

Russia exceeds 1,000 daily COVID deaths for first time

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[File: Tatyana Makeyeva/Reuters]?

Moscow, October 17 (RHC)-- Russia has reported more than 1,000 daily COVID-related deaths for the first time since the start of the pandemic, with the country's vaccination drive at a standstill and no restrictions in place.

An official government tally on Saturday reported 1,002 deaths and 33,208 new infections, setting a pandemic high for both fatalities and cases for the third day in a row.

The surging outbreak has come with just 31 percent of Russians fully inoculated as of Saturday, according to the Gogov website, which tallies COVID-19 data from the regions. A lack of tough restrictions has allowed the coronavirus to spread, though a number of regions have reintroduced QR codes for access to public places.

The Kremlin has avoided reintroducing major restrictions despite calling the country's vaccination rate "unacceptably" low, saying this week authorities have to ensure "the economy continues working." It also said that Russia's medical system is prepared to take in the rising number of patients, describing it as not "overwhelmed".

Earlier this week, Health Minister Mikhail Murashko pointed to their "behavior," while Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said everything had been done to give the public the chance to "save their lives by getting vaccinated."

While several local vaccines have been available for months, authorities have struggled to inoculate a vaccine-sceptic population. Independent polls show that more than half of Russians do not plan to get a shot. Deaths from COVID in Russia now stand at 222,315, the highest toll in Europe.

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