The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Denies Plans to Ban Passport Renewals Abroad

April 25, 2024



Russian Embassy in the USA **Social media**

Russia on Thursday denied reports that it was considering barring its own citizens from renewing passports abroad, a move that would further disadvantage exiled dissidents who fled political persecution.

The independent newspaper Novaya Gazeta said earlier Thursday that it had obtained a copy of a draft Foreign Ministry decree suspending passport renewals and other consular services for Russians abroad starting May 1.

"This information is absolutely untrue and is blatantly provocative," the consular department of Russia's Foreign Ministry said in a statement on its Telegram channel.

Related article: 15% of Russians Who Fled War, Mobilization Have Returned – Survey

The ministry added that its consular offices and diplomatic missions "traditionally pursue a

policy of information openness."

"We inform citizens about planned changes in current legislation and law enforcement practice in the consular and related areas as far in advance and as fully as possible," it said.

Novaya Gazeta said it had asked the Foreign Ministry to comment on its alleged draft decree before publication. It attached a scan of its written request for comment sent to Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova on Tuesday.

The independent Mediazona news website said it and another outlet, Sotavision, received a similar unverified Foreign Ministry document on April 18. The sender reportedly introduced himself as a Foreign Ministry employee but was otherwise unable to verify his identity and has not logged on to his social media account since, Mediazona said.

The alleged decree resembles the September 2023 move by Russia's close ally Belarus to ban citizens from renewing their passports abroad in what was widely interpreted as an effort to force exiled dissidents to return.

Anywhere from 700,000 to 1 million Russians are estimated to have left the country since Moscow invaded Ukraine in 2022 and declared a partial mobilization of reservists that fall. Only 20% have been granted temporary residence permits or political asylum, according to Novaya Gazeta.

UN figures for 2021 say approximately 10 million Russians live abroad.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/04/25/russia-denies-plans-to-ban-passport-renewals-abroad-a84958