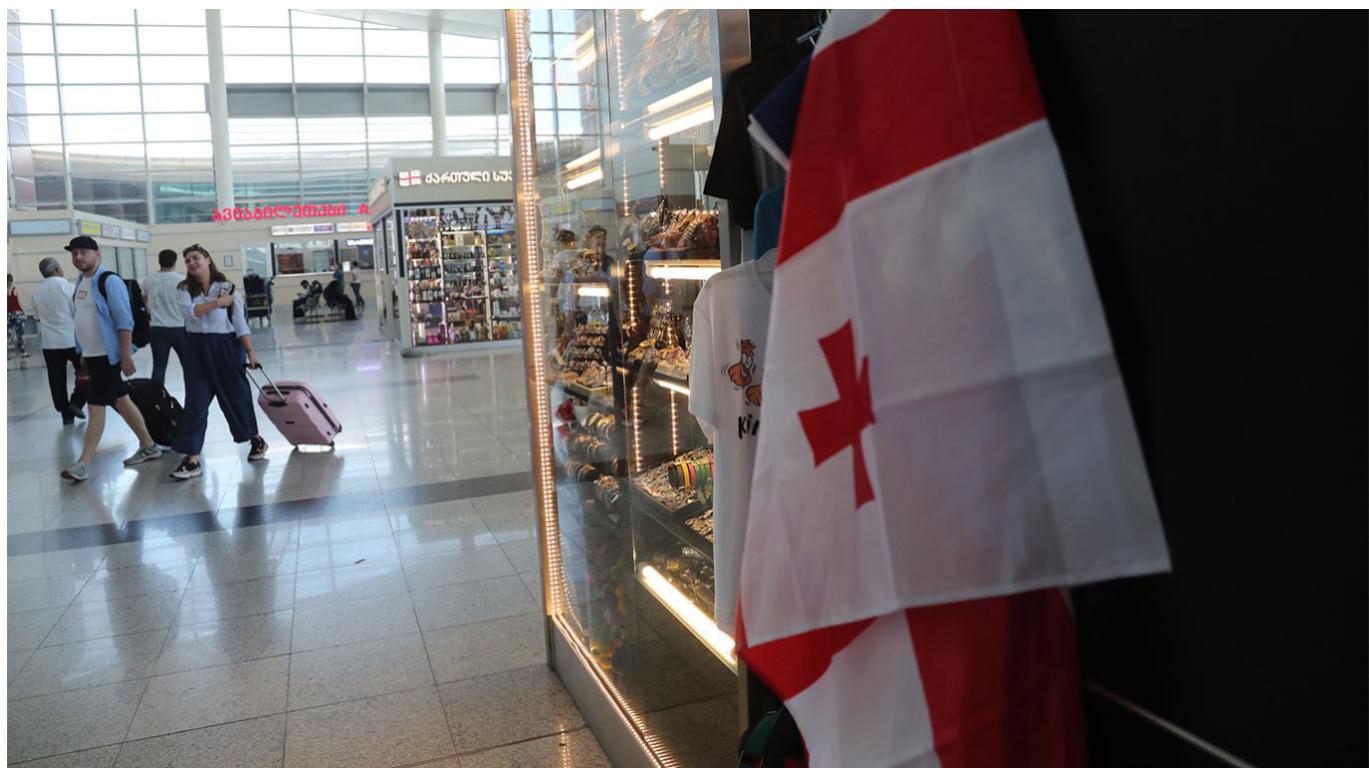


Russia Lifts Visa Regime, Flight Ban With Georgia

By [AFP](#)

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Travelers at Tbilisi's Shota Rustaveli International Airport. **Zurab Kurtsikidze / EPA / TACC**

President Vladimir Putin has lifted a flight ban and visa regime with Georgia, against which Russia fought a brief war in 2008, the Kremlin said on Wednesday.

According to a [decree](#) released on Wednesday, Putin has introduced a 90-day visa-free regime for Georgian citizens from May 15.

Another decree resumed air travel between Russia and Georgia. In response to anti-Moscow rallies in Georgia, Russia had in 2019 banned air travel with Georgia.

The two nations share a complicated history, and Mikheil Saakashvili, Georgia's former president who is now in jail, is seen as one of Moscow's top enemies.

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In 2008, after years of tensions over Saakashvili's efforts to forge closer ties with the West, Moscow fought a brief but bloody war with Georgia.

However, the current Georgian authorities have, in recent years, been accused by the opposition of forming close ties with the Kremlin.

Georgia's ruling party insists it is committed to Georgia's EU and NATO membership bid, enshrined in the constitution and supported — according to opinion polls — by 80% of the population.

Georgia's pro-EU president immediately slammed Moscow's decision.

"Another Russian provocation!" the country's figurehead president, Salome Zourabichvili, [said](#) on Twitter.

"Resuming direct flights and lifting (the) visa ban with Georgia is unacceptable as long as Russia continues its aggression on Ukraine and occupies our territory!"

The Kremlin's decrees on Georgia come as Moscow's offensive in Ukraine stretches into its second year.

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