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# St. Petersburg police reportedly arrest thousands of migrants, pressure them into signing Russian army contracts

Friday 12 January 2024, by [Meduza.io](https://meduza.io) (Date first published: 3 January 2024).

**St. Petersburg police arrested at least 3,000 migrants on December 31 and January 1, reports local outlet Fontanka. Novaya Gazeta Europe writes that the number was “much higher” and that men, women, and children were detained. The men were reportedly taken to police stations, while women and children were taken to a special detention center. Police cordoned off areas where they conducted raids and arrested people both on the streets and in apartments, according to Novaya Gazeta Europe.**

On January 1, military enlistment officers came to many of the detainees and offered them the option of enlisting in the Russian army as “volunteers,” reports Novaya Gazeta Europe. Officers threatened to deport the men’s families if they did not comply. Those without Russian citizenship were offered expedited naturalization if they joined the army. According to Novaya Gazeta Europe’s information, at least 1,500 people agreed to sign contracts with the Russian Defense Ministry. This number has not been confirmed.

The joint press service of the St. Petersburg courts [reported](#) that 31 people were charged with migration law violations. Two of those charged were released, two were fined, and 27 were deported.

In recent months, Russian authorities have been actively offering migrants from Central Asian countries expedited citizenship in return for signing a contract with the Russian Defense Ministry. Additionally, police have been arresting migrants with Russian citizenship during raids and taking them to military enlistment offices.

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