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FSB Says Busted Migrant Legalization Ring

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Olesya Chepurchenko / TASS

Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) has uncovered a large-scale migrant legalization scheme involving the forgery of employment contracts for more than 53,000 foreigners in Moscow and its environs, Interfax reported Wednesday.

Twelve Russian citizens were placed in pre-trial detention on charges of organizing illegal migration.

They face up to 10 years in prison if found guilty of organizing illegal migration.

One of the group's leaders was identified as a 37-year-old native of the southwestern Ukrainian city of Odesa. FSB agents found an undisclosed number of Bulgarian and Ukrainian passports in his possession during searches, the agency said.

Interfax did not publish video footage of the arrests.

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The group was alleged to have illegally facilitated the legalization of 53,197 foreign nationals in Moscow and the Moscow region.

Individuals who received the forged employment contracts have been identified and will be deported from Russia with a subsequent ban on re-entry, the FSB said.

Russia has clamped down on its migrant population since the Crocus City Hall attack in March 2024 by tightening migration laws, imposing municipal and regional bans on employment in certain industries and increasing deportations.

Migrant workers come to Russia predominantly from the Central Asian republics of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, as well as from Armenia in the South Caucasus.

Russian police said last month that they had uncovered more than 128,000 violations of migration law so far in 2025. More than 19,000 decisions were made on the administrative expulsion and deportation of foreigners from Russia.

Around 4,800 criminal cases were opened related to the organization of illegal migration over the same period, according to Russia's Interior Ministry.

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