



Written by [Annalisa Pesek](#) on February 4, 2021

Netanyahu Launches Massive Vaccine Drive as a Way to End Extreme Lockdowns

World leaders seem confused by “new discoveries” of coronavirus mutations and are bracing for the worst. On February 2, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced [a new plan](#) to vaccinate 90 percent of Israelis over age 50 within two weeks. This approach to beat the virus comes after Israel’s [Health Ministry reported](#) January 2021 as the deadliest month for coronavirus patients. However, signs indicate this panic is more fear-based than grounded in medical science.



AP Images

Since the release of early vaccines in late January, it has been [widely reported](#) that at least two vaccines, Moderna and Pfizer, do not actually prevent people from contracting the virus; they only lessen the symptoms of illness. Still, many heads of state are pushing for widespread inoculation programs and shockingly placing little emphasis on early [treatments](#) proven to stave off symptoms during the early onset phase. Moreover, there is mounting evidence suggesting that new virus variants, such as those recently found in South Africa and the U.K., could continue to evolve, leading to [resistance to the vaccines](#) around the world.

In a recent [press conference](#) with Health Minister Yuli Edelstein, Netanyahu stated, “The vaccination drive is our key to lifting the lockdown.” Then the prime minister called for an extension of the country’s current lockdown plan for another week. Continuing the restrictions, he says, would allow for “hundreds of thousands more people to be vaccinated before some restrictions were eased.”

However, as reported by the [Times of Israel](#), “Israel has seen daily virus caseloads remain high, despite over three weeks of lockdown and a world-leading vaccination program that has already given at least the first of the two-dose vaccine to over a third of its population. Seriously ill patients remained at over 1,000, straining hospitals, with the positive test rate barely dipping.”

It is suspected that Edelstein is the driving force behind Netanyahu’s decision to extend the shutdown. But why would Netanyahu sacrifice Israeli well-being to support his appointed health official? Edelstein has gone on record cautioning that if restrictions were lifted as planned, “there would be a surge in



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social activity, with friends and families gathering over the weekend, and many opened commercial sites drawing millions of people.” Considering these comments, it seems Edelstein fears people returning to societal norms.

Current restrictions in Israel are severe. They include bans on “traveling no more than 0.625 miles from home other than for essential needs, the operation of businesses that meet with clients one at a time, the opening of restaurants offering in-person takeout (restaurants are currently only allowed to sell food via delivery), and the closure of bed-and-breakfasts hosting nuclear families.”

[Blue and White](#), the Zionist Liberal party that is part of the [Israel Resilience Party](#), has pushed back on some of the state-imposed lockdown measures. They claim that the recent press conference was an attempt to “cover up the failure of the lockdown,” and they are demanding a reopening plan be presented to preserve the “public faith.”

Yet, in a move that seems principally contradictory, Blue and White has allegedly supported the extension of the shutdowns “on condition that enforcement be increased to ensure the closure is effective, and on the passing of a law doubling fines for violators.” Blue and White party leader and Defense Minister Benny Gantz has argued in the past for discontinuing lockdown measures that have decimated small businesses and closed down Israel’s entire education system, except for special-education institutes. These mixed messages question the credibility of Blue and White and offer little hope for an end to these tyrannical mandates.

Government officials are expected to meet next week to discuss revisions to the current lockdown plan.

Considering current findings released by Israel’s Health Ministry of “8,281 cases confirmed the week of February 1, with the positive test rate at 9.2 percent,” Israel will have to devise a new plan, but mass inoculation and more strict lockdowns raise the obvious question: Are these measures preventing the spread of the virus?

Since March 2020, Israel has reported that “659,356 people have been diagnosed with the virus and 4,886 have died of COVID-19.” Active cases are counted at “72,488, including 1,113 patients in serious condition, of whom 408 are considered critical.”

Important data missing from these reports and omitted from Netanyahu’s press briefing would address the impacts of the shutdowns themselves. How many Israelis are suffering owing to businesses being shuttered? Can Netanyahu justify the dramatic rise in suicide in a predominantly Jewish culture? How are victims of domestic abuse coping while isolated with their perpetrators?

As leaders continue to ignore these facts, death tolls continue to rise, not just owing to COVID-19.



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