

Finland To Keep Russian Border Shut, Extend Contested Law

By [AFP](#)

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The closed Vaalimaa border checkpoint between Finland and Russia in Virolahti, Finland. **Lauri Heino / IMAGO / TASS**

Finland's government said Thursday it plans to keep its border with Russia closed and extend a controversial law allowing border guards to turn away asylum seekers under certain circumstances.

The one-year "Act on Temporary Measures to Combat Instrumentalized Migration" entered into force on July 22, 2024, after a surge in asylum seekers arriving at Finland's eastern border with Russia in 2023.

Helsinki has claimed it was orchestrated by Russia — a charge the Kremlin has denied. Finland closed its border crossings as a result.

The government said the border closure and new law have had the desired effect, noting that

"instrumentalized migration has ceased for now."

The Finnish Interior Ministry said in a statement that it was looking to "extend the validity" of the act, although an official told AFP the length of the extension was not yet decided and would be "assessed."

"The security situation at Finland's eastern border is tense but stable for now. However, we must be prepared for rapid and critical changes," said Interior Minister Mari Rantanen.

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The Nordic country closed its 1,340-kilometer (830-mile) eastern border with Russia in mid-December 2023 after the arrival of around 1,000 migrants without visas.

"Finland still has no plans to open the eastern border," Rantanen said.

Legal experts have noted that the temporary legal act adopted in July — dubbed the "deportation law" in local media — violates human rights obligations enshrined in Finland's constitution as well as international legal commitments.

The law can be applied for one month at a time in limited areas, if Finland's sovereignty and national security is deemed threatened.

Once activated, only certain asylum seekers, such as children or people with disabilities, are allowed to seek protection.

Their eligibility to apply depends on an assessment of their case by border guards, with refused asylum seekers unable to appeal the decision.

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