

5 Million Illegal Immigrants Could Become Citizens

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A migration amnesty law is being developed that could allow as many as five million illegal immigrants to become Russian citizens.

The Migration of the 21st Century foundation, which seeks to assist the government in developing immigration strategies, has taken the task of drafting an amnesty law after President Dmitry Medvedev called the issue of illegal immigration one of the nation's biggest problems at the end of April, Rossiiskaya Gazeta reported Thursday.

The Federal Migration Service has put the number of illegal immigrants in Russia at five million, but taking into account numbers for money transfers abroad, experts think the number could be twice as high.

The suggested reforms would allow migrants that have expired work permits but no other violations to voluntarily surrender to authorities and obtain legal status.

The idea is not new. Migration of the 21st vice president Natalya Vlasovoi said there have been

more than 25 such amnesties, though none have been on such a large scale.

The organization said the draft law would be presented to the government within the next six months.

But the Federal Migration Service later responded to the possibility of an amnesty program, saying it does not see the need for such rules."

There is no need for this," a source at the agency told Interfax. "There is already an approved concept for migration policy. A plan for implementation of concrete measures is being developed. This has nothing to do with the administration," the source said, calling the proposal to declare amnesty "an attempt to jump into the last car of a departing train."

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