The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Georgia Leader Says Russia Sanctions Would 'Devastate' Economy

By AFP

May 24, 2023



Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili. **Szilard Koszticsak / EPA / TASS**

Georgia's prime minister told an international forum Wednesday that his government cannot afford to impose sanctions on Russia over the Ukraine war as they would "devastate" the economy.

Facing international criticism, Irakli Garbashvili strongly defended his country's reluctance to take action against its giant neighbor which occupied about 20% of Georgian territory in a 2008 war.

Garbashvili's government has refused to impose economic sanctions and direct flights from Russia to Georgia resumed last week sparking opposition protests at Tbilisi airport.

"Not only would we harm Georgia, but we would also devastate our economy and jeopardize the interests of our country and our people if we were to impose any form of economic

sanctions on Russia," Garbashvili told the Qatar Economic Forum.

He estimated bilateral trade with Russia is worth about $1 billion a year.

Related article: Lifting of Russia Flight, Visa Restrictions Deepens Georgia's Geopolitical Dilemma

Garbashvili criticized the international community for not taking action, including sanctions, during the 2008 conflict between his country and Russia.

"Where's the logic? Our war was not a war and the Ukrainian war is a war. Well, I have to say that we were quite disappointed that business as usual continued with Russia after the 2008 war.

"The result of that war, a devastating war, is that 20% of our territory was taken over by Russia. Russia built two military bases on our historic lands."

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been a key issue at the Qatar forum. Hungary's right-wing Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who has refused to condemn Russian President Vladimir Putin, said on Monday that Ukraine could not beat Russia.

Garbashvili said that "nobody knows" how the Ukraine war will end.

"And unfortunately we don't see any sign that this war is going to end soon," he added. "I also have to say that we don't see enough efforts from the international community to take proper measures to encourage consultation, to encourage peace talks."

However David Petraeus, a retired U.S. Army general and former head of the Central Intelligence Agency, told the forum he thought Orban "is entirely on the wrong side of what will be history."

Petraeus said that with U.S. and European aid, Ukraine was poised to make major gains against Russian forces.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/05/24/georgia-leader-says-russia-sanctions-would-devastate-economy-a81258