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Abkhazia Sets February Presidential Election After Mass Protests

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Sokhumi Sea Port. **Dmitry Feoktistov / TASS**

The breakaway Georgian region of Abkhazia will hold its presidential election on Feb. 15, 2025, following protests that led to the resignation of its Moscow-backed leader, state media reported Thursday.

Lawmakers in the region's self-styled parliament announced the election date, with the new president expected to be inaugurated within 30 days of the results being declared, according to the Apsny news agency.

Parliamentary speaker Lasha Ashuba estimated the election would cost up to 25 million rubles ($227,300), the Russian state-run news agency TASS reported.

Former president Aslan Bzhania stepped down last week to "maintain stability and constitutional order" after negotiations with opposition leaders. He was temporarily replaced by his deputy, Badra Ganba, and has expressed intentions to run again.

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Bzhania's resignation followed days of unrest over a controversial deal that would have allowed wealthy Russians to purchase property in Abkhazia. Protesters blocked highways and occupied government buildings, accusing Bzhania of prioritizing Russian economic interests over Abkhazian livelihoods.

In response to the outcry, authorities scrapped the property investment agreement.

While demonstrators voiced support for Abkhazia's close ties with Russia, they argued the investment deal would have undermined the region's economic sovereignty.

Russian media reported that the Kremlin might offer "certain concessions" as part of a broader strategy to dominate the real estate market in Abkhazia, which has become a popular destination for Russian tourists in recent years.

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