

Russia Violates Women's Rights During Childbirth Amid Coronavirus – Report

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Women in at least 45 countries faced treatment during childbirth that defied World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines at the height of the coronavirus pandemic this spring and summer. **Vasily Kuzmichyonok / TASS**

Russia is among dozens of countries that have violated women's rights during childbirth amid restrictions imposed because of the coronavirus pandemic, the Open Democracy advocacy group [said](#) Thursday.

Women in at least 45 countries faced treatment that defied World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines this spring and summer, Open Democracy's investigation said. These include forcibly separating mothers from newborns, performing C-sections without consent and blocking access to critical care because of restrictions.

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“There is no reason... that women should be denied respectful care,” Quazi Monirul Islam, a

doctor involved in drafting WHO's 2005 childbirth guidelines, told Open Democracy.

In Russia, Open Democracy said maternity hospitals banned companions of choice to would-be mothers in at least three Siberian and Far Eastern cities between February and April.

In Moscow and three other cities, women's health facilities have been either closed or repurposed during the Covid-19 outbreak, it said.

“[The] research clearly reveals how unnecessary restrictions constitute an alarming pattern of women's health and rights being deprioritized during the crisis,” said Petra De Sutter, a Belgian lawmaker, gynecologist and president of the European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (EPF).

Open Democracy's investigation follows warnings by Russian women's rights activists in April that Covid-19 restrictions in Moscow put more than 100,000 pregnant women at risk of unwanted pregnancies or botched abortions.

Only three out of 44 Moscow clinics were said to have continued to provide abortions through Russia's compulsory medical insurance program. The mayor's office denied the claim, saying that only one facility was repurposed for Covid-19 patients at the height of the outbreak.

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