The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Putin Expands Russia's Visa-Free Regime for Georgians

October 10, 2024



Passengers board a plane of Azimuth Airlines at Shota Rustaveli Tbilisi International Airport. **Sergei Bobylev / TASS**

President Vladimir Putin signed a decree Thursday to extend Russia's visa-free regime for Georgian citizens, as the countries have drawn closer in recent years.

In May 2023, Putin lifted a flight ban and introduced a 90-day visa-free regime for Georgian citizens.

His latest edict abolishes the 90-day limit and the need to obtain a work visa for Georgians, starting Oct. 10.

The steps mark a sharp turnaround after Georgia and Russia broke off diplomatic relations in 2008 when they fought a brief war over separatist territories that Moscow recognizes as independent.

Georgia has since sought to join the European Union and NATO, but its ties with the West

strained after Tbilisi declined to join sanctions against Russia over the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine and adopted a controversial law this year that was seen as similar to Russia's "foreign agent" legislation.

The EU announced Tuesday that it was canceling €121 million ($132 million) in EU funds for Georgia due to the country's "democratic backsliding."

Related article: Georgia's EU Accession Frozen, Says Brussels' Envoy to Tbilisi

Moscow banned direct flights with Georgia in summer 2019 over protests against a Russian lawmaker's visit to Tbilisi.

Georgia's government welcomed Putin's 2023 decision to lift the flight ban, while the South Caucasus country's ceremonial president, Salome Zourabichvili, denounced the move as a "provocation."

As of Thursday afternoon, Zourabichvili has not yet reacted to Putin's latest expansion of the visa-free regime for Georgians.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/10/10/putin-expands-russias-visa-free-regime-for-georgians-a86648