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HIV Cases in Russia Surpass 1 Million – State Watchdog

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In the past year, a record 37,000 people have died from HIV-related illnesses, the head of Rospotrebnadzor's AIDS control and prevention research center said. **Moskva News Agency**

The number of people living with HIV in Russia has surpassed 1 million as government officials have largely remained silent, Interfax reported, citing consumer protection watchdog data.

More than 340,000 people with HIV have died in Russia since the first case was registered three decades ago, two-thirds of them since 2012, Iskander Yasaveyev, a sociologist at the Higher School of Economics in St. Petersburg, wrote in the independent Novaya Gazeta newspaper Friday to mark World AIDS Day.

Related article: HIV-Related Deaths on the Rise in Russia – Health Ministry

About 1.06 million people in Russia were recorded as living with HIV during the first half of 2019, Interfax quoted Vadim Prokovsky, the head of Rospotrebnadzor's AIDS control and

prevention research center, as saying Sunday.

Since the middle of 2019, 47,000 new cases have been identified, Prokovsky said. Of these cases, 59% were transmitted through heterosexual contact, 39% through drug use and 2.5% through homosexual contact.

In the past year, a record 37,000 people have died from HIV-related illnesses, he added.

The Health and Social Development Ministry counted 961,700 HIV-positive people in Russia between January-October this year, which Prokovsky says is because the ministry only counts those who have sought treatment at state medical institutions.

Related article: Russia Risks HIV Epidemic as Cases Rise, Experts Warn

President Vladimir Putin hasn't mentioned HIV since the start of his third presidential term, Yasaveyev wrote, despite the virus spreading more aggressively in Russia in the years that followed than in any other time period.

The spike in HIV infections stems from the Putin administration's conservative stance, which creates a "top-down" lack of attention toward the issue throughout the government, Yasaveyev said.

"The government's upholding of 'traditional values' prevents sexual education in schools, the spread of safer sex using condoms, harm reduction programs for drug users and the introduction of substitution therapy in Russia for drug addicts," Yasveyev said.

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