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Finland to Close Last Border Crossing With Russia

By AFP

November 28, 2023



The Torfyanovka border crossing between Russia and Finland. **Alexander Demianchuk / TASS**

Finland's prime minister said Tuesday that the country will temporarily close its last border crossing with Russia following an influx of migrants that Helsinki claims is a "hybrid operation" orchestrated by Moscow.

Interior Minister Mari Rantanen said the closure would come into effect overnight between Wednesday and Thursday and last until Dec. 13.

The Nordic country, which shares a 1,340-kilometer-long border with Russia, saw a surge in undocumented migrants seeking asylum on its border with Russia this month.

Since the beginning of August, nearly 1,000 migrants have entered Finland without a visa through the eastern border crossing points.

"Finland is the target of a Russian hybrid operation. This is a matter of national security,"

Rantanen said.

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Last week, Finland's northernmost eastern border crossing, Raja-Jooseppi, became the sole entry point to Russia following the closure of the other seven transit points by the Nordic country.

Asylum seekers will be limited to applying for protection at "open border crossing points for air and maritime traffic," meaning ports and airports, according to a government statement.

"This is an organized activity, not a genuine emergency," Prime Minister Petteri Orpo said of the surge.

He added that the "ease with which the migrants found their way to the remote border crossing point at Raja-Jooseppi is also evidence of this."

"It is not just the number of arrivals that is at issue, but the phenomenon itself," Orpo said.

Finland's relations with its eastern neighbor have soured since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

After Finland joined NATO in April, reversing its decades-long policy of military non-alignment, Russia warned of "countermeasures."

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