

Russia to Recruit Convicts to Clean Up Arctic Pollution

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Norilsk authorities have already provided space to open a correctional center for 56 people, TASS reported. **Kirill Kukhmar / TASS**

Russia plans to recruit prisoners sentenced to forced labor to clean up pollution in the Arctic, the state-run TASS news agency [reported](#) Thursday, citing Federal Prison Service (FSIN) official Elena Korobkova.

The announcement follows a string of environmental incidents to hit the fast-warming region this year, most notably a massive fuel spill from a Norilsk Nickel storage tank in May that environmentalists called the [largest-ever oil spill](#) in the Arctic. Some 21,000 tons of diesel fuel spilled into the soil near the city of Norilsk and waterways up to 30 kilometers away.

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Speaking at an annual Arctic forum in St. Petersburg, Korobkova said an agreement has

already been reached with authorities in the Krasnoyarsk region to start clean-up work in Norilsk.

Norilsk authorities have already provided space to open a correctional center for 56 people, TASS quoted Korobkova, who oversees non-prison-related punishments at FSIN, as saying.

The Arkhangelsk region is considering a similar agreement with the FSIN, she said.

Korobkova said that local authorities and other organizations already working on Arctic clean-up could take advantage of "mutually beneficial cooperation" with the FSIN.

Climate change and widespread pollution remain hot topics in the Arctic as meteorologists [reported](#) record-high temperatures in November and December.

In imperial Russia and the Soviet Union, sending political prisoners to labor camps in remote parts of Siberia and the Arctic was a common practice.

In modern-day Russia, forced labor has been used as a form of criminal punishment since 2017, with officials [dismissing](#) comparisons to the Stalin-era gulag camps.

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