

Finland Moves to Restrict Asylum Seekers on Russian Border

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A closed border crossing between Russia and Finland. **Sergei Grits / AP / TASS**

The Finnish government on Tuesday [introduced](#) a bill into parliament that would allow authorities to turn away asylum seekers at the country's border with Russia, an announcement that comes months after Helsinki first shuttered its eastern frontier over an influx of asylum seekers it says was organized by Moscow.

Finland closed its border with Russia in December over the arrival of what was at the time said to be thousands of people seeking asylum in the country. Helsinki accused the Kremlin of encouraging the asylum seekers to cross their shared border in a destabilization ploy.

In April, Finnish authorities [extended](#) the closure "until further notice," adding that they did not see any changes in Russia's behavior "that would lead us to conclude that the situation has changed meaningfully."

And last week, Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo [said](#) that "intelligence information" showed there were still thousands of "migrants" near the border with Russia, waiting for it to

reopen.

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Tuesday's proposed draft law would allow Finnish border guards to turn away asylum seekers — with limited exceptions — for up to one month at a time in situations when the country's sovereignty and national security were considered to be under threat from a foreign state.

Orpo said the bill, if passed into law, would help manage "instrumentalized" migration and "counter the pressure exerted on Finland."

The proposed restrictions would require the approval of the Finnish president.

To become law, the bill requires a five-sixths majority vote in parliament. Once approved, the restrictions would be in force for one year.

The legislation has been rushed through due to the Finnish government's concern that the number of asylum seekers is set to surge with the onset of warm weather, according to the state broadcaster Yle.

AFP contributed reporting.

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