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In New Year's address, Chinese President Xi Jinping covers up massive public health crisis

On Saturday, Chinese President Xi Jinping broke his months-long silence on the state of the COVID-19 pandemic in China in a New Year's Eve address which echoed the empty platitudes of US President Joe Biden and other capitalist politicians responsible for the devastation wrought globally by this preventable disease.



Chinese President Xi Jinping speaks on the state of the COVID-19 crisis, December 31, 2022. [Photo: CGTN]

Over the past month, following the complete dismantling of China's Zero-COVID public health program which had kept the coronavirus at bay for over two years, an unprecedented surge of COVID-19 infections and deaths has swept the country.

While official figures are now entirely inaccurate, a leaked statement by Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention Deputy Director Sun Yang approximated that roughly 250 million people were infected throughout the country in the first 20 days of December.

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The health data analytics firm Airfinity estimates that 9,000 people are presently dying from COVID-19 each day across China.

Referring obliquely to the recent shift in policy, Xi stated early in his speech, “Since COVID-19 struck, we have put the people first and put life first all along. Following a science-based and targeted approach, we have adapted our COVID-19 response in light of the evolving situation to protect the life and health of the people to the greatest extent possible.”

He continued, “Officials and the general public, particularly medical professionals and community workers, have bravely stuck to their posts through it all. With extraordinary efforts, we have prevailed over unprecedented difficulties and challenges, and it has not been an easy journey for anyone.”

Using language intended to cover up the devastating pandemic wave which has engulfed China, Xi stated, “We have now entered a new phase of COVID response where tough challenges remain. Everyone is holding on with great fortitude, and the light of hope is right in front of us. Let’s make an extra effort to pull through, as perseverance and solidarity mean victory.”

Despite the happy talk given by Xi, in the coming weeks and months the crisis in China will only deepen. On January 8, just before the mass migration associated with the Lunar New Year commences, all travel restrictions into China will be lifted. Cases and deaths are expected to continue to surge throughout the country, with Airfinity predicting that the current nationwide surge will peak on January 23 with an astonishing 25,000 deaths per day. Their modeling predicts a death toll of 1.7 million in China by the end of April, 2023. The custom of people traveling to the rural areas and provinces to visit family in the weeks prior to the Lunar New Year holiday on January 22 ensures the spread of COVID-19 throughout the country. The government is aware of this and has urged rural hospitals to upgrade their intensive care units (ICUs) and prepare vehicles to transfer COVID-19 patients. Prominent infectious disease expert Zhang Wenhong has warned that China’s medical institutions will face their “darkest hour.” These warnings have been widely circulated on state media.

The sudden abandonment of Zero-COVID, with no warning or input from the public, has been a profound shock to masses of people across China. Countless videos are circulating on social media showing hospitals packed with sick patients, with hundreds of thousands of viewers. Pictures of empty trains at rush hour are also circulating, indicating that people are afraid of potential infection and are staying home from work.

Reuters and the *Washington Post* have published articles in the last two days with footage of crowded hospitals and fever clinics, mostly ripped from social media platforms Weibo and Twitter, with patients laying on the floors and crowding the hallways.

American journalist Victoria Brownworth posted the video below showing families bringing their deceased to funeral homes on carts and in bags and having to wait in long lines outside.

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