

Moscow mayor: No more mosques in my city

[swamp the city's four public mosques](#) on Muslim holidays, because they are mainly used by temporary workers, [interview with the daily Komsomolskaya Pravda](#) on Wednesday, Mr. Sobyenin said that Moscow has about two million foreign residents, the vast bulk of them migrant workers from former Soviet Central Asia who are mainly Muslim. The city's economy "could not manage without them," he admitted.

But he insisted that the vast throngs of Muslims who fill Moscow streets and wait, often for many hours, to enter the city's few existing mosques are mostly people who come from outside the city limits and therefore have no right to be catered to.

"Muslim believers who come on religious holidays come from other regions. Between 60 and 70 percent of them are outsiders. We cannot provide for all comers. I think it's not necessary," Sobyenin said.

One new mosque is presently under construction in Moscow, but that's the end of it, he added. "No new building permits will be issued. I think that's enough mosques for Moscow."

Sobyenin devoted much of his interview to slamming illegal immigration, which he has warned in the past is stirring ethnic hatred among the Slavic majority in the city.

In [thousands rioted in the Moscow suburb of Biryulyovo](#) over the stabbing of a Russian man by a Muslim from Azerbaijan. Authorities reacted by rounding up over a thousand illegal immigrants and promising to do more to curb the influx.

But critics point out that cracking down on migrant workers

does nothing to solve the underlying problem: Moscow's economy desperately needs cheap, unskilled labor, and it's the corruption of local police, businesses, and officials that ensures most outside workers [who fear](#) that more mosques will only attract more Muslims to Moscow.

"Sobyanin's position is, why should we build mosques for them if they're here illegally?" says Alexei Malashenko, an expert with the Carnegie Center in Moscow.