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UK first European country to record 150,000 official COVID deaths

Calling for the UK's self-isolation period for those infected with COVID to be reduced to five days, UK Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi declared Sunday, "I hope we will be one of the first major economies to demonstrate to the world how you transition from pandemic to endemic, and then deal with this however long it remains with us, whether that's five, six, seven, 10 years."

Zahawi's comments came one day after the UK became the first country in Europe and the seventh in the world to reach the horrific milestone of 150,000 deaths from COVID-19. Only the US, Brazil, India, Russia, Mexico and Peru have recorded more deaths. The UK has a population of just 68.4 million. Except Peru, other countries recording more deaths than Britain all have substantially larger populations.

The deaths are the responsibility of the Conservative government and the outcome of a murderous herd immunity agenda, aimed from the start of the pandemic at the mass infection of the population.

The move to reduce the self-isolation period, already cut from 10 days to seven, is criminal, given that the UK Health Security Agency, which is still in favour of the reduction, admitted that between 10 and 30 percent of people are still infectious on day six.

Zahawi spoke while denying reports that the government was planning to end the free provision of lateral flow tests, a move that would lead to an end of all monitoring of the spread of COVID. Tests are in any case increasingly hard to get hold of already.



A section of the 500-metre-long National Covid Memorial Wall, which has 150,000 hearts on representing the number of people who have lost their lives to COVID. The wall is opposite the Houses of Parliament in London. (WSWS Media)

The government openly declared that herd immunity was “desirable” when the pandemic first hit, only imposing a national lockdown in late March 2020, weeks after the virus had been circulating within the population, under mass pressure.

After reopening the economy in late spring-early summer 2020, more deaths piled up in the second wave of the pandemic. Prime Minister Boris Johnson made his infamous statement in late October 2020, “No more f**king lockdowns, let the bodies pile up in their thousands”. The premature end of the first lockdown and the delayed and even more limited character of the second led to many more deaths in January and February 2021 than at any other stage in the pandemic.

At the end of July last year, Johnson declared “Freedom Day” with the economy and schools opened. The then dominant Delta variant was allowed to continue its spread unhindered with the government declaring the UK aimed to be the first country in the world where COVID was endemic in the population.

The vast majority of the 150,000 official deaths are attributable to previous variants of the disease. It is not clear exactly how many deaths can be attributed to the new Omicron variant since it became dominant in Britain last month. However, since Omicron was first detected in Britain on November 27 a further 5,230 people have died from COVID.

The Johnson government's COVID death tally is highly manipulated, with deaths recorded only if they take place within 28 days of the person recording a positive test. According to the Office for National Statistics, the number of death certificates in the UK that mention COVID-19 *now exceeds 174,000*.

Since Omicron was detected, populations internationally have been bludgeoned with incessant propaganda from governments that it is mild and will soon pass. But hospitalisations and deaths are rising daily. The 150,000 total was reached with the 313 deaths announced Saturday, the third time in the past 10 days that more than 300 have died in a 24-hour period and giving a seven-day tally of 1,271.

There were 18,456 people in hospital with the disease on January 6, the latest date for which figures are available. The National Health Service is swamped. On Friday, the *Financial Times* reported that in Greater Manchester, with a population of approximately 3 million, COVID hospital cases have already surpassed the peak of last winter's wave—1,229 versus 1,000 last January. “Meanwhile, separate data showed that one in seven staff at acute trusts in the area were absent on January 2, with more than 3,000 staff either off sick or self-isolating due to Covid.”

Allowing schools to be flooded with a variant that is more transmissible than ever before is producing a disaster.

Education staff continue to suffer and die from COVID. On January 2, Nick Stone, aged just 55, who taught modern languages for 30 years at City of Norwich School in Norfolk, died from COVID.

In just one local authority, Suffolk, the county council reported there were 1,842 cases of coronavirus among 5-19-year-olds before they even returned to school on January 5. The council did not reveal the number of schools impacted.

In East Lothian, Scotland, hundreds of high school pupils had to move to learning from home just two days after returning to their classrooms. The *East Lothian Courier* reported that “five of the county’s six high schools have made the decision to ask certain year groups to work from home due to crippling levels of staff absence related to Covid-19.”

The ruling elite’s indifference to life was reflected in headlines reporting the 150,000 milestone with a collective shrug. The *Daily Mail* headlined its online story: “Boris Johnson recognises ‘terrible toll’ of pandemic as figures hit grim milestone... but data shows fatalities levelling off amid hopes Omicron is LESS deadly than flu”. The *Telegraph* did not even report the grim COVID death tally in its Sunday edition, devoting its front page and a full inside page to photos of new dresses worn by the Duchess of Cambridge.

The Labour Party-supporting *Daily Mirror* wrote, “Covid has now killed 150,000 people in the UK—but new cases fall to a 10 day low”.

Numerous articles note that it is not known exactly how many died *from* COVID or from some other condition *with* COVID .

They write as if it was not well-established that among those who have died are people, particularly among the oldest generations, already suffering with other life-threatening illnesses. Everyone knows that co-morbidities are a significant factor in many COVID deaths and that the elderly and those with serious illness are particularly at risk. The real issue is that *nothing* has ever been done to prevent the most vulnerable from catching COVID, as was horrifically demonstrated in the first year of the pandemic when the disease was allowed to flood care homes with the loss of 20,000 lives.

This attempt to play down the danger of COVID takes place under conditions where no-one knows the long-term impact of Omicron. It appears that the variant does not attack the lungs with the same degree of severity as Delta, which could account for the lower fatality rate. But as with all variants of COVID it attacks organs throughout the body and does long-term damage. This is particularly concerning as the latest statistics on Long COVID from the Office for National Statistics show that the number of people with the condition has risen by at least 100,000, from 1.2 million to 1.3 million.

The *Sunday Times* summed up the attitude of those in power who view saving lives as an intolerable burden on the corporations and billionaires in an article headlined, “End of free lateral flow tests as country told to live with Covid”.

Written before official denials were issued, the article complains, “More than £6 billion of public money has been spent on mass testing using the [LFT] devices.”

It included a graph showing “The cost of Covid: How the £370bn additional spend on Covid measures breaks down”.

Among the bewailed costs were “£84 billion for health and social care”, £69.5 billion for the Coronavirus Jobs furlough scheme, “£67 billion for public and emergency services” and “£60 billion for individuals”, including £10.3 billion for the Universal Credit £20 weekly uplift payment for those without a job and the poorest paid workers.

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