

South Ossetia Introduces New Travel Restrictions on Foreigners

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South Ossetia has introduced travel restrictions on Russian citizens and other foreigners as a security measure ahead of a November presidential election, its foreign minister said Tuesday.

The move is controversial because a main opposition politician denied registration in the race holds a Russian passport and works as coach for Russia's national wrestling team. At the same time, many residents in the breakaway Georgian region hold Russian passports.

Murat Dzhioyev, South Ossetia's foreign minister, said Russians, who have visa-free entry, were among the foreigners who would be barred from the republic until after the Nov. 13 election.

"The entry rules are restricted for some categories of foreigners and people without citizenship," he said, Interfax reported.

He did not elaborate, but noted that the restrictions did not apply to Russian citizens serving

at a military base in the republic, Federal Security Service border officials, those employed in reconstruction after the 2008 war with Georgia, and "people heading to South Ossetia on family matters."

The local Central Elections Commission was almost stormed this week by dozens of supporters of Dzambolat Tedeyev, the opposition politician denied registration. About 34 people were detained. Tedeyev, a professional wrestler, lives mostly in Russia.

In a 2009 interview with Kommersant, Tedeyev said he and his brother, Ibragim, had helped incumbent South Ossetian leader Eduard Kokoity come to power in 2001, but their relations later grew strained. Kokoity is not allowed to run for a third, five-year term under the republic's constitution.

Another presidential hopeful, opposition leader Roland Kelekhsayev, told the Kavkazsky Uzel news portal on Tuesday that he was severely beaten and briefly detained at a police station.

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