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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

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23.12.2021

## ***German government refuses to take action to avert Omicron disaster***

The criminal inaction of European governments has allowed the highly contagious and partially vaccine-resistant Omicron variant of the coronavirus to spread across the continent. To this day, the German government refuses to take any action to prevent the looming catastrophe.

Last Wednesday, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen declared that Omicron would become the predominant variant on the continent “by mid-January.” Since then, between December 16 and 19, 1,533 Omicron cases were confirmed in the European Union and European Economic Area, according to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). This means that of the 4,691 total Omicron cases reported in 28 European countries so far, about one in three cases has occurred in the last few days.



Designated German new chancellor Olaf Scholz, second left, presents the ministers of his Social Democratic Party (SPD) (AP Photo/Markus Schreiber)

The exponential spread of Omicron comes on top of the rampant Delta variant, which has infected about 2.5 million people in Europe and killed 25,000 just in the past week. Germany currently accounts for the most COVID-19 deaths in Western Europe, with more than 370 people dying every day and hospitals completely at their limits.

According to the Robert Koch Institute (RKI, the German agency responsible for disease control and prevention), the Omicron variant has already been detected in all German states except Mecklenburg-West Pomerania. The official share of total infections has already increased sixfold, from 0.1 to 0.6 percent in the first week of December and will be many times higher by now. The real numbers are certainly even higher as only 1.3 percent of positive PCR tests undergo the necessary genomic sequencing to identify the variant.

All serious physicians and scientists are warning that the unhindered spread of the Omicron variant threatens to trigger mass death far eclipsing anything seen before and during the pandemic.

Carsten Watzl, secretary general of the German Society for Immunology, warned in the *Augsburger Allgemeine* that “even after boosting, protection against Omicron infection could be only about 75 percent.” Moreover, it cannot be assumed that Omicron is “more

harmless” than the Delta variant, stressed Watzl. On Friday a study by the British Imperial College found “no evidence” for this widely reported claim.

The national weekly *Zeit* speaks of a “wave of unprecedented force,” whose growth curve has the shape of a “wall.” The German Hospital Association fears a situation that “goes beyond anything we have experienced so far” and threatens to arrive “before the current high occupancy rate in intensive care units has significantly dropped.” Already, crematoria are putting in extra shifts, and the military is airlifting intensive care patients across the nation to find beds.

Despite this catastrophic development, the German government is sticking to its murderous mass infection policy, insisting that there will be no life-saving shutdown of public life—not even briefly. Shortly before the Christmas holidays, when families traditionally gather together, children are to continue going to unsafe schools and workers to unsafe factories, whatever the cost, in order to generate the maximum profit for the capitalist oligarchy.

Speaking to *Bericht aus Berlin* on Sunday evening, the new federal Health Minister Karl Lauterbach (Social Democrats, SPD) said: “A lockdown like in the Netherlands before Christmas—we won’t have that here.” In an exclusive interview with the notoriously right-wing Bild channel he added that there would not be a “hard lockdown” even after Christmas, nor would there be a “Christmas pause” or even “regionally limited lockdowns.”

Instead, according to Lauterbach, the population “must be prepared” to experience high case rates by “early January at the latest.”

“Omicron is here and will spread,” he declared. This development is “no longer stoppable.”

The summit of federal and state governments, which took place yesterday, rejected a lockdown out of hand entirely. Its resolution envisages no new restrictions on factories and businesses, nor an early closure of child care facilities. Vice Chancellor and Economics Minister Robert Habeck (Green Party) on Monday likewise dismissed any “lockdown that would affect schools, day care centers and cultural events.”

The resolution states that while clubs and discos will be temporarily closed, restaurants will be kept open. In private households—where restrictions are impossible to enforce—a contact restriction of “a maximum of 10 vaccinated or recovered persons” is to apply starting December 28, excluding children under 14.

Significantly, the RKI on the same day published “strategic amendments” to its pandemic control plan, demanding “a maximum of contact reduction” and “a maximum of infection prevention measures”—set to “begin immediately.” According to news magazine *Der Spiegel* and tabloid *Bild*, Health Minister Lauterbach and Chancellor Olaf Scholz (SPD) reacted “angrily” to these demands which had “not been coordinated” with the government.

The federal and state governments know full well the deadly consequences of their criminal inaction. The expert council set up specifically by the new coalition government, which includes serious scientists and pro-government herd immunity advocates alike, released a paper Sunday that speaks of “enormous challenges” to governance and a “new dimension” to the pandemic situation.

The statement, unanimously adopted by the 19 scientists, states:

Should the spread of the Omicron variant in Germany continue in this manner, a relevant part of the population would be simultaneously ill and/or in quarantine. This would put an extreme strain on the health care system and the entire critical infrastructure of our country. Further collateral effects are to be expected, especially in the working population, among other things due to necessity of caring for children or people in need of medical assistance.

The paper paints a picture of a catastrophic situation not seen in Germany since the end of World War II:

Rapidly rising incidence rates pose a high risk to Germany’s critical infrastructure. This includes hospitals, the police, fire departments, rescue services, telecommunications, power and water supply and the corresponding logistics. Therefore, comprehensive and immediate preparations are needed to protect our country’s critical infrastructure.

With regard to the already dramatic situation in hospitals which will be exacerbated by Omicron, the paper states:

Due to the simultaneous, extreme volume of patients, a significant overload of hospitals is to be expected (...). Even if all hospitals focus exclusively on the care of emergencies and urgent interventions, it will no longer be possible to provide qualitatively adequate care for all patients. Strategic patient transfer can no longer contribute significantly to regional relief due to the expected high load across the board.

Both the explosive spread of the Omicron variant and governments' profit-driven pandemic policies confirm the perspective of the *World Socialist Web Site*. The pandemic is not a purely medical problem but rather the result of deliberate policies that put the profit of a narrow financial elite and the stability of financial markets ahead of the health and lives of millions of people. The refusal of the new German government to close schools and businesses—for even a few days—must serve as a warning and a wake-up call to workers.

An internationally coordinated program of action is necessary in which the economy is reduced to essential elements with full wage compensation for those affected. School, day care and retail closures must be accompanied by comprehensive mass testing, systematic quarantine and isolation measures in the pursuit of the global elimination of the coronavirus, funded by the expropriation of the pandemic profiteers.

The Network of Rank-and-File Committees for Safe Education in Germany will convene its next online meeting today at 8:00 p.m. (CET) to discuss this perspective and organize the fight against the pandemic.

World Socialist 22.12.2021