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Covid-19 pandemic

# **Drop the patents – vaccinate the world**

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**The world is facing devastating vaccine apartheid. High income countries like the UK have ordered more than 3 times the amount of doses they've needed, whilst only 3 per cent of people are double vaccinated in Africa and 0.5% double vaccinated c in low income of countries, writes Terry Conway.**

We are in this situation because big pharma companies hold patents on vaccines, treatments and health technologies and prevent other manufacturers from making more.

The UK government has a major responsibility for this as it is one of the key forces blocking a #TripsWaiver which would significantly break the deadlock.

Tim Bierley, pharma campaigner at Global Justice Now, said:

For more than a year, the UK has obstructed efforts to scale up the world's vaccine supply, forcing the global south to rely on donations that are always too little and too late. Not only has the British government grabbed far more vaccines than we need, they're actively working to stop low and middle-income countries producing their own vaccines. It's shameful.

Intellectual property and trade secrets are two of the biggest barriers to increasing global vaccine manufacturing. But the British government has doggedly defended a system that allows the rich world to hoard vaccines, while millions die in poorer countries.

These figures demonstrate the horrifying scale of vaccine apartheid – and 10,000 are dying each day as a result. At tomorrow's WTO meeting, the UK must stop holding up efforts to waive vaccine intellectual property and Boris Johnson must give up his reckless indifference to mounting global covid deaths.

The UK has vaccinated more people than 132 countries combined with 45.05 million people fully vaccinated out of a population of 68.2 million, compared to a total of 44.2 million from 132 countries with a combined population of more than one billion.

Countries collectively representing 13% of the world's population lag behind the UK, including Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Afghanistan, Angola, Mozambique, Ghana, Yemen, Madagascar, Cameroon, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, Malawi, and Zambia. Many have vaccination rates of less than 2%.

That's why Global Justice Now, STOPAIDS, Just Treatment, and Universities Allied for Essential Medicines (UAEM) carried coffins down Whitehall in London on October 12 in a funeral procession to protest the UK's complicity in global vaccine inequality. In Edinburgh, protestors in funeral attire held a white flower wreath reading 'Shame' outside the British government's Scotland office. These protests were timed to occur the day before the formal meeting of the WTOTRIPS Council on October 13.

## Drop the patents – vaccinate the world

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Unfortunately neither the UK, nor the EU who have taken more or less the same position on this crucial question of vaccine justice, really moved in the discussion, There is some glimmer of hope in that South Africa, who holds the opposite view, are to hold intensive talks with the EU in advance of the ministerial summit in Geneva from November 30 where it is hoped agreement can be reached.

Tim Bierley, pharma campaigner at Global Justice Now, said:

Today the UK once again opposed plans to allow low and middle-income countries to produce their own vaccines. The government's weasel words at the WTO could help prolong the pandemic indefinitely.

How many more people must die from Covid-19 before Boris Johnson gets out of the way and lets low and middle-income countries produce their own vaccines? Today the weight of history was on the Prime Minister's shoulders – and he decided to shrug it off.

In the meantime every day lost is a day in which the profits of Big Pharma are costing countless lives especially in the Global South, as this [video](#) from the International Transport Workers Federation shows. And in that context the likelihood for more variants of concern to develop and spread reminds us that no one is safe until everyone is safe.

Sign the petition from Global Justice Now [here](#).

Source [Zero Covid](#).

PS:

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