



2024 COUNTRY REPORT GEORGIA



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This year was a dramatic one for Georgia, in which its ties to the West, long under strain, began to unravel. Late October saw pivotal and contested elections, throwing the country's future European accession into question.

Key Points

- In October, Georgia held national elections pitting the incumbent Georgian Dream party against a united opposition. While the government reported a 54% win for Georgian Dream, opposition parties, non-governmental organizations, and their Western allies have alleged fraud and pledged not to recognize the vote, starting a period of sustained street protests.
- In late November, Georgia's Prime Minister announced the country would halt EU accession until 2028, leading to mass street protests across the country.
- Following Georgian Dream's passage of a Russian-style foreign agent's law in May targeting civil society, many high-level European and American ties to Georgia were suspended and Western governments began to sanction Georgian elites. Following Georgia's contested elections, the European Union placed Georgia's accession on indefinite halt.
- Russia and China both increased involvement in Georgia. Georgian Dream built ties to the Chinese government, including awarding state-owned Chinese firms the right to build a deep-water cargo port at Anaklia on the Black Sea. Russia deepened its involvement in Georgia's occupied territories, building a naval port at Ochamchire in Abkhazia and forcing more economic integration.

Chronological Reporting:

Georgian Delegation Launches China Trip

A delegation of Georgian Dream party members began its January 14–20 trip to China. The delegation met with several Chinese policy elites, including Xiao Jie, Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, and Liu Jianchao, head of the Chinese Communist Party's International Department. This trip commemorated the first anniversary of the Strategic Partnership Agreement the two countries signed in 2023. Topics of conversation

included implementing the partnership agreement, supporting Georgia's territorial integrity, and Georgia's recognition of the People's Republic of China as the sole China.

Source: [Civil.ge](https://civil.ge)

Georgia Releases 2023 Trade Statistics

On January 22, the National Statistics Office of Georgia published data on 2023 trade and growth. Overall, in 2023, foreign trade increased by 12.5% compared to 2022 with exports increasing 9.1% and imports increasing by 14%. Türkiye was Georgia's largest trading partner at \$2.98 billion, followed by Russia at \$2.4 billion, then the United States at \$2.05 billion, and then China at \$1.64 billion. The top three recipients of Georgian exports were Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Kazakhstan.

Source: [Civil.ge](https://civil.ge)

Georgian Delegation Attends Davos Forum

On January 16, a Georgian delegation led by Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili attended the Davos World Economic Forum summit in Davos, Switzerland. Garibashvili held several high-profile meetings, including with Israeli President Itzaak Herzog, and with the heads of a number of Turkish and European companies. Also present was Georgian foreign minister Ilia Darchiashvili, who held talks with his Dutch and Iranian counterparts. Discussions focused on European integration and economic ties respectively.

Source: [Civil.ge](https://civil.ge)

Garibashvili Resigns as PM of Georgia

At a press conference on January 29, Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili resigned. He did not give an immediate reason for his resignation and stated he would become the chair of the Georgian Dream party. Shortly before the announcement, a pro-government news station in Georgia predicted that the former speaker of the parliament, Irakli Kobakhidze, would replace him. It is unclear what precipitated Garibashvili's resignation, but the announcement came among rumors of a broader cabinet reshuffle and a month after the return of the party's founder, Bidzina Ivanishvili, to formal politics.

Source: [OC Media](https://ocmedia.com), [Jam News](https://jamnews.com)

Georgia Intercepts Cargo with Explosives on the Russian Border

The State Security Service of Georgia (SSSG) announced that it seized a special explosive device and a large amount of explosive material during an operational search on the border between Georgia and Russia. The SSSG says the explosives were shipped from the Ukrainian city of Odesa, transported through Romania, Bulgaria, and Türkiye, and then they were transported in a car to the Dariali border crossing in Georgia. Three Ukrainians and two Armenian citizens have been charged with transporting explosives within Georgia.

Source: [Civil.ge](https://civil.ge)

Georgia Names New Prime Minister

The Parliament of Georgia approved the nomination of the new Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Kobakhidze on February 8. Kobakhidze, 45, became the seventh prime minister of the Georgian Dream Party. This came shortly after the resignation of former Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili.

Source: [News.am](https://news.am)

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister: Russia seeks "Normalization with Georgia"

In a February 11 interview with Russian state media, Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Galuzin stat-

ed that “Russia intends to further facilitate the normalization of ties with Georgia.” He cited the resumption of commercial flights between the two countries, a new visa-free regime for Georgians hoping to enter Russia, and positive economic developments as evidence this could be accomplished without establishing formal diplomatic relations. He went on to praise the current Georgian government for its “pragmatism.”

Source: [Civil.ge](#)

Georgian Defense Minister Meets with the U.S. European Command General

On February 26, Georgian Defense Minister Irakli Chikovani met with the Director of Planning, Policy, Strategy, and Capabilities of the U.S. European Command General Daniel Lasika. During the meeting, cooperation between the United States and Georgia in the defense sector was discussed. The two sides stressed the importance of conducting multinational defense exercises in Georgia.

Source: [Agenda.ge](#)

Georgia Aims to Start Construction of Anaklia Port by June 2024, Actual Launch in September

Georgia’s Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze announced that the construction of the country’s first deep-water port in Anaklia is planned to commence in June. However, according to an October statement from Georgia’s Prime Minister, construction actually begin in September.

Source: [JAMnews](#)

So-Called South Ossetia Considers Joining Russia

Georgia’s breakaway region of South Ossetia is considered holding a referendum on joining Russia, a self-declared official told Russian media on March 15. “When we, together with Russia, come to this idea (about joining the Russian Federation), we will do it,” said Alan Alborov, the head of the breakaway region’s parliament, in response to a question on the potential referendum.

Source: [Anadolu Agency](#)

Georgian Dream Resurrects Foreign Agents Law

On April 3, Georgia’s parliamentary majority introduced a bill nearly identical to the “foreign agents” law it attempted to pass in March of 2023. Under the first bill, an organization receiving more than 20% of its funding from outside of Georgia would have been labeled “foreign agents.” The new iteration used the phrase “organization pursuing the interests of an outside power.” The original law was strongly opposed by the European Union and with large street protests in Tbilisi. Protesters gathered in Tbilisi to demonstrate against the new bill.

Source: [RFE/RL](#), [JAM News](#)

Georgia Prepares for Foreign Agents Law Vote Amid Heated Opposition

In April, the Georgian parliament discussed and prepared to vote on a revised version of the Foreign Agents law it attempted to pass in March 2023. The bill, which applies the label of “Organization Pursuing the Interests of a Foreign Power” to non-governmental organizations receiving upwards of 20% funding from abroad, was intensely criticized by domestic opposition figures and European officials as mirroring Russian legislation used to suppress civil society. Protests took place and journalists were barred access to the parliament. A notable incident occurred the morning of April 15, when an opposition Member of Parliament punched parliamentary Majority Leader Mamuka Mdinardze as he was delivering remarks relating to the bill.

Source: [Jam-News](#), [RFE/RL](#)

Occupation Forces Detain Three Georgian Citizens Near South Ossetia

On April 15, Georgia's state security service stated that three Georgian citizens were illegally detained by what it described as "Representatives of Russian occupation forces." The statement also relayed that Georgian security, in collaboration with the European Union observer mission, was utilizing all existing mechanisms to secure the release of the three Georgians. The statement condemned the action. The citizens were released on April 19.

Source: [State Security Service of Georgia](#)

Protests Continue Against Foreign Agents Law in Georgia

Starting the 15 of April, thousands of protesters continually gathered in Tbilisi, Georgia, in opposition to the second attempted passage of a bill that would apply the label "Organization Pursuing the Interest of an Outside Power" to NOGs that receive 20% or more of funding from foreign donors. Critics, both domestic and international, pointed out its similarity to bills that have passed in authoritarian countries, most notably Russia, that have served as a precursor to civil society repression. Georgian Dream officials announced they would hold a rally of their own supporting the bill on April 29.

Source: [RFE/RL](#)

Georgia's Parliament Pushes Forward Foreign Agents Bill, Protests Continue

On May 13, the Georgian Dream-controlled parliamentary Legal Committee endorsed the controversial foreign agents bill that had stoked mass protest in prior weeks. The foreign agents bill received its third and final reading in Parliament on May 14. On May 11, 50,000 Georgians protested the legislation in Tbilisi, arguing that the bill would threaten civil society in Georgia and put Georgia's European Union trajectory at risk.

Source: [Jam News](#), [Reuters](#)

Georgian Parliament Overrides Presidential Veto on Foreign Agents Bill

On May 28, Georgia's parliament voted once again on a controversial piece of legislation that forces non-governmental organizations receiving substantial foreign donations to declare themselves "organizations operating on behalf of a foreign power." The vote overrode the veto of President Salome Zourabichvili, who opposed the law. The foreign agents bill has led to mass protest within Georgia, as well as criticism by European and American officials. Opponents warned the bill would derail Georgia's long-running EU aspirations. U. S. officials stated that if the bill passed, Washington would place sanctions and visa-bans on appropriate Georgian elites, which did eventually take place.

Sources: [RFE/RL](#), [Politico](#)

Chinese Construction Firms to Build New Georgian Black Sea Deep-Water Port

A new deep-water port will be constructed along Georgia's Black Sea coastline, in Anaklia. The Georgian Government decided to give this massive infrastructure project to certain Chinese state-owned enterprises, despite some of these companies' ties to cases of corruption and fraud. The port is part of a larger connectivity project—the Middle Corridor. China's hand in the construction and operation of this new port will give it strategic influence over the port's function.

Source: [RFE/RL](#)

European Council: Georgia's EU Accession on de facto Halt

On June 27, the European Council (EC) released a document relaying conclusions on various issues, including the status of aspiring European Union members. About Georgia, the EC ex-

pressed serious concern about Tbilisi's recently passed bill on supposed foreign agents, a bill critics argued imperils Georgia's civil society. The EC called on Georgia to "clarify their intentions by reversing the current course of action which jeopardizes Georgia's EU path, de facto leading to a halt of the accession process." The statement went on to call on "Georgian authorities to ensure that the parliamentary elections this autumn are free and fair and encourages substantial long-term and short-term election observation by partners."

Source: [European Council](#)

United States "Indefinitely Postpones" Annual Military Exercises with Georgia

According to a July 5 statement released by the U.S. Department of Defense, the United States indefinitely postponed the then upcoming Noble Partner military exercises, which were scheduled to take place from July 25 to August 6. The statement noted that due to Georgian officials' increasingly anti-Western rhetoric, accusing the United States of attempting coups and pushing for an expansion of war in Russia, the United States was conducting a "a full review of all bilateral cooperation with Georgia."

Source: [U.S. Department of Defense](#)

First Russian Naval Ship Spotted at Planned Abkhazia Base

Satellite imagery showed what appeared to be a Russian naval ship off the coast of the still-under-construction Russian naval base at Ochamchire, within Russian-occupied Georgia. The Russian Project 22870 ship was the first Russian naval vessel spotted at Ochamchire, which has so far only hosted small boats from Russia's Federal Security Service. The ship appeared at Ochamchire on July 4-5, shortly after a successful Ukrainian drone boat attack on the Novorossiysk port on July 3.

Source: [RFE/RL](#), [Naval News](#)

EU Halting Funds to Georgian Military

The European Union announced it would halt the annual \$32 million worth of military aid to the Republic of Georgia. On July 16, EU Ambassador Paweł Herczyński announced the cuts and also stated that the EU planned to instead funnel funds to Georgian civil-society organizations. The shift in policy came in response to the passage of a controversial foreign agents bill by Tbilisi. The United States halted annual military exercises with Georgia in response to what the U.S. Department of Defense described as "the Georgian government's false accusations against the United States and other Western entities."

Source: [OC Media](#), [U.S. Department of Defense](#)

Georgia's President Contests 'Foreign Agent' Law in Constitutional Court

Georgia's president, Salome Zurbishvili, filed a challenge in Georgia's Constitutional Court over the recently passed "Foreign Agent Law." The law requires that NGOs receiving over 20% of their funding from abroad be classified as foreign agents. It has been characterized as a so-called Russian law, sparking protests in the streets of Tbilisi since it was passed in May and receiving condemnation from the United States and Europe. President Zurbishvili attempted to veto the law in May but was overridden by Georgia's Parliament. Her office argued that the law is "unconstitutional" because it violates Article 78 of the Georgian constitution requiring the government to "take all measures within the scope of its competences to ensure the full integration of Georgia into the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization."

Source: [RFE/RL](#)

Georgian Exports Valued at Record High for Month of June

According to Georgia's Deputy Economy Minister, Georgian exports were valued at just over

\$581 million in June. The goods exported were notably diverse, including agricultural products, textiles, clothing, and industrial goods. He noted that state support programs were working to further diversify and boost exports.

Source: [Agenda.ge](https://agenda.ge)

Falling Protests, “So Called” Officials of Occupied Abkhazia Withdraw Real-Estate Reform

In Abkhazia, a separatist controlled and Russian occupied Georgian territory, a controversial real estate bill easing access to Abkhaz properties for foreign nationals was withdrawn following street demonstrations. Opponents feared the law, which allowed foreigners to develop and own property in Abkhazia, would lead to an influx of Russian citizens to the territory, which likely has a population of roughly 250,000. Abkhazia has a significant Black Sea coast and prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union was a frequent tourist destination.

Source: [JAM News](#), [OC Media](#)

U.S. House Helsinki Commission Calls for Sanctions on Bidzina Ivanishvili

In a letter sent to U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken released on July 26, a bipartisan group of U.S. House of Representatives on the U.S. House Helsinki Commission called for “individual financial sanctions against key nodes of corruption and malign influence in Georgia, – specifically, Bidzina Ivanishvili and his inner circle.” The letter also stated that the Helsinki Commission believes Georgia’s governing Georgian Dream party, of which Ivanishvili is believed to be the informal head, is operating illegal call centers whose profits contribute to political corruption in “Georgia, Russia, and beyond.” Prior months saw a sharp falling out between Tbilisi and both Washington and Brussels. In May, the United States announced it intended to place visa restrictions on Georgian officials.

Source: [U.S. Helsinki Commission](#)

United States Pauses \$95 Million in Aid to Georgian Government

On July 31, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced that the United States would pause all financial assistance to the government of Georgia. In the letter, Blinken stated that following a review of U.S.-Georgian relations caused by the passage of a Russian-style foreign agents law, “the United States is pausing more than \$95 million in assistance that directly benefits the Government of Georgia. The Georgian government’s anti-democratic actions and false statements are incompatible with membership norms in the EU and NATO. While we are pausing our assistance to the Government of Georgia due to those actions, the United States will continue assistance to programs and activities that benefit the people of Georgia by strengthening democracy, rule of law, independent media, and economic development.” The move came after the European Union announced in July it would halt all financial aid to the Georgian military, citing the same concerns.

Source: [U.S. Department of State](#)

Georgian Volunteers Take Part in Kursk Offensive

During Ukraine’s ongoing Kursk incursion, footage emerged of pro-Ukrainian Georgia fighters, waving Georgian flags from within Russian territory. Pro-Russian news sites claimed up to 120 such volunteers were active within Kursk region, describing them as “mercenaries.” Possibly in response to the presence of Georgian fighters, Moscow reportedly deployed Ossetian and Abkhazian fighters to the area. Hundreds, and possibly thousands, of pro-Ukrainian Georgian volunteers are active in Ukraine, often as part of the Georgian National Legion of Ukraine.

Source: [RFE](#), [EurAsia Daily](#)

Russia Suspends Funds to Abkhazia Amid Political Disagreement

Sergei Shamba, the foreign representative of the self-declared Republic of Abkhazia, a Russian-backed separatist entity on the territory of Georgia, announced on September 3 that Russia had suspended funding for the Socio-Economic Development Program for Abkhazia. Shamba also announced that Russia would begin charging Abkhazia commercial rates for energy, having long charged Abkhazia discounted prices. The moves came after a leaked document stipulated Russia would halt support to Abkhazia until a number of pro-Russian reforms on economic and judicial integration were instituted.

Source: [OC-Media](#)

Ivanishvili Tops Georgian Dream Party List

Georgian Dream (GD) party elites listed billionaire and former Prime Minister, Bidzina Ivanishvili, as the party's number-one candidate on their official electoral list. Ivanishvili had not held a formal role in government in several years but has long been believed to be the informal center of power in GD.

Source: [Civil.ge](#)

EU Envoy: Visa-Free Status for Georgia Depends on Free Elections

The European Union ambassador to Georgia stated on September 20 that the EU might cancel visa-free travel for Georgian nationals if October's national elections are not free and fair. Georgia had previously achieved visa liberalization as part of a long-running push for EU integration, but recent years have seen those bilateral relations fracture.

Source: [RFE/RL](#)

Georgia's National Elections Saturday October 26

Georgians headed to the polls on October 26 in national parliamentary elections that will shape the country for years to come. The ruling Georgian Dream party faced off against a diverse but united opposition block under the leadership of President Salome Zourabichvili. Most independent polling had placed Georgian Dream's approval between 30-40%.

Source: [EurasiaNet](#), [German Marshall Fund](#)

Georgia's Elections Contested:

On October 26, Georgia held national elections. The country's Central Electoral Commission (CEC) reported a 54% majority in favor of the government. This despite two [exit polls](#) reporting a 40% and 42% vote share for GD respectively. Election day was also marred by several instances of [polling irregularities](#) critics claim demonstrate government rigging. The opposition has since mobilized and promised to resist Georgian Dream and demanded new elections be held.

In Georgia's immediate neighborhood, Armenia and Azerbaijan both congratulated Georgian Dream on the supposed victory. Russian officials [likewise](#) supported the result. Dmitry Medvedev, the former Russian president and current deputy chairman of the Security Council of Russia, wrote on X in support of the elections and called for the arrest of Zourabichvili. Victor Orbán, prime minister of Hungary, wrote on X [congratulating](#) Georgian Dream and made a visit to Tbilisi on October 28 to demonstrate his support. China additionally [recognized](#) the result.

Western [officials](#) have noted concerns surrounding the election. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken [stated](#) that election day itself was "generally well-administered," but noted reports of irregularities and called for a "full investigation." Others, such as [Poland's Foreign Minister](#) and leaders from the three Baltic countries of [Estonia](#), [Latvia](#), and [Lithuania](#), released statements indicating they will not recognize the legitimacy of the elections and will support opposition

efforts. A group of European Union foreign ministers also [issued](#) a joint-statement expressing their concerns and condemning “all violation of international norms for free and fair elections.” In November, the EU announced it was dispatching a team to investigate claims of election rigging as protests were held throughout Tbilisi and other cities.

European Union Halts Georgia’s EU Accession Following Elections

On October 30, EU Ambassador to Georgia Pawel Herczynski stated, “Due to the course of action taken by the Georgian government, EU leaders have stopped Georgia’s access process.” Herczynski continued, “It remains on hold as long as Georgia continues to move away from the European Union, our values and our precedents.... Georgia’s future government must change course, return to democratic principles and values, and start with transparency in the electoral process.”

Source: [POLITICO](#) , [JAM-news](#)

European Parliamentary Delegation Visits Tbilisi in Solidarity with Opposition

On November 11, a delegation of members of parliament from various European governments visited Tbilisi, Georgia. The trip, which included high-ranking MPs from Germany, Poland, France, and the three Baltic countries, was done in solidarity with Georgia’s political opposition, who argue that October 26’s national elections were rigged in favor of the governing Georgian Dream party. The parliamentarians greeted protesters and spoke at a large opposition rally on November 11.

Source: [POLITICO](#)

Protests in Abkhazia Seek to Unseat “Government”

In Georgia’s Russian-occupied separatist-governed region of Abkhazia, large crowds of protesters stormed central government buildings on November 15, including the de facto parliament. Despite a preliminary report that suggested that the so-called President of Abkhazia, Aslam Bzhania, had resigned, he later delivered a statement repudiating the claim. The protests were coordinated by opposition groups in reaction to a controversial plan to allow Russian citizens and investors to buy property within the region. Bzhania since fled to his private home outside of Abkhazia’s de facto capital and pledged to remain in office.

Source: [OC Media](#)

In Letter to EU Foreign Policy Chief, Georgian Opposition Lays out Position

Georgia’s four opposition blocks released a joint letter addressed to European Union foreign policy head, Josep Borrell. The letter called on the EU not to recognize the results of the October 26 elections. Furthermore, the letter asked that Brussels pressure Georgian officials to investigate election fraud, not to convene parliament until the investigation is completed, to announce a suspension of Georgia’s EU accession, to cease all communication with Georgian authorities, and to suspend funding for Georgia’s public sector. The central demand was that new elections be held in 2025, following an improvement of the electoral environment. In the aftermath of the May passage of the foreign agents law, the EU suspended most of its financial aid to the Georgian government. The EU’s ambassador to Georgia already stated that the country’s accession is on hold.

Source: [JAM News](#)

Electricity Crisis in Abkhazia

TASS has reported that Abkhazia, the Russian-occupied separatist-governed region of Georgia, is currently facing a severe energy crisis due to the Enguri hydroelectric power station, Abkhazia’s main domestic source of energy, shutting down as a result of low water levels. The crisis

came amidst an ongoing political confrontation between Abkhazia and Russia that has pressured the territory to accept economic integration by withholding the discounted natural gas Moscow usually provides Abkhazia.

Source: [The Kyiv Independent](#)

Georgia Elects New President

On December 14, Georgian elections took place with a new format, comprised of voting by an electoral college, which is made up of members of parliament, municipal councils and regional legislatures. As a result of the elections, Mikheil Kavelashvili, a former soccer player, became the president. Kavelashvili, who has never held political office before, is regarded by many as a GD loyalist. Salome Zourabichvili, the head of Georgia's opposition who was elected to the presidency in 2020, has refused to recognize the results of October 26's contested national elections and to leave her office.

Source: [OC Media](#), [AP News](#)

United States Adds More Visa Restrictions on Georgian Officials

On December 12, the U.S. State Department announced a new set of visa restrictions on Georgian Officials, stating it would "prohibit visa issuance to those who are responsible for, or complicit in, undermining democracy in Georgia." This move comes amidst continued widespread protests in Georgia following allegations of a rigged election in October.

Source: [RFE/RL](#)

Mass Protests Across Georgia

For four back-to-back evenings, mass street demonstrations have been taking place in downtown Tbilisi. The demonstrations began in backlash to the announcement by Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze that Georgia's government would be postponing European Union accession engagement until 2028. Joining the EU is favored by a large majority of Georgians and is written into Georgia's constitution. Kobakhidze's announcement came in the aftermath of the disputed October 28 national elections, in which the incumbent Georgian Dream party claimed a 54% majority. Georgia's opposition parties have all refused to recognize the October 28 result.

Source: [OC-Media](#)

Georgian Ambassadors Resign Amid Protests

Amid the mass demonstrations taking place in Tbilisi and other Georgian cities, several members of the Georgian foreign service have resigned. This includes Georgia's ambassadors to the United States, Bulgaria, the Netherlands, Lithuania, and the acting ambassador to Italy. While the exact reason for the resignations has gone unstated, Georgia's diplomatic corps on November 29 issued a statement that pausing EU accession was opposed to Georgia's strategic interests. In May, Georgia's top diplomat to France and Monaco resigned, citing Georgian Dream's passage of the foreign agents law.

Source: [Civil.ge](#), [OC-Media](#)

Georgia Protests Continue with Arrests and Resignations

Mass demonstrations have continued across Georgia following the November 28 announcement by Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze that Georgia would not engage in the European Union accession process until 2028. Beginning on December 4, Georgian authorities have targeted opposition members, arresting several on charges of organizing violence. Former Member of Parliament Aleko Elisashvili of the Strong Georgia political block was sentenced to two months of pre-trial detention while Nika Gvaramia, a former government minister of education and science and current leader of the Coalition for Change block, has been sentenced to 12 days

after a violent arrest by security forces. Meanwhile, Irakli Shaishmelashvili, head of Operational Planning Division of the Special Task Force and member of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Giorgi Gvimradze, director of the news and current affairs department of the Georgian Public Broadcaster, resigned their positions.

Source: [Civil.ge](#), [BBC](#), [Georgian News](#)

So-Called Parliament of Abkhazia Rejects Russian Investment

At a December 3 meeting of the de facto parliament of the break-away Abkhazia region of Georgia, 19 of the 23 members participating voted down the ratification of an agreement that would have “opened up” Abkhazia to Russian economic investment. The original agreement was signed in Moscow in October by an Abkhaz leader and Russian Economic Minister Maxim Reshetnikov. The agreement sparked anger in Abkhazia, leading to protests that forced the resignation of the so-called president of the territory. Those who oppose the agreement argue that allowing Russian investment would allow Moscow to deepen its domination of the region and demographically threaten ethnic Abkhaz. In response, Russia banned the importation of Abkhaz tangerines.

Source: [OC-Media](#), [Interfax](#)

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