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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

30 Babies Born to Surrogates Stranded in Russia

By AFP

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Surrogacy is a legal and lucrative business in Russia. **Efrem Lukatsky / AP / TASS**

Thirty babies born to surrogate mothers are stranded in St. Petersburg, an official said on Wednesday, with foreign parents unable to travel to Russia's second city due to coronavirus restrictions.

The children's rights ombudswoman in the city Anna Mitianina said on her website that the authorities had received calls from several medical facilities caring for children born to surrogate mothers.

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Most foreign parents are from China and are "not able to pick up their children because of the pandemic," she said.

Mitianina added that she was dealing with the situation personally and had approached the regional governor to help resolve the problem in coordination with the Chinese consul general.

Russia closed its borders in March to slow the spread of the coronavirus and has registered the fourth-highest caseload in the world.

Surrogacy is legal in the country and has been a lucrative business for many years, but some in Russia are calling for an end to the practice for foreigners.

Eight Russians including several doctors and a mother were arrested and charged with human trafficking in the country's first surrogacy probe in January this year.

In May, Ukrainian authorities also reported around 100 babies born to surrogate mothers were stranded because of the border closures.

After their plight was publicized, the government stepped in to help the parents obtain special permits to travel to the country to meet and collect their newborns.

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