

# *Half of total deaths in Germany from COVID-19 recorded in December*

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A medical worker leaves a booth where people get COVID-19 vaccine at the Robert Bosch hospital in Stuttgart, southern Germany. (Photo: AFP)

Berlin, January 3 (RHC)-- Coronavirus related deaths have almost trebled in Germany last month, amid a massive surge in COVID-19 cases that has left the health system in desperate need of assistance.

Health officials reported some 16,718 deaths from COVID-19, between December 2 and January 1, according to the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) for infectious diseases.

The figure suggests that half of all coronavirus deaths in Germany were recorded in December. The death toll in November was 6,155. Over the last year, a total number of 33,071 COVID-19 related deaths have been recorded in the country. The cases of infection also continued to surge across the country, taking the tally to 675,188 in December alone.

Only on Christmas Eve, Germany reported 32,195 cases, which is some 70 percent higher than what Chancellor Angela Merkel warned about, back in September. She predicted some 19,000 cases of infection a day by Christmas.

The total number of infections also reached 1,719,737 by the end of December, nationwide. This comes as Germany has been in lockdown since mid-December to curb the spread of the virus ahead of Christmas.

The massive surge has now prompted call for an extension of the current lockdown as the health system "desperately needs relief." A relief "can only be achieved through an extension of the contact restriction measures," said head of the Marburger Bund doctors' union, Susanne Johna, on Saturday. "We won't be able to get the situation under control otherwise," she added.

The government will meet on Tuesday to discuss whether to toughen the lockdown curbs. Meanwhile, the Merkel government has come under fire for failing to procure enough doses of vaccine ahead of time.

Germany has kicked off its vaccination, with some 131,626 people had been given their first dose of the vaccine by the end of December. "I consider the current situation a gross failure," said Frauke Zipp of the Leopoldina Academy of Sciences on Saturday.

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