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Vologda Region Clinics Illegally Refusing Abortions, Lawmaker Says

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A newborn baby in a maternity hospital. **Sergei Kiselev / Moskva News Agency**

State-run clinics in northwestern Russia's Vologda region are illegally denying women abortions, a local lawmaker said Thursday.

Alexander Morozov, a member of the regional legislative assembly from the Communist Party, urged the prosecutor's office to investigate the refusals, sharing a copy of his request on the social media site VKontakte.

"When the state prevents women from receiving legitimate medical services, it only exacerbates social tensions," Morozov wrote.

He claimed that clinic heads report to the Vologda region's Health Ministry on their refusals to provide abortions, except in cases of medical necessity, rape or incest.

Morozov cited the case of one woman who had to pay 50,000 rubles ($560) for an abortion in the neighboring Yaroslavl region. The regional news outlet 7x7 reported that at least five

women in the Vologda region have been denied the procedure at their local clinics.

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Vologda Governor Georgy Filimonov said earlier this month that the region could become the first in Russia to ban abortions in both state and private clinics.

On paper, Russia still has one of the world's most liberal abortion policies, allowing women to terminate pregnancies on request up to 12 weeks. A nationwide attempt to ban abortions in private clinics was rejected by lawmakers in December 2023.

In practice, however, women across Russia face growing barriers to abortion access.

Private clinics in at least nine regions have stopped offering the procedure, while at least 18 regions have introduced fines for "coercing" women into terminating pregnancies.

President Vladimir Putin has encouraged women to give birth but has cautioned officials against imposing strict legal restrictions on abortion.

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