

Crime by Migrants 'Up 40 Percent'

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The number of crimes committed by migrants this year is up 40 percent from last year, likely as a result of improved policing, and City Hall will expand the use of controversial volunteer patrols to catch illegal migrants and others who violate migration laws, officials announced Thursday.

Police have reported 3,350 such crimes since Jan. 1, compared with 2,369 for the same period last year. Most involve theft, and a much smaller percentage involve graver crimes, a spokeswoman for the Federal Migration Service's Moscow branch said at a news conference, Interfax reported.

"Either we've gotten better at uncovering crimes, or something has changed. I tend to think we've gotten better at uncovering crimes," she said.

But Svetlana Gannushkina, a migrant rights advocate with Memorial, told Interfax that she had not noticed a rise in crime. "Usually, people ask us for help and legal assistance. If crime rates had risen, we would have felt it," she said.

Meanwhile, a top city security official told journalists that Moscow would boost volunteer patrols aimed at helping enforce migration laws, possibly by increasing the overall number of patrols.

About 1,221 volunteers have participated in 370 police operations since the program's launch in February, and the results have been "positive," Sergei Kryuchkov said in comments carried by Interfax.

Rights activists have expressed concern about the patrols, which they say operate on questionable legal grounds and unfairly target migrants from Russia's economically depressed and majority Muslim southern flank.

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