

Russia Passes Law to Employ Prisoners Near Businesses, Drawing Gulag Comparisons

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Alexander Nekrasov / TASS

Russian prisoners could soon work at correctional facilities near businesses under a new law that observers were quick to compare to Soviet-era gulag labor camps.

Almost 33,500 out of nearly 550,000 inmates are currently [doing time](#) in 123 prison settlements across Russia. These settlements are a type of remote penal colony where prisoners are free to roam the premises under the guards' watch.

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Prisoners convicted of misdemeanors or sentenced to hard labor are now allowed gainful employment at prison branches built near large enterprises, according to new legislation [published](#) Thursday.

The amendments to Russia's Criminal Code say that employers are required to provide living quarters, compensation and medical assistance to the inmates.

The measure's authors expect to [link](#) businesses in need of workers with at least 6,000 inmates and improve inmates' readiness to re-enter society, according to the Rossiiskaya Gazeta government daily.

The law comes into force on Jan. 1, 2020.

Online observers, including former Yekaterinburg mayor Yevgeny Roizman, [reacted](#) to news of the so-called prison branches by [comparing](#) them to the gulags.

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