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Vaccinate or Repent Forever, Russian Orthodox Church Warns

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The metropolitan's remarks come as several Russian regions including Moscow push for compulsory vaccination. **Natalia Kolesnikova / AFP**

Russians who refuse to get vaccinated against the coronavirus are taking a sin upon themselves that they will repent for until the end of their days, a top Russian Orthodox Church official said Monday.

"I now constantly face such situations when people come to a priest in order to repent that they did not vaccinate themselves or their loved ones and that they became the unwitting cause of another person's death," Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, the head of the Church's external relations department, said during a live broadcast on the state-run Rossia 24 channel.

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"And it is difficult even for me to say how to live with it now," he continued. "You'll have to

atone your whole life for the sin you committed — that you thought about yourself and not another person."

The metropolitan's remarks come as several Russian regions including Moscow push for compulsory vaccination to contain a fierce surge in Covid-19 cases and deaths fueled by more-contagious variants and a tepid vaccine uptake.

An independent poll released Monday said 54% of Russians are still unwilling to get vaccinated against Covid-19.

The Russian Orthodox Church has stepped up enforcement of mask-wearing and other safety measures inside Moscow churches and monasteries, the state-run RIA Novosti news agency reported last week.

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