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Russia Empties Hospitals, Student Dorms to Accommodate Donbas Evacuees

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Thousands of Donbas residents have left for Russia under a mass evacuation announced last Friday.
Rostov regional government

Russia's regions are emptying hospitals, student dormitories and other facilities as they scramble to accommodate the thousands of Donbas residents being evacuated into Russia, according to local media reports.

More than 60,000 people have crossed into Russia from the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) and Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) since regional leaders announced a mass evacuation on Friday. They are planning to evacuate some 700,000 women, children and pensioners, while a general mobilization has been announced for able-bodied men aged 18-55.

In the Sverdlovsk region, patients at the Lipovka hospital and rehabilitation center told the Znak.com news website that they were being evicted in the middle of their treatment to make

space for the evacuees. The central region is one of many across Russia that has agreed to help take in those leaving the Donbas.

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Covid-19 patients were sent to other facilities, while private patients in rehabilitation after suffering strokes and for other serious conditions were offered refunds, the news site reported.

Znak also reported that in the Rostov region, which borders the separatist-held regions of eastern Ukraine, students were being evicted from their dormitories to provide temporary living space for the evacuees. The Don State Technical University said it was providing 765 places in its student accommodation for those leaving the Donbas.

Other evacuees are being put up in makeshift refugee camps near the border after hotels and sanatoriums quickly filled up.

Six regions of Russia have so far declared a state of emergency due to the influx of evacuees.

President Vladimir Putin has offered to pay the "refugees" fleeing the Donbas 10,000 rubles ($130) upon arrival in Russia.

Western governments have criticized the evacuation as an escalatory step and a possible preparation for a full-scale ground invasion. Separatists leaders said the evacuation was a response to a surge in shelling from Ukraine's armed forces — claims Kyiv has denied.

Videos announcing the evacuation were filmed last Wednesday — two days before they were published and just hours before the first sharp escalation in ceasefire violations in the disputed territories.

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