

2,500 Detained As Sobyenin Calls For Tighter Migration Rules

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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About 2,500 migrants were detained in the Russian capital in a three-day police operation, Acting Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin said in an interview Saturday during which he also added his voice to calls for tighter migration controls between Russia and the former states of the Soviet Union.

During a series of raids known as "Barrier-1," police detained 2,500 migrants, among whom 80 were deported and 600 criminal offenses recorded, Sobyenin said on television channel Rossia-1.

The Russian economy is heavily dependent on migrant labor, particularly from Central Asia, but there is widespread opposition to increased immigration within society, and the issue has become a focal point of upcoming Moscow mayoral elections scheduled for September 8 in which Sobyenin is running.

Sobyanin also expressed his support Saturday for an initiative to force migrants crossing from former countries of the Soviet Union into Russia to produce an international passport, rather than just their internal (national) passports.

"As soon as possible, we must change to the international passport, so that they don't come to us [by showing] paper at the border but with a real passport so we can identify these people," said Sobyanin.

In his state of the nation address in December, President Vladimir Putin called for the practice of using internal passports to end no later than 2015. Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin said in April that the new rules could be introduced as early as this year.

Most former Soviet republics, including Russia, retain the internal passport, which in the USSR functioned as an ID card and recorded its carrier's place of registration and other information.

Russian officials, including Putin, have recently highlighted the risks of underregulated migration, and drawn a link between migration and extremism. Sobyanin said last month that there were about 300,000 illegal migrants in Moscow and that most of the city's crimes were committed by "visitors."

A 2012 report from the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development said that Russia had the highest number of illegal immigrants in the world; accounting for some 7 percent of the country's working population.

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