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Russia Sets Another Coronavirus Fatality Record

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Russian officials have been accused of undercounting Covid-19 deaths. **Yevgeny Sofiychuk / TASS**

Russia set a new record number of daily coronavirus fatalities Wednesday as federal authorities contemplate a nationwide non-working week to fight surging hospitalizations and deaths during an unrelenting fourth wave of the pandemic.

The government's coronavirus task force reported an all-time high of 1,028 Covid-19 deaths over the last 24 hours.

Russia has repeatedly broken new record high numbers of fatalities over the last three weeks amid low vaccination rates across the country. The country is currently reporting the highest daily coronavirus fatalities in the world, with the exception of the United States.

The government's official death toll since the start of the pandemic stands at 226,353 people — Europe's highest. But officials have been accused of drastically undercounting Covid-19 fatalities. Russia's total excess fatality count during the same period is at least 660,000, according to The Moscow Times' analysis of government statistics.

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The Kremlin has so far eschewed imposing a nationwide lockdown to help stop the spread of the virus.

Instead, Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin has backed his cabinet's proposal to declare a non-working week starting Oct. 30, with the hardest-hit regions starting a week earlier, on Oct. 23. The strict measures are effectively a paid vacation or orders for non-essential businesses to furlough their workers.

President Vladimir Putin is expected to give formal approval to the plans later Wednesday.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin announced Tuesday the reintroduction of remote work, mandatory vaccinations for service workers and a stay-at-home orders for elderly and chronically ill citizens in the capital. Most of the country's regions have similar restrictions in place, including vaccine passports for entry to indoor venues.

Russia also reported 34,073 new infections Wednesday, with authorities warning that the virus is gaining ground in nearly every part of the country and all age groups.

Just one in three Russians have been fully vaccinated against the coronavirus with one of the country's homemade vaccines. Independent polls show more than half the population do not plan to get vaccinated.

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