The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Georgian Ex-President's Return From Exile a 'Circus,' Kremlin Says

October 01, 2021



Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov. **Sergei Fadeichev / TASS**

The former president of Georgia's alleged return to the country ahead of local elections is a "circus," the Kremlin said Friday.

Georgia's flamboyant ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili said Friday he had returned from exile despite the threat of arrest, calling on his supporters to take to the streets against the government.

"Listen, wherever Saakashvili is, there is a circus," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, according to the RBC news website.

It is important that "this circus does not pose a danger to citizens of any country where this gentleman is," Peskov said. "Thank God [this is] not a question for us."

Saakashvili, a pro-Western reformer who left the Caucasus country after his second term as president ended in 2013, said in video messages that he was in the western city of Batumi and

had returned to Georgia ahead of local elections on Saturday.

“I greet you from Batumi and call on everyone to go to the local elections and vote for the United National Movement,” Saakashvili said in a blurry video message, referring to the opposition party he founded. “We will definitely win and we will celebrate victory."

Georgia’s Interior Ministry denied that the former president had returned, saying it had no record of him crossing the border.

The 53-year-old's return would almost certainly spark upheaval in Georgia, a small former Soviet republic in the Caucasus that has been plagued for years by political instability.

Peskov said that the Kremlin “does not see any risk” of destabilization in Georgia so far due to Saakashvili’s actions.

Saakashvili, the third president of Georgia who came to power following a peaceful uprising in 2004, faces multiple criminal charges at home that he says are politically motivated.

Georgian authorities have repeatedly stated that Saakashvili will be arrested if he returns as he was convicted in absentia of abuse of office in 2018.

AFP contributed reporting.

Original url:
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