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Russia Warns Against Travel to Georgia

Civil Georgia, Tbilisi / 12 Apr.'12 / 17:57



The Russian Foreign Ministry recommended its citizens "to refrain from traveling" to Georgia because of "absence of security" for the Russian citizens.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement on April 12, that since this February three citizens of Russia had been subject to criminal persecution upon arrival in Georgia for violating Georgia's law on occupied territories. One of the provisions of that law makes it illegal in Georgia to enter into breakaway Abkhazia and South Ossetia from territories other than those controlled by Tbilisi. The law also sets whole set of exceptions to this rule. Violation of the law can result into a fine or a jail term from two to four years. The Russian Foreign Ministry said that in two cases Russian citizens were released after paying fine and in the most recent case one person was remaining held in detention in Zugdidi, western Georgia, pending investigation.

Russia called on Georgia to revise this law in early March after Georgia unilaterally lifted visa requirements for the Russian citizens. At the time Russia **conditioned** reciprocating with lifting visa rules for Georgian citizens to revision of this law by Tbilisi, but Georgia responded it would not change its law and if Russia wanted to reciprocate **it should do it without pre-conditions**.

The Russian Foreign Ministry also said on April 12, that the Georgian special services "continue systematic capturing of and repressions against Russians arriving" in Georgia.

It also said that President Saakashvili's visit on the Russian border at the Kazbegi-Zemo Larsi crossing point on April 9 and welcoming Russian citizens arriving in Georgia was part of his "propaganda".

"The Russian Foreign Ministry once again draws attention to absence of security for our citizens in Georgia and recommends refraining from traveling to this country," it said.

Georgian President's spokesperson, Manana Manjgaladze, said on April 10 that since Georgia's unilateral decision to lift visa rules with Russia on February 29, number of visits from Russia reached 30,000, which, she said, was a 70% increase over the same period of last year.

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