

Doctors Without Borders Forced to Shut Down Operations in Russia

September 17, 2024



Russian doctors working for MSF help treat homeless people in 1993. **Michael Evstafiev / AFP**

The Switzerland-based humanitarian aid organization Doctors Without Borders [announced](#) the sudden closure of its operations in Russia on Monday, ending its 32-year presence in the country.

“After receiving a letter from the Ministry of Justice of Russia, MSF-Netherlands had to close our operations in the country,” the organization, also known by its French name, Medecins Sans Frontieres, said in a statement.

The aid organization said it was ordered to “deregister” from the ministry’s database of foreign NGOs, effectively shutting down its operations. MSF-Netherlands served as the organization’s affiliate office in Russia.

Last month, Russia’s Justice Ministry [revoked](#) MSF’s license, alongside that of Doctors of Peace and other humanitarian groups, citing that their “activities don’t comply with the charter.” The organizations were given a month to self-liquidate and close their bank

accounts.

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MSF had been active across Russia's regions, including Moscow, St. Petersburg, Rostov-on-Don and Belgorod, near the Ukrainian border. After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, MSF expanded its efforts to help war refugees arriving in Russia.

"Since the beginning of our response in 2022, more than 52,000 refugees and displaced people received humanitarian aid, while over 15,400 benefited from free medical, mental health and psychosocial support," MSF said in its statement on Monday.

The decision to deregister MSF also disrupted its plans to respond to the humanitarian needs of internally displaced people in the southwestern Kursk region, where Ukrainian forces launched a surprise incursion on Aug. 6.

After beginning operations in Russia in 1992, MSF focused on providing aid to the homeless, responding to emergencies and collaborating with Russia's Health Ministry to pioneer tuberculosis treatments.

"We are deeply saddened to end our programs in Russia," said Norman Sitali, MSF's operations manager for Russia. "Many people in need of medical and humanitarian assistance will now be left without the support we could have provided. MSF remains hopeful that we can return to work in Russia if the opportunity arises."

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