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Private Clinics Suspend Abortion Services in Vologda Region, Governor Says

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Maxim Kiselev/TASS

Private clinics in the northwestern Vologda region have begun halting abortion services, the region's governor announced Wednesday, coming amid broader efforts across the country to increase fertility rates.

"Some private medical facilities in the region have stopped performing abortion procedures," Governor Georgy Filimonov wrote in a message on Telegram.

"In the first quarter, the number of abortions in the region dropped compared to the same period last year, or 32 abortions versus 420 during the same period last year," Filomonov added, noting that all the abortions performed in the Vologda region this year were done for medical reasons.

"Family is the foundation of everything. We're creating the conditions for a healthy, active

and happy future for the Vologda region, so that families feel stable and confident about tomorrow," the governor said.

Filimonov, who has spearheaded anti-abortion initiatives over the past year, previously said Vologda could become the first Russian region to ban the procedure in both public and private clinics. He told a national health forum on Wednesday that private providers halted services following "consultations" with his administration.

Related article: Vologda Region Clinics Illegally Refusing Abortions, Lawmaker Says

Private clinics in at least nine other Russian regions have already "voluntarily" suspended abortion services. Twenty-one regions have also imposed fines for "coercing" women to terminate pregnancies.

State-run medical facilities in the Vologda region were accused earlier this year of illegally denying access to abortion procedures. Some doctors and clinics were fined last month in response, and prosecutors warned that refusal of care violates the law.

Governor Filimonov launched a hotline to report illegal denials "in cases of medical necessity." Still, local women have continued to report being refused services.

Russia formally allows abortions on request through the 12th week of pregnancy, one of the most liberal policies in the world. But in practice, access has narrowed in recent years as authorities try to boost flagging birth rates.

A nationwide bill to ban abortions in private clinics was rejected in December 2023 after President Vladimir Putin warned against strict legal measures, even as he urged women to have more children.

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