

Finland Extends Russian Border Closure for 2 Months

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The Vaalimaa border checkpoint, which has been closed since December. **Lauri Heino / IMAGO / TASS**

Finland has extended the closure of its border with Russia until April 14, as a recent surge of asylum seekers it accuses Moscow of orchestrating shows no sign of abating, the Nordic country's Interior Ministry [announced](#) Thursday.

Finland has not reopened its eastern border with Russia since closing it in December over what it called Moscow's "instrumentalization" of asylum seekers from the Middle East and Africa.

"We have seen no signs that Russia is changing its behavior. On the contrary, the information we have received confirms our assessment that Russia is continuing its hybrid operation," Interior Minister Mari Rantanen said in a statement.

Moscow denies using asylum seekers to wage a hybrid attack on Finland.

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But Russia also warned that Helsinki's reversal of its longstanding non-alignment policy to join NATO in April would lead to "countermeasures."

Rantanen claimed that "hundreds if not thousands" of third-country migrants remained on the Russian side waiting to cross into Finland once the border reopened.

"We have reason to believe that this situation will continue for some time," she stressed.

The official acknowledged the difficulties experienced by residents with family on the Russian side of the border, but stressed Finland's need to "put national security first."

Meanwhile, asylum seekers will still 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.

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