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Russia Lifts Abkhazia Travel Advisory Following Pro-Kremlin Leader's Election Win

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Russia's Foreign Ministry announced Friday that it lifted a travel advisory for Abkhazia following protests over a controversial investment deal that led to the election of another pro-Moscow leader in the breakaway Georgian region.

The advisory had been issued in November after mass demonstrations erupted over a Russian investment bill that critics argued would allow wealthy Russians to push out local businesses.

Acting Abkhazian leader Badra Gunba was declared the winner of the region's runoff election on March 2 after his predecessor stepped down in response to protesters' demands.

"With the situation in Abkhazia now stabilized, the Russian Foreign Ministry is canceling the earlier recommendations. Russians who wish to travel to Abkhazia may now proceed with their plans," the ministry said in a statement.

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Abkhazia, which has been under de facto Russian control since the 2008 Russian-Georgian war, is a popular destination for Russian tourists. Russian nationals do not need international travel documents to enter and can cross the border using a domestic passport.

In 2024, around 1.4 million Russian tourists visited the small mountainous region, home to just over 240,000 people.

"Moscow knows that Abkhazia eagerly awaits guests from Russia for the opening of the new holiday season," the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

Gunba traveled to Moscow for meetings with Russian officials, including Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, just days before the first round of voting — an move that opposition figures criticized as giving him an unfair advantage.

Russian President Vladimir Putin later congratulated Gunba, saying the Abkhazian people had expressed their "free popular will."

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