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Russia Starts Giving Coronavirus Vaccine To Homeless

By AFP

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Russia's population remains among the world's most vaccine-skeptical. **Alexandr Avilov / Moskva News Agency**

40 homeless people in Saint Petersburg received coronavirus vaccine jabs on Sunday under a charity initiative that has received the backing of local officials.

"Here, there are many people at risk. It is important for them to be vaccinated," said Taisia Suvorova of the Nochlezhka non-governmental organization that provides aid to the homeless in Russia's second-largest city.

The 40 people receiving the vaccine are currently housed by the charity.

According to official figures, there are 15,000 homeless people in the former imperial capital out of a total population of 5 million.

Nochlezhka believes the real figure is at least double that.

"Some people have been saying controversial things about the vaccine, but I think there are more advantages than negatives," 57-year-old Galina Ivanovna told AFP after receiving the first dose of the vaccine.

"I'm pretty happy to do it," she added.

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Fellow recipient Aleksandr Suvorov, 60, echoed her sentiment, adding that the vaccine was a good thing "because the situation is complicated with coronavirus."

An NGO has already launched a similar initiative for the homeless in Moscow aided by the authorities in the Russian capital.

Russia registered its first coronavirus vaccine, Sputnik V, back in August.

A second Russian vaccine, EpiVacCorona, was approved in Oct. 2020. The country officially launched its program of mass vaccinations in January.

On Saturday, Russia announced the registration of its third coronavirus vaccine Kovivak.

According to official figures, 4.6 million coronavirus cases have been registered in Russia, 83,293 of which have proved fatal.

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