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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Region Declares Emergency Over Ukraine Refugees

By Jonathan Brown for AFP

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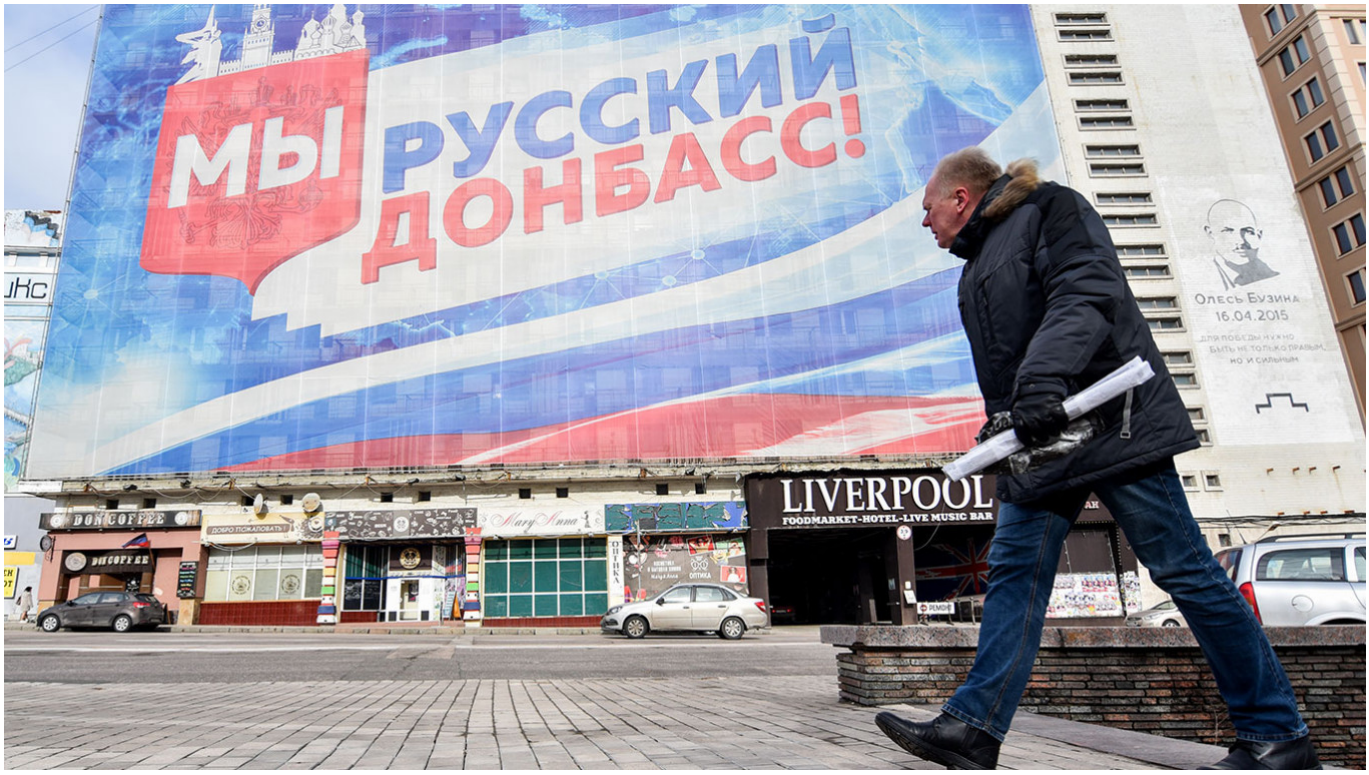

Evacuees are seen in a tent camp set up by the Russian Emergencies Ministry at the Matveyev Kurgan border checkpoint. **Erik Romanenko / TASS**

A Russian region bordering Ukraine declared a state of emergency on Saturday citing growing numbers of people arriving from separatist-held areas in Ukraine after they received evacuation orders.

"Given the trend of increasing numbers of people arriving, we consider it appropriate to introduce a state of emergency," the Rostov region's governor Vasily Golubev said in a meeting, according to Russian news agencies.

The leaders of two pro-Russian separatist republics in eastern Ukraine on Friday ordered civilians to cross the border into Russia, accusing the Ukrainian army of preparing to try and retake the regions by force.

The conflict in eastern Ukraine erupted in 2014 when Moscow-backed rebels broke away from Kyiv and Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula. Some 14,000 people have been killed in fighting since then.

The current head of Russia's emergencies ministry said some 400 people as well as 150 vehicles were involved in operations to receive people arriving from separatist territory.

Emergency services in the Donetsk separatist region said earlier Saturday that just over 6,600 people have been evacuated.

State-run news agency RIA Novosti reported that those crossing checkpoints were being offered medical and psychological support.

The Luhansk region meanwhile said 25,000 people had left of their own accord and convoys were readying to take out an additional 10,000 people.

Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered his government late Friday to give evacuees 10,000 rubles ($129).

Kyiv has repeatedly denied any plans to regain control of separatist-held areas by force.

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