

Finland Shuts Russian Border Again Over Migrant Crossings

By [Elias Huuhtanen for AFP](#)

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@KainuunRaja / X

Finland will close its eastern border with Russia, its interior minister said Thursday, hours after reopening it following a spike in migrant crossings that Helsinki has labeled a Russian hybrid attack.

Finland, which shares a 1,340-kilometer border with Russia, will close the border on Friday at 8:00 p.m. until Jan. 14, Interior Minister Mari Rantanen said at a press conference.

On Tuesday, Finland opted to partially ease the closure that had been in force since the end of November, aiming to assess whether there was still pressure on its borders.

But it canceled the plan to ease restrictions when migrants resumed entering the country immediately after restrictions were lifted.

Two border crossing points in southeastern Finland were opened overnight Wednesday to

Thursday.

Related article: [Finland to Partially Reopen Border With Russia](#)

The Finnish border guard said Thursday that at least 40 people had crossed into Finland to seek asylum since the border was opened.

"The number of migrants increased rapidly and the phenomenon accelerated faster than expected," Rantanen said.

Arthur Parfenchikov, the governor of Karelia, the Russian region bordering Finland, said Thursday on X, formerly Twitter, that "there are groups of migrants among the people wishing to cross the border."

He said that the Russian authorities checked the passports of the migrants and only found two with non-compliant documents.

"The others are allowed to pass through the checkpoint in small groups," he added.

Following an influx of migrants in mid-November, Finland closed four of its eight border crossings with Russia, before restricting passage only to the northernmost checkpoint. That too was closed by the end of November.

The Nordic country had seen nearly 1,000 migrants arrive without a visa through its eastern border crossings since August.

"The phenomenon and the threat of its expansion pose a serious threat to national security," Rantanen said.

Finland is obliged by international law to ensure that migrants can seek asylum, and the availability of locations can only be limited in exceptional circumstances, according to Finnish legal experts.

'Hybrid operation'

Helsinki has accused Russia of orchestrating a migration crisis on its border, aimed at exerting political pressure on its small neighbor.

"This is a sign that the Russian authorities are continuing their hybrid operation against Finland," Rantanen said.

According to Finnish authorities, Russian border guards are pushing the migrants to the border.

Finland cited the influx of dozens of migrants even at its northernmost border crossing, in the Arctic region of Murmansk, immediately after others were closed as evidence of Russian involvement.

"The phenomenon is also linked to international crime," Rantanen added.

Moscow has denied intentionally sending migrants to Finland.

"Finnish authorities are beginning to make clumsy excuses, warming up Russophobic sentiments," Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said in November.

Finland's once cordial relations with its eastern neighbor soured after the invasion of Ukraine.

Anticipating that Moscow could use migrants as political pressure, Finland in February began building a 200-kilometer fence along its Russian border.

But only three kilometres of the fence are finished.

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

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