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Migrant Crackdown Leads to 10% Drop in Foreigners Residing in Russia

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Foreign children attending a school in Moscow. **Andrei Nikerichev / Moskva News Agency**

The number of foreign nationals living in Russia has fallen to 5.7 million this month, down 10% from January 2025, amid a raft of new migration restrictions, the business newspaper Vedomosti reported Thursday.

The figure marks a decline from 6.3 million foreigners a year earlier, according to data presented by Alexander Perezhogin, head of analytics at the Interior Ministry's migration service.

Perezhogin attributed the drop largely to a 25% decline in the number of foreign children in Russia, following new rules introduced last year that bar them from attending schools unless they pass a Russian-language exam and provide proof of legal residency.

Interior Ministry spokeswoman Irina Volk warned this week that foreigners who violate the rules could face deportation.

A separate law that took effect on Wednesday allows education authorities to share data on foreign children directly with the Interior Ministry, tightening state oversight of migrant families.

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Another major factor behind the decline was the introduction last year of a so-called "controlled persons registry," said Anna Minushkina, head of the Minushkina & Partners law firm.

The registry lists foreigners subject to possible deportation and imposes sweeping restrictions, including bans on driving, marrying, traveling within Russia, opening bank accounts or spending more than 30,000 rubles ($394) per month — effectively preventing remittances abroad.

Anti-migrant sentiment has intensified since the mass shooting at Moscow's Crocus City Hall in March 2024. Several suspected gunmen from Central Asia were arrested in connection with the attack.

In 2024, Russia deported more than 80,000 foreigners, nearly double the 44,200 people deported in 2023.

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