

Saakashvili Foes Near Pardon

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TBILISI, Georgia — Georgia's parliament passed a law on Friday to pardon 3,500 prisoners, including those jailed under President Mikheil Saakashvili whose party was ousted from government in October.

The move appears to fit into a power play between the new prime minister, billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili, and Saakashvili. Since the election, won by the six-party Georgian Dream led by Ivanishvili, a raft of former government officials have been arrested, accused of abuse of power.

Prisoners to be pardoned under the bill include those convicted for high treason, taking part in military riots, spying for Russia as well as robbery, fraud, theft, drugs and minor crimes — although critics of Saakashvili say many of them they were victims of political persecution.

"By adopting this humane act we are giving a new chance to prisoners to get back to society as we are entering a new era in our country's history," said Ani Mirotadze, a Georgian Dream member of parliament.

(Reuters)

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