

Seat Belt Requirement Lifted in Russia-backed Abkhazia Republic

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Drivers in Georgia's breakaway republic of Abkhazia no longer need to wear seat belts within city limits, the Interior Ministry said, arguing that the requirement to buckle-up was putting an undue strain on local residents, a news report said.

"For us, people should always come first," Leonid Dzapshba, the interior minister of the Moscow-backed separatist republic, said, Gazeta.ru news portal reported Wednesday.

"I think that within city boundaries, such a rule [to wear seat belts] is, in practice, hard to fulfill," Dzapshba was quoted as saying, "Let's not conduct experiments on our own people."

The minister said that "adults are capable of driving a few blocks from home to work without buckling up," especially given municipal speed limits of 60 kilometers per hour or less, the report said. Dzapshba did not specify whether speed limits, unlike the seat belt

requirement, were consistently enforced in Abkhaz towns.

The seat belt requirement would remain in effect on Abkhazia's highways, he said, Gazeta.ru reported.

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