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Siberia's Krasnoyarsk to Shutter Prisons After Inmates Sent to Fight in Ukraine

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Andrei Lyubimov / Moskva News Agency

Authorities in Siberia's Krasnoyarsk region plan to close several prisons this year after a drop-off in the number of inmates due to military recruitment efforts for the war in Ukraine, a regional official said Thursday.

"A one-time large reduction in the number of convicts during the special military operation prompted some people to report to the top about the need to close penitentiary institutions as a way to optimize and save money," said Krasnoyarsk's human rights ombudsman Mark Denisov.

"It's an alarming trend," he was quoted as saying by the Kommersant daily in his annual report to the region's legislative assembly.

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Denisov named two penal colonies that are slated to close down this year but did not indicate how many more were expected to shut their doors.

He criticized the decision as "impractical" and predicted that the prisons would reopen within five years.

"[The war] will end sooner or later. Everything will return to normal. After all, the social structure of society has not changed," Denisov told regional lawmakers, according to the news outlet Prospekt Mira.

His comments came the same week as Russian lawmakers in the lower-house State Duma passed legislation to allow future suspected or convicted criminals to join the military and fight in Ukraine.

The practice of recruiting prisoners for the war in Ukraine was spearheaded by the Wagner mercenary group in 2022, although Russia's Defense Ministry took over prison recruitment early last year.

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