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Russia Threatens Denaturalization for Draft-Defying Central Asians

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The Sakharovo migration center in Moscow. **Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency**

Moscow could strip the Russian passports of naturalized citizens from Central Asia if they defy President Vladimir Putin's orders to take up arms in Ukraine, a senior human rights official said Thursday.

Kirill Kabanov, member of the presidential human rights council, issued the warning after four ex-Soviet Central Asian republics threatened their citizens with criminal prosecution for fighting in foreign conflicts.

Related article: Central Asians in Russia Pressured to Join Moscow's Fight in Ukraine

Kabanov said his body is drafting new rules as part of Putin's mobilization orders for migrants who have obtained Russian citizenship within the past 10 years.

The draft rules include compulsory military service within a year for Russian citizens hailing

from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, he wrote on his Telegram channel.

Nationals of these countries, who often move to Russia to find work, make up a significant share of foreigners granted Russian passports.

“Refusal to perform military service should result in the deprivation of Russian citizenship not only for the person subject to military service, but also for members of his family,” Kabanov said.

He said denaturalization “would be an adequate response to an official ban” on taking part in hostilities on foreign soil by the Central Asian countries.

Several reports have emerged of Central Asian nationals living in Russia being pressured to fight on Moscow’s side in the months since Russia invaded Ukraine in February.

Migrants’ rights activists told The Moscow Times in spring that the recruitment tactics included promising expedited citizenship in exchange for Central Asians signing up for contract service with the Russian army.

Russian lawmakers this week moved to simplify citizenships for foreigners who complete a one-year contract with the Russian Armed Forces.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin announced the opening of a military recruitment site for foreigners at a migration center outside the Russian capital.

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