

Russian Governor Fights to Keep North Korean Laborers, Despite Sanctions

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Yuri Smityuk / TASS

The head of a region in Russia's Far East has asked Moscow to allow an estimated 10,000 North Korean migrant workers to remain in the country despite UN sanctions.

Russia's Labor Ministry had [rejected](#) all previous requests from local employers to give the North Korean citizens working permits last month. The move came after the UN imposed fresh sanctions in September that limited countries from issuing permits to North Korean workers, who are suspected of helping finance Pyongyang's nuclear program.

Related article: [The Real Story of North Korean Labor Camps in Russia \(Op-ed\)](#)

After meeting the North Korean consul, Andrei Tarasenko, the governor of the Pacific Primorye region, told reporters Friday that he was concerned about the fate of the migrant workers in his region.

“We took the initiative and appealed to Moscow to keep the number of those workers who are already in Primorye,” Tarasenko was [cited](#) as saying by the Interfax news agency Friday.

North Korea’s Embassy petitioned Russian deputies last November to allow 3,500 migrant workers, who have already signed work contracts, to stay in the country despite the UN sanctions, Reuters [reported](#).

According to a U.S. State Department report from mid-2017, tens of thousands of North Koreans toil in “slave-like conditions” in Russia, forced to work up to 20 hours a day for meagre pay. Despite poor working conditions and a required “planned contribution” to their government, many North Korean [choose](#) to work in Russia to receive a higher salary than back home.

Media reports last year [alleged](#) that Russian companies used slave labor from North Korea to finish a stadium in St. Petersburg in time to host the 2017 FIFA Confederations Cup.

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