

# Russia Urges Georgia to Undo Occupied Territories Law

By [The Moscow Times](#)

June 06, 2013

**The  Moscow Times**

Moscow insists that Georgia revoke a law on occupied territories, a Russian deputy foreign minister said Wednesday.

Grigory Karasin said the law remains a serious problem as it affects the security of Russian tourists in Georgia.

The law establishes criminal liability for visiting the disputed regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The abolition of the law would "create a favorable environment for cultural exchanges, above all for tourist trips," Karasin said after negotiations with Zurab Abashidze, Georgia's point man for relations with Russia.

Tbilisi passed the Law on Occupied Territories in October 2008, declaring the "Territory of the

Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia" and the "Tskhinvali Region (former South Ossetia Autonomous Region)" to be "occupied territories." The law forbids entry into the regions from Russia and subjects violators to a fine or imprisonment.

Georgia lost control over a fifth of its territory when South Ossetia and Abkhazia broke away and were recognized by Moscow in the wake of a brief war with Russia in August 2008. Georgia maintains its claim to sovereignty over both regions, which have only been recognized by a handful of other states besides Russia.

Both regions had enjoyed de facto independence since the early 1990s, following earlier separatist conflicts with Georgia. Georgia repeatedly accused Moscow of aiding separatist movements in Abkhazia and South Ossetia at that time, which Moscow denied.

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