

Saakashvili Losing Powers

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Georgia's parliament has tentatively approved legislation to strip President Mikheil Saakashvili of some of his powers, including the right to dismiss the Cabinet and parliament.

Lawmakers unanimously backed the motion in the first of three readings and Saakashvili, who has the power to send legislation back to the parliament, indicated that he would accept this law if it were passed.

"I was never going to dismiss the government or the parliament," he said in televised remarks after the vote Thursday. "But this vote was important for democratic dialogue in our country."

Saakashvili's National Movement party supported the legislation, also saying that the president had no intention of firing anyone.

Saakashvili, whose term ends in October, is in an uneasy power-sharing arrangement with billionaire Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, whose Georgian Dream coalition won parliamentary elections last October.

(MT)

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