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Georgia Holds Ex-Minister

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A Georgian court has decided to keep Bacho Akhalaia, a former interior and defense minister, in custody but freed two army commanders on bail after being charged with abuse of power.

The Tbilisi City Court on Friday ordered Akhalaia detained for two months before trial and set bail at 20,000 lari ($12,000) each for Giorgi Kalandadze, the army's chief-of-staff, and another army commander, their lawyers said.

Prosecutors had requested that all three defendants be held in pre-trial detention. Abuse of power carries a prison term of up to eight years, while Akhalaia, also charged with illegal confinement, could face as much as 12 years if convicted. The case has raised concerns that the new government led by billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili is waging a political vendetta.

(Reuters)

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