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Abkhazia Elects Opposition's Raul Khadzhimba as President

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Georgia's Russian-backed breakaway province of Abkhazia elected opposition leader Raul Khadzhimba as president on Sunday, the head of the region's election commission said.

Commission head Batal Tabagua told journalists that Khadzimba received 50.57 percent of the vote, while his main rival Aslan Bzhania received 35.91 percent.

According to Russia's ITAR-Tass news agency all four candidates are proponents of closer relations with Russia, but none advocates the region becomes part of Russia.

Former leader Alexander Ankvab was forced to resign over allegations of corruption and misrule. Protesters broke into the presidential administration building in the main city, Sukhumi, in May.

Abkhazia, a province in the Black Sea region, together with another Georgian region, South Ossetia, had been the focal point of a war between Georgia and Russia in 2008. Now Abkhazia relies on Moscow's financial and political assistance.

Georgia considers elections in Abkhazia illegal, Interfax news agency quoted Georgia's Foreign Ministry as saying earlier on Sunday.

Russia, which has angered the U.S. by recognizing Abkhazia as an independent state, will be watching the situation closely amid tense relations with the West after annexing another breakaway region, Crimea, from Ukraine in March.

Before the unrest, the next presidential election in Abkhazia had been expected in 2016.

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.

With just 240,000 people, Abkkhazia is made up of a mix of ethnic groups. It borders the Russian resort city of Sochi.

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