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Finland Follows Baltics, Bans Entry to Russian Vehicles

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Peter Kovalev/TASS

Finland will ban entry to passenger vehicles registered in Russia starting Saturday, the Nordic country's top diplomat announced Friday afternoon.

"Our decision is for the ban to come into force after midnight," Finnish Foreign Minister Elina Valtonen was quoted as saying by the state broadcaster Yle.

"We estimate the new rules will significantly reduce traffic on the border between Finland and Russia," she added.

EU citizens and "their immediate circle," as well as diplomats and those traveling for humanitarian reasons, would be exempt from the restrictions, according to Yle.

Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia issued no-exception entry bans this week for Russian-registered cars after the European Commission clarified that existing regulations prohibit the import or transfer of goods originating in Russia.

Related article: Estonia, Lithuania Threaten Seizure of Russian Vehicles

Estonian and Lithuanian officials later suggested that cars with Russian license plates would be confiscated if they refused to re-register or leave.

Finland's Valtonen ruled out confiscations in her country, telling Yle that vehicles with Russian license plates would have to leave Finland by March 16, 2024.

Supporters of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny urged Baltic leaders to lift the vehicle ban on claims that they harm Russian war exiles and play into the Kremlin's narrative of anti-Russian feelings in the West.

Moscow has accused the EU of "racism" for its ban on passenger vehicles, while former President Dmitry Medvedev called for a suspension of diplomatic relations.

Finland, a member of the European Union, joined NATO this year, thus doubling the length of the U.S.-led military alliance's border with Russia.

Finland's neighbor Norway, which has joined the EU's sanctions against Russia despite not being a member of the bloc, said it was also considering banning entry to Russian-registered vehicles.

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