

Finland Extends Russian Border Closure Over 'Instrumentalized' Migration

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Road to closed Vaalimaa border check point between Finland and Russia in Virolahti, Finland. **Lauri Heino / IMAGO / TASS**

Finland will extend the closure of its eastern border with Russia until Feb. 11 due to the continued threat of illegal migration that Helsinki blames on Moscow, the Nordic country's Interior Ministry [announced](#) Thursday.

The ministry said it has information that migrants from third countries remain on the Russian side of the border, waiting to cross once it reopens.

In a statement announcing the extended closure, Finland's Interior Ministry said "It is clear that the Russian authorities or other actors have been facilitating instrumentalized migration" and that international criminal groups were also involved.

"Based on information gathered by the authorities, it is very likely that Russia's hybrid influence activities will resume and expand as we saw earlier," Interior Minister Mari Rantanen said.

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Moscow denies that it is waging a hybrid attack on Finland with the use of asylum seekers.

It also warned that Finland’s reversal of its longstanding non-alignment policy to join NATO in April would lead to “countermeasures.”

Finland’s government will “repeal or amend” the decision once the threat to national security or public order subsides, the Interior Ministry said in the statement.

It added that Helsinki “is also examining alternative ways to put an end to the phenomenon.”

Meanwhile, asylum seekers will not be able to submit applications for international protection at any of the crossing points along the 1,340-kilometer border between Finland and Russia.

Last month, Finland closed its border with Russia until Jan. 14, citing what it said was a spike in asylum seekers from the Middle East and Africa.

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