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Russia Sets New Record Coronavirus Cases, Fatalities

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Russia's excess fatality count from the coronavirus is above 660,000, one of the highest levels in the world. **Dmitry Rogulin / TASS**

Russia reported a new record number of daily coronavirus deaths and infections Thursday, as officials sound the alarm over the strain placed on the country's hospitals from an unremitting fourth wave of the pandemic.

The government's coronavirus information center reported 986 fatalities over the past 24 hours, up from the previous records of 984, set Wednesday.

Russia also reported an all-time high of 31,299 new coronavirus cases, almost 2,000 more than the previous high set on Dec. 24, 2020.

Russia has now set a new record number of fatalities for 12 of the last 16 days.

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Surging cases and fatalities puts Russia at odds with the global trend of a pandemic showing some signs of a retreat. The World Health Organization (WHO) said earlier this week that global deaths from Covid-19 are falling and have reached their lowest levels in almost a year.

Russia's Health Minister Mikhail Murashko issued a stark warning earlier Thursday that 1.1 million patients are currently being treated for Covid-19 — "the highest strain" that has been put on Russia's healthcare system since the start of the pandemic.

Murashko urged skeptical Russians to get vaccinated and called on retired doctors to come out of retirement to help treat the growing numbers of patients.

Only a third of Russians have been vaccinated against the coronavirus, and opinion polls show more than half of the population do not plan on getting a shot.

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The government's official death toll since the start of the pandemic stands at 220,315 — Europe's highest — while Russia's total excess fatality count during the same period is at least 660,000.

The Kremlin has ruled out imposing a lockdown to help stop the spread of the virus. Dozens of Russian regions have introduced vaccine mandates for certain categories of workers and vaccine passports for entry into crowded indoor venues in an attempt to boost weak uptake.

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