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Georgian Officials Reject Russia's Offer to Restore Ties Without Settling Territorial Dispute

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Georgian Dream founder and oligarch Bidzina Ivanishvili. **EPA / TASS**

Georgia's ruling and opposition parties have ruled out restoring diplomatic relations with Russia unless Moscow returns the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the business newspaper Kommersant reported Monday, citing senior officials in the South Caucasus country.

Russia is one of the few countries to recognize the two regions as independent states following its five-day war with Georgia in 2008. The Kremlin has since provided military, political and economic support to the separatist territories, which make up roughly 20% of Georgia's internationally recognized territory.

On Sunday, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Galuzin said Moscow was open to restoring relations if Georgia drops its claims to Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

“We regret that the Georgian leadership continues to link the restoration of diplomatic relations with our position on Abkhazia and South Ossetia,” Galuzin told the pro-Kremlin Izvestia newspaper. “[This policy] is not subject to revision.”

Diplomatic ties between Moscow and Tbilisi have been severed since the 2008 war, though critics have accused the ruling Georgian Dream party of quietly warming relations with the Kremlin.

That perception deepened after the party introduced controversial “foreign influence” legislation, prompting the EU to suspend Georgia’s accession bid and the U.S. to impose sanctions on dozens of Georgian officials.

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Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov echoed Galuzin’s remarks on Monday and said Russia remains ready to resume relations, though he added there was no timeline.

Georgian Parliament Speaker Shalva Papuashvili said a full restoration of diplomatic ties would not be possible until the territorial dispute is resolved.

“There’s only one barrier to the restoration of Russian-Georgian relations — Russia’s occupation of Georgian territories,” Kommersant quoted him as saying.

Opposition lawmaker Khatia Dekanoidze backed that stance but accused Georgian Dream of hesitating only due to fears of public backlash.

“They don’t dare [restore ties with Russia], fearing the anger of the Georgian people,” she said.

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