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Demonstrators in Abkhazia Storm Presidential Building

By The Moscow Times

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Thousands of opposition demonstrators were reported to have gathered to protest against the government of Abkaz President Alexander Ankvab.

Demonstrators have stormed the presidential headquarters in Georgia's Russian-backed breakaway province of Abkhazia, demanding the resignation of a leader they accuse of corruption and misrule, a news report said.

Several thousand opposition supporters gathered Tuesday in the capital of the Black Sea coastal region to vent anger at President Alexander Ankvab's government and demand reforms, Interfax reported.

Some opposition representatives later held talks with Ankvab in his office but others broke windows and doors and about 30 entered the building through a shattered window, it said. They later left the building.

Interfax quoted the head of the country's Security Council, Nugzar Ashuba, as saying Ankvab had also left, but the chief of the military, Mirab Kishmarai, was quoted as saying talks were continuing.

Raul Khadzhimba, an opposition leader who lost a presidential election to Ankvab in 2011, said the president had agreed to dismiss his cabinet but that opponents would press for Ankvab himself to step down, Interfax reported.

"We will not leave until we get what we want," Khadzhimba was quoted as telling opposition supporters.

Abkhazia broke from Georgian rule in a 1992-1993 war after the Soviet collapse. Moscow recognized it as an independent state after Russia fought a five-day war with Georgia in 2008, and at the same time strengthened control over the region.

Only a handful of other nations recognize Abkhazia as an independent state.

Opponents of Ankvab, a former prime minister and vice president who has survived several reported assassination attempts, accuse him of corruption and authoritarian rule over the lush region that borders the Russian resort city of Sochi.

Some critics including Khadzhimba have also accused Ankvab's government of mishandling the relationship with Russia and relying too much on Moscow, while others want Abkhazia to become part of Russia.

Abkhazia "cannot keep going with the flow, relying exclusively on subsidies from the Russian Federation. This is a road to nowhere," Interfax quoted parliamentary deputy Akhra Bzhania as saying.

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