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Russia to Rethink HIV Travel Ban Weeks After Backing Restrictions

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Viktor Bartenev / TASS

The Russian government could be forced to rethink its travel ban on people with HIV just two weeks after ruling that the restrictions would stay in place.

Russia's Health Ministry had proposed scrapping the ban in new legislation at the end of January. The plans were dropped after opposition from the Internal Affairs Ministry, which claimed that the change could "compromise national security" by threatening "the health of the Russian people."

Deputy Prime Minister Olga Golodets is now pressing for the issue to be reexamined in meetings with the Health Ministry, Interior Ministry, and health watchdog Rospotrebnadzor, the Kommersant newspaper reported Monday.

Related article: Russian Health Ministry Abandons Plans to Spend Additional 70 Billion Rubles on Fighting HIV Epidemic

Government officials warn that foreign nationals with HIV are more likely enter the country illegally to avoid the travel ban. These undocumented migrants often go without health care and their HIV remains untreated, increasing the risk of spreading the disease, the newspaper said.

Foreigners who have tested HIV positive are currently unable to receive long term visas or live in Russia. It does not affect those traveling on a tourist visa.

In October 2016, a entry ban against foreigners who had fully recovered from infectious diseases such as tuberculosis was declared unconstitutional.

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