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## Five ministers fired, two re-assigned

By [Gvantsa Gabekhadze](#)

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For the first time since taking office, a government reshuffle took place on July 21. Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili fired five ministers and moved two others into other duties. Gharibashvili stressed that the changes were created after Georgia's signing of the Association Agreement (AA) with EU. Gharibashvili claims that the cabinet turnover is not yet complete. The PM informed that he would name the candidates that will replace these ministers, either on Tuesday or

Wednesday.

Minister of Agriculture Shalva Pipia, Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Khatuna Gogaladze, Minister of Refugees and Accommodation Davit Darakhvelidze, Minister of Culture and Monument Protection Guram Odisharia, State Minister of Georgia for Diaspora Issues Konstantine Surguladze-are the ministers who have been dismissed. Those reshuffled into another position are Minister of Correction of Georgia Sozar Subari and Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure Elguja Khokrishvili. Subari will take the post of the Minister for Internally Displaced Persons and Accommodation; Khokrishvili will replace Gogaladze on the position of the Minister of Environment.

Gharibashvili stressed that Georgia has already undergone several vital "exams", from conducting fair elections to signing the AA. The PM stressed that the government required new energy and motivation to meet all the promises given to the population and the demands of the international community.

"I think we should move to another mode, more pace is required as we are facing new challenges," Gharibashvili said.

After the PM names new ministerial nominations, President Giorgi Margvelashvili will submit the reshuffled cabinet for approval to the parliament within seven days; the parliament will have to consider the new cabinet and vote within following seven days.

Former minister of Environment Khatuna Gogaladze stated that it was unclear for her why Gharibashvili was unsatisfied with her activities. She stressed that much has been done in the ministry since her appointment there.

"What he did not like or what shortcomings he meant, the PM should speak about it himself," Gogaladze said while wishing her replacement success.

Majority members called the reshuffle natural. According to majority MP Irakli Sesiashvili "the PM knows better how to act and who to dismiss, following the new stage in the country's history."

Fellow coalition MP Levan Berdzenishvili stated that the acting cabinet was composed under the previous PM Bidzina Ivanishvili and the new PM has a different vision. Tina Khidasheli from the coalition stressed that all the ministers were doing their best and the issue would be further commented on during future parliamentary sessions. Unlike the parliamentary majority, the parliamentary minority was unanimous that the reshuffle was related to former PM Bidzina Ivanishvili. MPs Mikeil Machavariani and Irma Nadirashvili stated that the changes were "cosmetic".

"Bidzina Ivanishvili aims at destroying the main opposition party in the country. All the ministers fulfilled

and will fulfill the former PM's commands in terms of pursuit of their political opponents," Machavariani said.

"According to the Constitution of Georgia, when the cabinet reshuffle concerns 1/3 of the total number of ministers, the Prime Minister must resign," constitutionalist Avtandil Demetrashvili said, commenting on the case.

Editor-in-chief of *Rezonansi* newspaper, analyst Lasha Tughushi said that PM's statement lacked arguments. "New energy is not an explanation. I appeal to the new government to give up the habit of reshuffling ministers without proper explanations given to the people," Tughushi said.

Political analyst of Green Alternative Ketj Gujaraidze told Tabula that Gogaladze's dismissal might have been related to Khodon Hydro Power Station, as Gogaladze was not going to give ecological sanction to the project. Head of the Elections and Political Technologies Research Centre, Kakha Kakhishvili suggests that only such ministers were fired, who had no "political patronage" and were not active members of any political party of the coalition.

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