

Jailed Ex-Georgian Premier Goes on Hunger Strike

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TBILISI — The jailed former prime minister of Georgia has gone on a hunger strike, according to his lawyer, who says Vano Merabishvili is demanding a television in his cell and permission to give his family access to his personal bank account.

Merabishvili, who heads the party of President Mikhail Saakashvili, was arrested a month ago on charges of embezzlement and abuse of office. He and a former labor minister are accused of putting 22,000 party activists on the Labor Ministry's payroll.

Since the party lost last fall's parliamentary election to a coalition headed by Bidzina Ivanishvili, who took over as prime minister, some of Saakashvili's top lieutenants have had charges leveled against them.

Lawyer Giorgi Chiviashvili said Merabishvili began his hunger strike on Monday.

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