

## Abkhazia Appeals for Free Russian Electricity Supplies Amid Rolling Blackouts

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A view of Sukhum at night. Dmitry Feoktistov / TASS

Georgia's breakaway region of Abkhazia has appealed for authorities in Moscow to supply free electricity next year, the Black Sea region's energy and transportation minister<u>told</u> Russian media Wednesday.

Russia<u>suspended</u> financial aid to Abkhazia in September and ordered the cash-strapped region to buy Russian energy at market rates. Russia has not publicly commented on Abkhazia's claims that Moscow unilaterally withheld 1.8 billion rubles (approximately \$18 million) in funding.

"Back in October, Abkhazia asked Russia to supply social [free] electricity for 2025 to the amount of 327 million kilowatt-hours," acting Energy and Transportation Minister Dzhansukh Nanba told the state-run news agency RIA Novosti. "We have not yet received any response," he was quoted as saying, noting that Abkhazia had fulfilled "all technical procedures" on its side. Nanba also <u>said</u> Abkhazia has been able to purchase only 165 million kilowatt-hours for 655 million Russian rubles (\$6.3 million) since November.

Last month, opposition protests forced out Abkhazia's Moscow-backed leader and pressured lawmakers to scrap a controversial Russian investment deal.

Abkhazia currently operates under a rolling <u>blackout</u> plan, with only 2 hours and 48 minutes of electricity supplied during the day. Electricity is turned back on between 9 p.m. and 7 a.m.

Alexandra Panina, a member of the board at Russia's energy supplier Inter RAO, told RIA Novosti that Russia supplies electricity to Abkhazia under a prepaid contract that expires on Dec. 31, 2024. She said the sides had not discussed extending the contract.

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