

Tbilisi Prepares to Fight Sochi Olympics

By [Alexandra Odynova](#)

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The  **Moscow Times**

Georgia is preparing a campaign against the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, developing as-yet unspecified measures that analysts warned might fuel violence in the Caucasus.

Three committees of the Georgian parliament met behind closed doors last week to discuss the campaign, which may call on the international community to relocate the games for security, environmental and historical reasons, news reports said.

“We should take all possible efforts to inform the international community and seek for relocation of the Olympics from Sochi to a different venue,” lawmaker Shota Malashkhia said, news site Newsgeorgia.ru reported.

The parliament said on its web site that the committees are supposed to develop elements [for the campaign](#) that will be submitted to the entire chamber for approval.

Lawmaker Nugzar Tsiklauri said talks were already being held with Chechens, internally displaced people and Abkhazia’s exiled government, Newsgeorgia.ru [reported](#). He did not

elaborate.

Malashkhia said a full-scale international boycott of the Sochi Olympics was “highly unlikely,” but added that Georgia hoped to receive support from the European Union, which has criticized Russia’s policy toward Georgia.

Georgia, which fought a five-day war with Russia after attempting to retake its breakaway province of South Ossetia in 2008, appealed in November that year to the International Olympics Committee to relocate the Olympics from Sochi because of the possibility of conflict in neighboring Abkhazia, another separatist Georgian region.

The committee ignored the request.

Maxim Agarkov, an analyst with the SK Strategia think tank, said a peaceful campaign against the Olympics was not likely to bear fruit because all possible damage to Russia’s image in the West has been already done.

“The only possible option is destabilizing the situation in the region,” Agarkov said by telephone, adding that Georgia could use existing local ethnic conflicts and separatists to influence the situation.

Moscow has accused Tbilisi on numerous occasions of supporting Islamist rebels in the North Caucasus, but no concrete evidence to back up the claims has surfaced.

The 2014 Winter Olympics have been opposed by various groups, including environmentalists and the Circassian diaspora.

Circassians, a Muslim indigenous people from the northwest Caucasus who scattered across the globe after a 19th-century massacre that left about 300,000 of them dead around Sochi, have compared the plan to holding the games in the city to staging the Olympics in the Nazi death camp Auschwitz.

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