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Perinatal Nurses in Russian Hospital Go on Hunger Strike

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The hospital is relying on junior nurses. **TASS**

At least five junior nurses in a hospital outside Moscow have gone on hunger strike over poor working conditions and low salaries, the Meduza news site reported on Wednesday.

Nurses at the Kolomna Perinatal Center 100 kilometers southeast of the capital are demanding the authorities increase numbers of junior medical staff and pay them more, especially for their extra work with Covid-19 patients in the hospital, according to an open letter posted by the Deystviye medical worker's trade union on its Facebook page.

The nurses claim that the facility has only 22 junior nurses and about 20 cleaners, even though Russian Health Ministry rules specify that there should be 160 junior nurses in a hospital of its size.

The perinatal center laid off all of its nurses' aides in 2019 and 2021, putting a bigger strain on the junior nurses. The letter said some have meal breaks lasting as little as seven minutes due to the high workload.

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Natalya Trukhina, a nurse who went on hunger strike on Tuesday, told the RBC news website that junior nurses had not been given a raise to compensate them for the additional labor. She said her monthly salary had been cut to around 30,000 rubles ($400) from 40,000.

The nurses have said one more colleague will join the hunger strike every five days.

Local health authorities said they are conducting an internal investigation into the hospital and will take appropriate measures based on the results.

Russia's healthcare system has been hit hard by the pandemic as Covid-19 numbers continue to rapidly surge. On Thursday, the country reported more than 100,000 new coronavirus cases for the sixth consecutive day.

Since the start of the pandemic, medical staff across the country have voiced their discontent over low wages and poor working conditions.

Russia remains one of the most vaccine hesitant countries with less than half of its population fully vaccinated.

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