissible than the Alpha variant first identified in the UK.

In response to the latest warnings by the WHO, the Biden administration is doubling down on its anti-scientific position on masking. In the words of the *New York Times*, “A CDC spokesman pointed to the existing guidance and gave no indication it would change.”

On Tuesday, US automakers and the United Auto Workers announced an agreement to end the wearing of masks at US factories, turning these crowded indoor spaces into hotbeds for the transmission of COVID-19 and endangering the lives of workers and their families.

The same brutal intransigence prevails around the world. On Monday, Sajid Javid, the new UK health secretary, declared the public must “learn to live” with COVID-19, announcing that the country would fully abandon health restrictions within three weeks.

Over 600,000 people are dead in the United States, and nearly 1.1 million have died in Europe as a result of the policy outlined by Javid. While an initial round of lockdowns suppressed transmission of the virus in the fall of last year, the ending of restrictions and reopening of production—combined with the emergence of the so-called Alpha variant—led to a new global surge.

The roll-out of vaccinations has contributed to a reduction of global cases but only to levels seen during the worst part of the first wave of the pandemic in the fall of 2020. Epidemiologists are now warning that the world's population, which is still largely unvaccinated, must prepare for a new global resurgence of the pandemic.

Scientific American concluded that, despite the warnings of scientists: “It is unrealistic to expect that US leaders will reimpose a lockdown or other restrictions.” But what “US leaders” are willing to do cannot be the starting point when millions of lives are in danger.

The pseudo-scientific policy of “herd immunity” that guided the response of the US, UK, Swedish and other governments has proven to be a monumental crime. Its proponents claimed that the more the disease spread, the better the population's natural immunity would be at suppressing the disease. The exact opposite has happened: the more the disease has spread, the better it has become at evading not only natural immunity, but the immunity offered by vaccinations.

By abandoning public health measures, keeping vaccines out of the hands of poor countries and allowing the virus to spread unchecked, politicians in the US and around the world have not only allowed millions of people to die, but they have undermined the efficacy of vaccinations, one of the best tools for the eradication of the disease.

This insanity must stop! Humanity cannot stand by as the deaths pile up! Emergency action is necessary, regardless of the economic cost to the capitalist class, to eradicate COVID-19 once and for all!

As the pandemic surges throughout the globe, workers will enter into struggle to demand the implementation of vital public safety measures at workplaces and the closure of nonessential production. To coordinate these struggles, the International Committee of the

Fourth International calls for workers to form rank-and-file safety committees as part of the struggle to build the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.

The necessary measures to stop the pandemic must be paid for through a frontal assault on the wealth of the capitalist oligarchy. In 2020, the number of ultrahigh net worth individuals (UHNWI), those with a net worth above \$50 million, surged by nearly 25 percent, while hundreds of thousands of people died and millions were thrown out of work.

The struggle to stop the pandemic is inseparable from the struggle to break the stranglehold of this financial oligarchy over social and economic life by replacing capitalism with socialism.

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