

# Belarus Decrees Forced Employment For Some Jobs

The Associated Press

MINSK, Belarus (AP) — Belarus' authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko has signed a decree that bans some industrial workers from leaving their jobs, threatening them with draconian fines if they do.

Lukashenko's decree, signed Friday, follows a statement he made a week ago on a visit to a wood-processing plant. It's intended to stem the exodus of workers to neighboring Russia, where salaries are higher.

The measure refers to some 13,000 employees of nine state-controlled wood-processing plants and about 3,000 construction workers involved in their modernization. The workers would be required to sign new labor contracts containing a provision that would force those who quit to pay back the entire wage they received since signing the contract.

Critics compare the measure to serfdom and warn that it will only deepen the ex-Soviet nation's economic woes.

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