

Georgia Appoints New Foreign Minister, 6 Days After She Quit Government

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Tamar Beruchashvili

TBILISI — Career diplomat Tamar Beruchashvili has been appointed Georgian foreign minister, six days after briefly quitting the government in an "emotional misunderstanding," and said she had no doubts over the country's pro-Western course.

Beruchashvili stepped down as deputy foreign minister last week when her boss, Maya Panjikidze, resigned after the dismissal of the pro-Western defense minister. But she changed her mind the next day after a meeting with Prime Minister Irakly Garibashvili.

The tensions in the ruling coalition have highlighted Georgia's difficulties in trying to pursue its goals of joining NATO and the European Union without antagonizing its former Soviet overlord Moscow.

Under former president Mikheil Saakashvili, Georgia blundered into a five-day war with Russia in 2008 in which it was heavily defeated. The current Georgian Dream coalition has sought to repair ties and been careful not to antagonize Moscow.

"I want to reiterate that the European choice is the choice of the Georgian people and ... Tamar Beruchashvili will significantly contribute to achieving this goal," Garibashvili said in a statement on Tuesday announcing the appointment.

Beruchashvili, 53, said: "My initial decision to step down was an emotional misunderstanding and was done more in solidarity with Panjandrum." She said her "suspicions" about a change in Georgia's foreign policy course had lasted only a few hours.

Last week's ministerial departures increased political tension in the country of 4.5 million people, an important transit route for oil and gas from Azerbaijan to Europe.

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