

Police, protesters clash as thousands march against COVID curbs in Berlin

BERLIN, Aug 28 (Reuters) - Police tussled with protesters as thousands of people marched through Berlin on Saturday chanting slogans and waving banners against COVID-19 restrictions.

Some demonstrators tried to get past barricades to the government district around the Reichstag parliament building and clashed with officers, police said. Four officers were injured, the Berliner Zeitung reported.

About 50 people were detained, some for assaulting officers, the force said.

The protesters, few of whom wore masks, waved banners marked with the messages "I have my own opinion" and "COVID-84" in a reference to George Orwell's book "1984" about a totalitarian state.

The marches came a month before a federal election. The leading candidates vying to replace Chancellor Angela Merkel have pledged there will be no return to the strict lockdowns of last year and earlier this year.

The country has reported more than 3.9 million coronavirus cases and is facing a fourth wave of infections. It reported 10,303 new cases and 22 fatalities on Saturday, bringing the death toll to 92,096.

To nudge more people to get vaccinated, the government has said it will stop offering free tests from Oct. 11, except for those for whom vaccination is not recommended, such as children and pregnant women.

The government will require people to be vaccinated, test negative or have a recovery certificate to enter indoor restaurants, participate in religious ceremonies or do indoor sport.

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