The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Hundreds of Ukrainians 'in Limbo' at Moscow Deportation Centers – Kommersant

June 17, 2022



Peter Kovalev / TASS

Hundreds of Ukrainian citizens are stuck in limbo at detention centers in and around Moscow awaiting deportations that were halted by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Kommersant business daily reported Friday.

Members of Russia's presidential human rights council and its prison watchdog say at least 358 Ukrainians have been held at Moscow detention centers as well as the temporary migrant detention center in the town of Sakharovo since February.

"It's not a lot compared with hundreds of thousands of [Ukrainian] refugees," Eva Merkacheva, a member of both organizations, told Kommersant.

"[But] it's unclear what to do next," she said.

Related article: ‘It’s Our Way to Protest’: Anti-War Russians Volunteer to Help Ukrainian Refugees

Moscow and Kyiv had an agreement allowing Ukrainian citizens to serve prison sentences in their home country after trials held in Russia, according to Merkacheva.

“Now, even this mechanism has stopped,” the activist said. “So far, it’s easier to feed them and leave them in Russia until the end of the special military operation and the renewal of [deportation] agreements.”

The Ukrainian detainees, dozens of whom are wanted in Ukraine on charges of grave crimes, risk being locked up for a legally mandated two years if Russia’s war in Ukraine drags on.

Georgy Ivanov, member of Moscow’s Public Monitoring Commission prison watchdog, told Kommersant that authorities could round up the detainees again after their release.

Activists decry squalid conditions at the detention centers, citing overcrowding as well as inadequate food, sanitation and medical care.

Ivanov estimates that around 200 more Ukrainian citizens are being held in detention facilities near Moscow and an unknown number in St. Petersburg.

Human rights officials in Russia’s Sverdlovsk and Ulyanovsk regions confirmed dozens more Ukrainian citizens held in deportation centers. In the Nizhny Novgorod region, officials said they have had no problems deporting Ukrainians to their home country in recent months.

Some detainees have family in Russia and are seeking to legalize their status in the country.

“They don’t want to leave at all. Some of them tried to receive asylum but were denied,” Ivanov said.

Kommersant’s report comes amid widespread reports of Ukrainian refugees being forced into so-called “filtration camps” before being transferred to Russia.

Kyiv says Ukrainian citizens are being deported against their will, while Moscow calls this process an “evacuation.”

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/06/17/hundreds-of-ukrainians-in-limbo-at-moscow-deportation-centers-kommersant-a78030