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## Shared Interests in the War and Terror from Beslan to Boston



On p. 2

## Rare Diseases and Genetic Conditions require Attention, Treatment and Financial Support

On p. 7

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

## Davit Narmania: "We are focusing on improving the quality of infrastructure projects"

On p. 4

## SOCAR becomes Partner to Georgia's National Olympic Committee



On p. 4

## Georgia and China seek to enhance Trade Relations

On p. 8

## Armenians Commemorate Genocide Victims

On p. 9



XIV ბიზნესის ქიშვილი 2012 წლის საუკეთესო კომპანია/ბიზნესმენი



# Shared Interests in the War and Terror from Beslan to Boston

By HYMAN KAMENOWSKY, GT

**Amid growing speculation of the motives behind the twin Boston marathon bombings on April 15, Russia's Kremlin-mouthpiece Izvestia recently published an article explaining that it had obtained information that one of the alleged suspects, Tamerlan Tsarnaev, received training at a US-backed seminar conducted by Georgian special services designed to "control events" in Russia's Northern Caucasus region following the Russo-Georgian war in August 2008. Russian claims of Georgian support to the Chechens militants are nothing new and can be traced to over a decade of US involvement in Russia's conflicts in Chechnya, involving Georgian territory and its governments which shared American foreign policy objectives in the region.**

According to Izvestia, it had obtained documents from Georgia's main division of the counter-intelligence department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs that the NGO Caucasian Fund and the Jamestown Foundation, a neoconservative American think tank, conducted workshops and seminars in 2012 in Georgia in order to radicalize youth from Russia's predominantly Muslim Northern Caucasus republics (Chechnya, Dagestan, North Ossetia, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachayev-Cherkessia). The report claims that when Tamerlan Tsarnaev was in Russia in 2012, he also participated in some of these alleged CIA-sponsored seminars. Although denied by Georgian officials, Izvestia also claims that the leaked information it obtained shows that the MIA ceased funding the organization earlier this year because "it drew unnecessary attention from the Russian secret services."

The main purpose of these training sessions was to indoctrinate the youth and intelligentsia of Northern Caucasus in order to destabilize and propagate extremist attitudes in the region. It is reported by Russian intelligence sources that each month GEL 33,000 was allotted to the organization, with a total of GEL 4.058 million provided to the program since it was created on November 7, 2008.

In connection with these indoctrination sessions under the auspices of the Georgian government, in October 2010, a unilateral decision was made to allow visa-free entry for up to 90 days for those living in Russia's volatile Northern Caucasus republics.

Such a change in Georgian visa regulations was not by happenstance. Russian officials were quick to react to what they perceived as provocation on the part of Georgian authorities; they said the move was mere propaganda and an action intended to further destabilize the already violence-plagued region. The motivation was best made clear by Georgia's former Interior Minister Vano Merabishvili when he said that "those living in the Northern Caucasus have fallen under [Russian] federal power-wielding structures terror" on Rustavi2 TV, the previous Georgian government's mouthpiece, on October 16, 2010.

Already, Russian intelligence services had been very active in systematically documenting how Chechen fighters and other militant groups in the area were obtaining material support from Georgia along with outside assistance, most probably the CIA and other Western intelligence organizations.

In 2010, Aleksander Bastarykin, head of Russia's Investigative Committee had described the situation in the region as equivalent to an all-out war, with militants inflicting at least five to six losses among the Russian Interior Ministry troops on a daily basis, as reported by the non-governmental organization the American Committee for Peace in the Caucasus.

Such accusations echo scores of similar claims made by the top echelons of Russia's intelligence and security services, including Aleksander Bortnikov, the director of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) who in late 2009 said that he was in possession of audio evidence seized from insurgents that showed that they had close contacts with representatives of the Georgian special services and "emissaries of Al-Qaeda". Through these links, Georgia "participated in the training of terrorists and the facilitating of their movement to Chechnya," the FSB chief reportedly said.

On October 22, 2010 Ramzan Kadyrov, Moscow's strongman in Chechnya, told Russian news stations that Georgia played an exclusive role in fueling the insurgency. "There are few remaining sources of serious support—moral or financial—to the militants. Previously they had been receiving financial assistance and weapons via Georgian territory: whole contingents were armed and equipped from Georgia and sent to Chechnya. It can be said that almost the only source from where the militants are assisted and trained is Georgia."

In 2011, Alexander Torshin, deputy speaker of Russia's upper house of Parliament at the time even went as far as to blame

Georgia's leadership for the terrorist attack at Moscow's Domodedovo airport in January of that year, telling Rossiiskaya Gazeta that Islamist rebel leader Doku Umarov, who said that he had personally ordered the Domodedovo bombing, had either nothing to do with this attack or, at most, acted as a broker between those who had really ordered it and those who had carried it out.

Such accusations were typical during a time of nonstop anti-Russian rhetoric from Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili following the Russo-Georgian war. Nevertheless, the funding mechanism for Chechen fighters had been established over a decade ago and has been well-documented in Georgia and Azerbaijan. It started out with the Pankisi Gorge in eastern Georgia, where the Georgian National Security Agency and an NGO, under the name of Jvari (cross), worked together with elements who claimed to have been veterans of the war in Afghanistan in designating the Pankisi Gorge as a no-go zone and thus demonizing the region as a lawless place for the purpose of deterring unwanted attention. Prior to 9/11, it was reported that one of the NGOs involved, ACIDI/VOCA, which was implementing a US-government funded rural credit program, was used as a mechanism to provide financial support to facilitate cross-border raids by Chechen fighters and transnational jihadist who sought safe haven in Georgia's Pankisi Gorge; the same NGO ended up working in Afghanistan in placating Afghan warlords with soft loans. Both Chechen and Arab fighters found their way to the now infamous gorge and they were assisted in carrying out operations in the Northern Caucasus, including the Beslan School Massacre and other headline-grabbing attacks, for the purpose of destabilizing the region and propagating a radical interpretation of Islam in this hitherto moderate region of the Russian Federation.

In light of the Boston bombings and based on human intelligence, it is highly likely that the Tsarnaev brothers were recruited by US intelligence agencies to liaise with anti-government militant groups in Chechnya and Dagestan, and to further take part in militant activities. It is clear now that the FBI and the CIA had been monitoring them for years and the elder brother managed to circumvent the no-fly list despite supposedly being on two terrorist watch lists, and took time out on his visit to Dagestan to take holiday snaps of himself posing with Dagestani jihadist Gadzhimurad Dolgatov who later killed in a fire fight with Russian security services in 2012, as reported by the Daily Mail.

The Russian FSB's two mes-

sages to the FBI and CIA were not simply meant to warn the Americans that the Tsarnaev brothers had become radicalized; it was meant to be a clear message to the US that Russia was aware of what was going on. Such collaboration is standard practice when it comes to espionage in the post-9/11 period, but these warnings were clearly different, as subversive assets who are not intelligence officers are usually simply killed when they no longer serve their purpose or are caught in the act.

It is highly likely that the Russians realized that this was an accident waiting to happen and a potential PR bonanza, and it is conceivable that they flipped the older brother while he was in Russia, perhaps by blackmailing him with threats that his mother would be put in harm's way, or other means, to carry out the attack on US soil rather than against Russia, in spite of the fact that this would come with huge risks for US-Russian relations.

Moscow jumped on the chance to capitalize on the US's own portrayal of the events. The attacks help to expose the dangers and apparent hypocrisy of the United States foreign policy, with more and more Americans now questioning US support for regime change in Syria, where the US recently allocated an additional USD 123 million to rebel forces, which include known Al-Qaeda affiliates. They also help to spur efforts to alter the entire American public's perception of Russia's own domestic threats: no longer do the Americans consider anti-Russian groups in Chechnya to be "freedom fighters", but rather hardcore terrorists.

Moreover, the terrorist attacks in Boston also continue to justify the "War on International Terrorism" and the need for closer cooperation between Russia and the US in combating this shared threat. It is even conceivable that the US and Russia could now reach a consensus on Syria, as well as draw a "red line" on what kind of foreign activity/influence is permitted in the Caucasus region, especially Georgia. This is particularly important for Moscow in the run up to the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, where post-Soviet Russian grandiose showmanship will be on display.

By uniting US and Russian counter-terrorism efforts, the Boston bombings have been an unexpected windfall for all concerned: the Russian government finds itself with increased leverage in countries of strategic importance and in its domestic war against terrorism, and the American government finds itself with a useful escape clause for all that happened in Georgia under the Saakashvili administration, including Georgia's role in supplying material support and fighters to Syria and to Chechen rebels.

# Georgia Selects Its Most Attractive Politician

By LISA TONAKANYAN, GT

**A public opinion poll conducted by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) has confirmed that President Mikheil Saakashvili has lost all his attraction for the Georgian population and the ruling Georgian Dream is gaining in popularity, although the personal approval ratings of almost all the leaders of the coalition, including the Prime Minister, have actually fallen.**

The poll results make good reading for the present government. The Georgian Dream has not yet named its presidential candidate, but according to the NDI survey 58 percent of poll respondents would vote for that candidate whoever it may be. A United National Movement candidate would be supported by only 8 percent of poll respondents while 4 percent didn't like any possible candidate. Leader of the Christian Democratic Movement Giorgi Targamadze would be supported by 3 percent of respondents and Labour's Shalva Natelashvili by 2 percent.

The majority of those surveyed (62 percent) would vote for the Georgian Dream if the 2014 local elections were held tomorrow; the UNM would get 9 percent of the vote, the Christian Democratic Movement 2 percent and the Labour Party and National Democratic Party 1 percent each.

"I guess I will have to ask my friend, The Director of the American NDI, to pull Mr. Navarro [Country Director of NDI in Georgia] out of here as soon as possible. He has allowed opinion polls to become objects of corruption. This could badly damage not only Georgia's democratic image but also America's interests," Natelashvili said after learning that only 1 percent of poll respondents had named Labour as the strongest opposition party. More than half of those surveyed (56 percent) identified the UNM as the strongest opposition party; all other parties were named by 1 percent or less.

According to the poll the Georgian Dream coalition is supported by 60 percent of respondents, the UNM by only 10 percent. The President's team, however, assured that its support is actually much greater. The UNM's Shota Malashkhia told GT that the April 19 rally proved that the party is alive and well and can consolidate its support among those who share its values.

Two polls conducted by NDI in 2012 had given the Georgian Dream a maximum of 18 percent support and the United National Movement 47 percent. However, although Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili doubts that the UNM has more than 4 percent public support. The Georgian Dream's Zakaria Kutsnashvili told GT that people were afraid to reveal their true feelings about the UNM when they were in power and thus the polls didn't reflect reality, but now everything has changed and Georgians can talk openly about their sympathies. On this basis, he believes it is fair to conclude that the poll is broadly correct.

Luis Navarro stated at the presentation of the poll results that 75 percent of respondents approved of the Prime Minister's performance, although this was 5 percent down on his rating in the last NDI poll of November 2012. Parliament Speaker Davit Usupashvili had a personal approval rating of 66 percent, while majority leaders Tina Khidasheli, Eka Beselia and Zviad Dzidziguri had rates of 59, 58 and 52 percent respectively. The UNM's most popular figure was Davit Bakradze, liked by 48 percent, while President Mikheil Saakashvili only had a 25 percent approval rating. Navarro said that compared to the previous poll, the approval ratings of both parties had fallen and only Usupashvili and Bakradzhad gained more public approval.

Minister of Justice Tea Tsulukiani was considered to be the best minister, followed by Defence Minister Irakli Alasania and Interior Minister Irakli Garibashvili. Euro-Atlantic Integration Minister Alex Petriashvili had a negative rating, but the ratings of UNM leaders were generally worse, the worst of all being that of Giga Bokeria, Secretary of the National Security Council: only 6 percent of poll respondents expressed satisfaction with his work, while 50 percent described it as "bad" or "very bad". The performance of Tbilisi Mayor Gigi Ugulava was approved of by 14 percent of respondents, but 40 percent were dissatisfied.

The poll determined that Patriarch Ilia II is still the most popular and respected individual in Georgia. He had a personal approval rating of 92 percent, and 73 percent of respondents described his work as "very good". It also revealed that Georgians regard unemployment, territorial integrity and health care as the country's three most important issues at present.

The NDI poll was conducted between March 13th and 27th via face-to-face interviews with a representative sample of Georgian speakers from throughout the country, involving a total of 3,103 interviews. It asked questions on issues of public importance, perceptions of democracy, and attitudes toward reforms and various domestic and foreign policy issues. It was funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Centre (CRRC).

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# Davit Narmania: “We are focusing on improving the quality of infrastructure projects”

By EMMA BAIRAMOVA, GT

**Davit Narmania, Georgia's Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure discusses problems and priorities in Georgia's infrastructure. As one of the measures to improve the quality of roads, the Ministry has recently introduced control measures for the quality of imported bitumen, an essential component in the production of asphalt.**

*Mr. Narmania, how do you assess the former government's infrastructure projects? What are the problems in this area?*

Soon after political power was transferred, we began studying the projects that were already underway. We found more than 200 projects being implemented concurrently, most of which were related to the repair of roads, water supply systems, and other municipal infrastructure projects. Large sums of money from the budget were allocated for these projects. Some projects did not receive permission from the local municipality, and restoration projects for various cultural and historical sites were not coordinated with the Ministry of Culture. There were also legal problems and these are referred to in the drafts of the

Municipal Development Fund. Projects related to the rehabilitation of roads were justified legally because they were carried out according to the guidelines of international donors. We have decided to strengthen internal auditing as a way of dealing with these problems; we have replaced the head of the audit service and hired new employees, who have begun to reconsider current projects and have made new recommendations on how to implement them in a more effective and timely manner.

*Are there any big projects that you have put on hold?*

There are no projects that we have stopped indefinitely but we have seriously reconsidered several. Among them was the Tbilisi-Rustavi road project, where we noticed several inaccuracies and shortcomings. We had to go through a very extensive process based on the rules of the Asian Development Bank, which is financially supporting the project. Guidelines have been included whereby local workers were preferred over imported labor. We will be releasing a tender for this project in the near future.

*What about the East-West highway project? How is it progressing?*

Construction work is continuing simultaneously on three segments of the highway

project: the Agara-Ruisi area in eastern Georgia, the Kutaisi bypass in western Georgia, and the Kobuleti bypass. We have also added a fourth section, the stretch between Samtredia and Grigoleti, and work will commence this year.

*How much does it cost?*

This project is expensive because of its quality; as it is a new road, the surfacing costs will be quite high. This work includes the purchase of the land and soil, then asphalt compactors to asphalt the road to a depth of 28 cm. Construction of the Agara-Ruisi stretch will cost us GEL 60 million. This is the price submitted to us by the company that won the tender. Other areas also have their price, which has been determined by the rules and conditions of the tender. These projects are funded by various development banks under preferred terms.

Almost two thirds of our infrastructure projects are funded by international donors and only a third is funded by the State budget. We do not call them investors because it's not an investment. These are just projects implemented with the support of international donors.

*It is known that many key infrastructures were sold to the Russians during the previous government, for example Tbilisi's water and electricity supply. Can you explain this?*

*Can you explain this?*

On the one hand, the former authorities declared Russia as the country's enemy and on the other hand, they made deals with Russia for their own financial interests. As for the water supply, there is a state-owned company "United Water Supply" which is under the direction of our ministry, and we are working with the company in improving its supply. Electrical power supply is under another ministry. At this time I do not have precise information about what belongs to the state and what does not. However, in terms of the water supply system, I can say that with the exception of water utilities in the Tbilisi and Adjara regions, all other companies belong to us and we are conducting extensive rehabilitation. Under the framework of the GEL 40 million European Investment Bank loan, we are carrying out projects in 25 regions and local municipalities to improve water supply. Consequently, the companies under our direction are not associated with Russia. This was not the case with the previous government.

*Under the former government, much work was carried out to repair roads and sidewalks, but the quality is visibly poor. What is going on? Is*

*the new government doing anything differently?*

Repair of the roads is the responsibility of Tbilisi Municipality. We are concerned with projects of international and domestic value. However, in 2013 we will have to rehabilitate 250 km of poorly constructed roads. We are working very hard to improve the quality of both international and domestic roads. This week's government session we will confirm new instructions for the classification of responsibilities for the rehabilitation of roads. Very strict rules and measures connected to the improvement of the quality of roads will be laid down. Today, I had a two-hour meeting where we discussed the quality of bitumen and we prepared special instructions to control its import. This is something that I have not told the press and am exclusively telling you. It will be announced this week. Thus, it should be clear that we do focus on improving the quality of infrastructure projects throughout Georgia.

*Are there any projects, either locally initiated or foreign supported, aimed at providing better infrastructure for handicapped people?*

Yes, this is one of our responsibilities. For example, when we built a house for refugees in Zugdidi, we included

these rules in our regulations. This means that any company that wins a construction contract will be obligated to provide such facilities as part of the contract.

*Is Georgia prepared for possible flooding this season such as the kind that wreaked havoc in Tbilisi and elsewhere last year?*

This is a force majeure, which is often difficult to predict. The most important thing is that, in any case, the government has provided and will provide an immediate response to all the natural disasters that may occur in the capital and in the regions. A special commission was created that includes me. Our ministry has taken over the coordination of the majority of infrastructure works and together with local municipalities; we have conducted a risk assessment of local problems. We are also working on a number of special modeling issues aimed at preventing natural disasters and reducing potential damage. For example, we are working on measures to reduce the impact of avalanches, landslides and extreme weather, including hail. The World Bank will support us in projects related to natural disasters, not only financially, but also with international experience.



## SOCAR becomes Partner to Georgia's National Olympic Committee

**A Memorandum of Partnership making SOCAR an official partner of National Olympic Committee of Georgia was signed by Mair Mamedov, the director of the Azerbaijan Republic oil company in Georgia and Leri Khabelov, the president of National Olympic Committee of Georgia.**

Funded within the framework of the Memorandum will be various types of Olympic programs and projects, sports activities held under the auspices of the international Olympic Committee and European Olympic Committee, smooth functioning of the National

Olympic Committee of Georgia, social assistance of the sportsmen and trainers, publishing and educational activities arranged by National Olympic Committee of Georgia, implementation of regional organizations programs, and provision of sports medicine in Georgia.

“Cooperation with the National Olympic Committee of Georgia is highly important. Legendary Olympic champions are working in the committee and we are providing financial assistance to supports the development of various Olympic activities in Georgia” stated Mair Mamedov.

According to Leri Khabelov,

at the official signing ceremony, SOCAR will support the Olympic committee in implementing a number of projects, which are planned in the near future.

“The Memorandum outlines the implementation of the projects, which are planned by the Olympic committee. We have many projects to implement. SOCAR promised to help and we would like to thank this company for its support,” said Leri Khabelov.

The ceremony was attended by Georgian Olympic champion; the parties mentioned that this is one more example of the fruitful cooperation between the two countries





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# Georgian PM Addresses PACE for the First Time

By LIKA MOSHIASHVILI, GT

**On April 23, for the first time, Georgia's PM, Bidzina Ivanishvili, addressed the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) in Strasbourg. Georgia's aspiration for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, Georgia's territorial integrity, the Russian-Georgian war and future international relations, cohabitation, restoration of justice and criticizing the previous government and President Mikheil Saakashvili for "practically controlling all fields" were the main messages of Georgia's PM at the PACE summit.**

"I would like to emphasize that Georgia's western foreign policy course and integration into EU and NATO represent our strategic choice that has no alternative. This choice does not belong to any particular political group; this choice was made by the Georgian people a long time ago," Bidzina Ivanishvili stated at the beginning of his public speech. "Georgia's decision to apply for membership in NATO represents above all a deep commitment among our people to live with the values of the West. This commitment was echoed in the Resolution on Basic Directions of Georgia's Foreign Policy, unanimously adopted by the Georgian Parliament," he added.

Talking about Russian-Georgian relations, the PM commented that there is still a danger of war, because there is still aggression directed against Georgia, as 20 percent of its territory has been occupied by Russia since 2008.

Nevertheless in his speech Bidzina Ivanishvili said that mending ties with Russia was his "big dream" and stated that "dialogue with Russia, is a huge but necessary challenge."

He noted that his government's approach towards Russia was "pragmatic" and the policies

in this respect would be "correct, but principled".

"We are realistic about Georgia's possibilities. We will recognize that Georgia is a small regional power in a volatile neighborhood. No sustainable future can be built by projecting military power" explained Ivanishvili. "But there can be no progress towards peace in the region if Georgia is expected to abandon its legitimate interests, especially its territorial integrity and the right of its citizens to return to their homes."

Ivanishvili's public speech was followed by a question and answer session with MPs from EU countries. Many of those questions concerned relations with Russia; there were also questions about the cohabitation process with the United National Movement (UNM) and President Saakashvili; minority issues, women's engagement in politics and opinions related to the Magnitsky List.

Aleksey Pushkov from the Russian delegation asked the PM what he would think if Abkhazians and people in South Ossetia were given an opportunity for their voice to be heard, for example at sessions of PACE, drawing on the example of Kosovo.

"Abkhazia and South Ossetia are parts of Georgia, so Ossetians and Abkhazians will of course be able to participate in the work of PACE as members of our delegation," Ivanishvili commented, but added that unfortunately the de facto governments of South Ossetia and Abkhazia aren't open even if there is support from the international community.

Georgia's PM stated that Kosovo invited international observers and was open to any type of cooperation, unlike Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

"You don't like President Saakashvili, but I think 'you like Russian President Putin very much,'" Polish MP Zbigniew Girzyński addressed Ivanishvili asking him whether Putin was

responsible for ethnic cleansing in Georgia in 2008 or not.

Ivanishvili responded by saying "politics should not be based on personal emotions. The head of the government should first and foremost love his own country and should try to call each thing by its right name."

"We should seek accountability from our own authorities for mistakes that were done and we will do it. If not for Saakashvili's huge mistakes, it would have been very difficult for Russia to carry out this aggression," he continued.

When asked how Georgia's new government's plans to reconcile efforts to mend relations with Russia with Tbilisi's policy of restoring territorial integrity, Ivanishvili answered that "over the past 20 years there were many mistakes made by the Georgian authorities, as well as by our Abkhazian and Ossetian brothers; mistakes were made by both sides... Our goal is not to repeat the same mistakes and not to even think about using force."

According to the PM, the key to resolving these conflicts was within Georgia. "Georgia's economy should be revived, democracy developed; Georgia should become interesting for Ossetians and Abkhazians, for Europe and for Russia," he stated.

Many of the questions asked by PACE members to Ivanishvili were about cohabitation of his government with President Saakashvili and his UNM party.

"I assure you that cohabitation with President Saakashvili and his UNM party is not a problem," Ivanishvili said and put the blame for the tense relations on Saakashvili. According to him, the UNM was speaking a "language of lies" aimed at misleading the Western audience.

The Prime Minister ruled out selective application of justice and strongly dismissed allegations about politically-motivated prosecution of former government representatives. He urged not to, as he put it, "mix" cohabitation with the process of "restoring jus-

about his opinion of the Magnitsky list, as well as the imprisonment of former Ukrainian Prime Minister, Yulia Tymoshenko and the "authoritarian regime" in Belarus.

"I am aware of these problems; I am aware of the Magnitsky problem and I also know about the developments in Ukraine, but I know much better what was going on in my own country and what is the situation now," he commented, adding that

ry Assembly members and told them that they were victims of a lie."

Meanwhile, MPs from the Georgian Dream (GD) coalition, as well as the government, commended Ivanishvili's PACE address, stressing that he had a very impressive performance, and he clearly, honestly and completely answered questions and expressed the desire of the new government, foreign and domestic plans.

"I am very glad that the PM's



tice."

"That implies putting before justice representatives of the previous government for committed crimes with full observance of due process; it also implies keeping the thousands of those loyal civil servants who have been in service since the previous government," Ivanishvili stressed.

He said that his government was sparing no efforts to ensure that "our policies are fully transparent" and open to scrutiny from media and civil society, including from the international community.

The PM stated that upon his request "EU has seconded" to Georgia the Council of Europe's former commissioner on human rights, Thomas Hammarberg, as "a special advisor for legal and constitutional reforms and human rights". He also noted that the OSCE was monitoring court proceedings of those cases in which former high level officials face criminal charges.

Responding to several questions on ethnic minority rights in Georgia, Ivanishvili said that his government was committed to the integration of minority groups. He said that the main problem in this regard was lack of Georgian-language skills among ethnic minorities.

Ivanishvili was also asked

human rights were totally violated under Georgia's previous government.

"As far as other countries are concerned—Russia or Ukraine, I would try to remain on topic around my own country as we still have no right to criticize other countries in this regard, because in our own country human rights were being totally violated. I assure you that under the new government justice will be restored in this regard and everything will be done to be like Europe."

Comments on Ivanishvili's performance

Georgia's President Mikheil Saakashvili criticized the Prime Minister for remarks he made regarding the country's two breakaway regions.

"He shouldn't play with the issues on territorial integrity as it is an issue of the future. We can damage things so that we never will be able to fix them in the future," Saakashvili stated.

Other members of UNM also assessed Ivanishvili's performance negatively. Giorgi Kandelaqi, one of the leaders of the Parliamentary Minority said that he, as a Member of Parliament, is ashamed that the PM delivered "such a poor speech", claiming it was "too confrontational" and that the PM "fought against the Council of Europe Parliamentar-

visit was so successful. I am sure Europe's imagination about Georgia will be different from now on. The European Parliament and our partner countries support Georgia's integration with Europe. The main thing is that this will help us in implementing our euro-Atlantic aspirations," stated Irakli Alasania, Defense Minister of Georgia, adding that "it was one of the more important speeches in the Euro-Parliament."

Georgian Dream MP Tina Khidasheli, who was among the Georgian delegation, commented that the European MPs are very content as they saw Ivanishvili's "open manner and character." "The goal has been achieved—probably all the questions were asked. We are very satisfied," Khidasheli explained.

According to Irakli Menagharishvili, co-chairman of the Center for Strategic Research, the ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia "Ivanishvili took to Strasbourg almost all the messages, which Europe expected from us."

"I may say that the Georgian government is making itself known to the world now," US Ambassador to Georgia Richard Norland said while commenting on PM Ivanishvili's speech at the PACE session.

# Saakashvili Vetoes two Court Reforms

By LIKA MOSHIASHVILI, GT

**The President has vetoed two bills adopted by parliament, one of which relates to the selection of members of the Supreme Council of Justice, while the other bill concerns restriction of the right of defendants to choose a jury to consider their case. The president has sent his objections to the Parliament, while the Georgian Dream (GD) parliamentary majority is determined to override the presidential veto this week, which requires 89 votes. The ruling GD party holds 83 seats and will thus require the support of members of the opposition United National Movement (UNM).**

In the first case, regarding the law about staffing the High Council of Justice, the president thinks that "parliament refused to take into account one of the most principled positions of the Venice Commission, as it is not about a theoretical model, but the real context in which this amendment is being implemented," stated Andro Barnovi, the new head of the president's administration.

However, during the meeting with Georgia's Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili in Strasbourg the president of Venice Commission Gianni Buquicchio once again welcomed the judicial system reforms.

"The Venice Commission welcomed this initiative in order to improve the independence of the judiciary, the effi-

ciency of the judiciary; it seems that everything is going in a good direction," the President of Venice Commission said.

As it appears the president of Venice Commission had no remarks regarding the bill.

In his notes, President Mikheil Saakashvili offers the ruling team to review some fundamental issues in the framework of the legislative package of the law on common courts and an alternative legislative proposal. He demands to change the decision to suspend the authority of members of the High Council of Justice ahead of schedule; edition of the restriction regarding the selection of judges in the council, and the introduction of a different rule for choosing members, who must be selected by parliament.

Saakashvili introduced a legislative proposal that would

have the president select one member.

MPs from the GD Coalition were expecting the president to use his veto power, as the UNM was strongly opposed to the bill from the very beginning, particularly the provision which would terminate the authority of 13 out of 15 sitting members of the High Council of Justice of Georgia (HCoJ) since their membership would no longer comply with the criteria of the new bill.

"I doubt the president will offer something that we will share, so the Parliament is expected to vote and I am sure the Parliament will successfully override this veto," commented Davit Usupashvili, Chairman of the Parliament. "Bills adopted by us are useful for the country and useful for the judiciary and everyone acknowledges it, including the Venice Commis-

sion," Usupashvili explained.

"Saakashvili and UNM have no arguments; they don't want to change the situation in the courts. The situation in the courts will change for the good and judges will have more independence, which is in the interest of our citizens," Usupashvili added.

The jury trial related bill, which is an amendment to the Criminal Procedure Code, deprives a defendant the right to choose whether to have a trial by jury or a judge. As Barnovi stated, Saakashvili found the bill to be restricting the defendants' right, hence he vetoed it.

While the GD parliamentary majority is determined to override the presidential veto on the judicial council bill, it has yet to be seen how it will act in respect to the other vetoed bill related to restricting defendant's rights.

MP Vakhtang Khmaladze, who chairs the parliamentary committee for legal affairs, said he did not vote for this government-proposed bill when it was passed by the Parliament earlier this month because he's against of jury trial system in general. Usupashvili, who, like MP Khmaladze, is from the Republican Party, said that he also did not vote for the bill when it was passed by the Parliament, but he "may vote in favor of overriding the veto."

Both feel the parliamentary majority group will make the final decision on how to react to the presidential veto following discussions within the party.

This is the second time when the president has vetoed bills passed by the new GD controlled Parliament. Late last year, Saakashvili vetoed the Law on Amnesty, which was later overcome by the Parliament.

# Rare Diseases and Genetic Conditions require Attention, Treatment and Financial Support

On Apr.17 in Tbilisi, Sheraton Metechi Palace hosted a conference on *Development of Rare Diseases Policy/Strategy in Georgia for 2013-2017*. The conference was organized by the Georgian Foundation for Genetic and Rare Diseases which unites the majority of organizations and doctors working in the field of rare diseases as well as self-help groups of patients and their parents. The conference was held in the frame of EUROPLAN 2 project which is initiated by EC and supported by EUCERD, Committee of Rare Diseases experts of European Union [www.europlanproject.eu](http://www.europlanproject.eu)

This project aims to help European countries in development of adequate rare diseases policy. Initiator of the conference was EURORDIS, European Rare Diseases Organization, which is actively supporting EU countries as well as non-EU countries, such as Georgia, in the field of rare diseases.

Such institutions as Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs, National Center for Diseases Control and Public Health, Tbilisi State Medical University, Tbilisi State University, Georgian Pediatric Academy, as well as the majority of medical professional and scientists working in the field of rare diseases in Georgia, and patient organizations took part in the organization and work of the conference.

The main goal of the conference was formation of an effective working group which would consist of Health Care decision makers and people most competent and motivated in rare diseases, including patients and their parents, and whose function would be to draft a National Rare Diseases Policy/Strategy.

Rare diseases are often overlooked, not only do they not affect many people but they are not profitable for drug companies and do not gain much attention by the mainstream press. The Conferencesought to raise awareness within the medical community about rare diseases and to draw the attention of health decision-makers to the problems in this field and propose social awareness and social marketing projects.

The European Commission on Public Health defines rare diseases as life-threatening or chronically debilitating diseases (in most cases genetically-



determined) which are of such low prevalence that special combined efforts are needed to address them (first of all treatment). Statistically, low prevalence corresponds to less than 1 case per 2000 population. According to the EURORDIS estimations, there are between 5,000 and 7,000 different rare diseases. In spite of the fact that each of the diseases affects small numbers within a population, overall, rare diseases may affect 6-8% of European Union citizens (as well as in Georgia).

The majority of diseases are life-threatening and the majority of those who fall ill are children. Most find themselves in a critical condition due to the lack of proper diagnostic, experienced medical statement and evidence-based treatment. Lack of access to public health services is not only caused by prohibitive high costs but also the lack of appropriate health services. In many instances there is a lack of diagnostic equipment, testing-systems, protocols and appropriate and affordable medicines. Not only are such needs not accessible but those in medical and management positions are unqualified and are not keeping up with current research in the field due to the lack of continued professional development and relaxed demand to achieve higher professional qualifications.

Early detection and timely treatment can save the children from a disability and even from

death, not to mention the reduction of suffering for their parents and relatives, and also in terms of peer support and groups that help them deal with the impact of diseases on many interested stakeholders.

The importance of the Conference was directly in regard to the severity of rare diseases on an international level, across



the South Caucasus region, and with particular focus on Georgia. Rare and little understood diseases are likely one of remaining sphere of medicine, in which implementation of the scientific achievements and reduction of the morbidity burden is most associated with good will of governments, public awareness and donors.

Unfortunately the vast majority of physicians know practically nothing about rare diseases. The term "medical field" with respect to rare diseases is incorrect, as all of these diseases are attributable to the specific fields, such as: pediatrics,

endocrinology, hematology, rheumatology, neurology, orthopedics, genetics, etc. However, in some cases, they are forced to combine, not only because of the rare manifestation in the overall population, but also because of the dire prognosis and lack of prospects for appropriate and affordable treatments. Medical

products intended for the rare diseases are called "orphans" because it is not cost-effective for the pharmaceutical industry to develop and market the products, thus making them expensive and inaccessible for those most in need.

The increased attention of the international organizations (especially among European structures) to rare diseases was noticeable in the past five to seven years, as has been most reflected in programme documents of the European Committee on Public Health. The fact that the European Committee on Public Health had set the

issue of rare diseases to the three highest priorities within the coming years most reflects the acute urgency of the this problem. Currently vital improvement in the situation and significant achievements with respect to rare diseases are noted in many European countries. Such an improvement impact not only economically developed countries, but also the countries with the social and economic conditions similar to Georgia (for instance, Bulgaria, Romania, the Baltic countries, Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Russia).

Based on international experience, the management of the rare diseases is the prerogative of the State, as reflected in the legislation in the vast majority of European countries. The list of designated priority rare diseases exist in all countries, and consequently health services for the patients are carried out in line with this list. Naturally, the number of diseases included in the list is directly proportional to the country's socio-economic development: the richer the country is - the list is longer and more involved as to possible services. It should be noted that in 2001, the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia had officially approved the list of rare diseases, but it does not reflect the actual situation in line with the prevalence of rare diseases in Georgia Unfortunately, a whole range of most important and pressing diseases is not included

in the list. Meanwhile, other diseases, which are not currently registered now and do not meet the criteria for prioritized rare diseases are listed.

Teimuraz Margvelashvili, medical consultant in Georgia of the pharmaceutical company Genzyme (which creates and produces so-called orphan medications) promised a maximal support to the medical society. The company is ready to help the Health Ministry as well as associations in the field to develop different enlightenment programs and its implementation throughout the country. A very important component is for companies to be positioned to assist Georgian MDs in obtaining correct diagnosis in difficult cases. The company at its own expenses sends the material for diagnostics and conducts laboratory tests in Hamburg (Germany) as an approved reference laboratory. The company has been included in the special international aid program for one patient from Georgia, whose health condition rapidly improved after the onset of treatment.

Oleg Kvilvidze, Executive Director of the Genetic and Rare Diseases Foundation, summarized the conference. He noted that it is very important for Georgia to start working on the list of legally accepted definition of a rare disease, and identification of its rate, and to form an optimal model for cooperation between government, medical society and patients in providing timely detecting for such diseases and applying appropriate treatment. All these problems should be considered and emphasized in the process of development of the National Rare Diseases Plan in Georgia.

We would like to address everybody who may read this article in conclusion, most of our patients, including many children with rare diseases, are deprived of access to adequate treatment and care due to absence of sufficient financing. We call on you to help our children. The Georgian Foundation for Genetic and Rare Diseases, which brings together patients with rare diseases and doctors and scientists working in the field, guarantees that your financial support will be effectively used to solve the problem of rare diseases in Georgia.

Please contact us by email: [grd.georgia@gmail.com](mailto:grd.georgia@gmail.com)

# Georgia and China seek to enhance Trade Relations

By LISA TONAKANYAN, GT

**The rapid economic development and ease of doing business in Georgia have begun to interest foreigners once again. Representatives of more than 20 Chinese companies have recently visited Georgia in order to study its business climate and investment opportunities.**

To mark the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic and economic relations with Georgia, a Chinese business delegation visited Georgia on April 23<sup>rd</sup> to attend a business forum at the Radisson Blu Iveria hotel in Tbilisi. This was organised by the Georgian National Investment Agency (GNIA), the Chinese Embassy and the Partnership Fund.

Chinese entrepreneurs from the energy, real estate and agriculture sectors are interested in investing in Georgia's tourism, hydropower, manufacturing, agriculture and logistics industries. Nino Tsetskhladze from GNIA, made a presentation on the progress Georgia has made during the last few years. She said that Georgia has a business-friendly environment and is a corruption-free state with a stable banking sector and low crime rate.

"The Georgian government is trying to create better conditions for investors in order to attract more foreigners here. The country has seen impressive development in various economic areas, and this



progress has been highlighted by several international organizations," she said.

In the World Bank's 2013 Ease of Doing Business Rating Georgia ranked ninth out of 183 countries and territories. In 2005 Georgia was 112<sup>th</sup>. In the Heritage Foundation's Index of Economic Freedom Georgia has moved from 99<sup>th</sup> place in 2005 to 21<sup>st</sup> in 2013, whilst its neighbours Armenia, Turkey, Azerbaijan and Russia are 38<sup>th</sup>, 69<sup>th</sup>, 88<sup>th</sup> and 139<sup>th</sup> respectively. Transparency International states that only 3 percent of Georgians paid bribes in 2011.

Tsetskhladze emphasised that Georgia has one of the most liberal labour environments – the third best globally, according to the Heritage Foundation's 2012 study. The Georgian labour force

is also young: 25 percent of those employed are between 28 and 34 years old. She also said that in 2012 the average salary in Georgia was 450 USD per month, though wages were appreciably lower in the regions than in the capital.

"The government has dramatically overhauled the tax system since 2004 in order to improve Georgia's investment and business climate. By implementing a liberal reform agenda Georgia has simplified its procedures and reduced the number of taxes from 21 in 2004 to only 6 today – income tax, corporate profit tax, VAT, excise duty, import tax and property tax. What's more important, these taxes are simple and low," she told the potential investors, adding that the coun-

try has established Double Taxation Treaties with 42 major trading partner countries and benefits from free trade agreements and preferential trade regimes with CIS countries (Ukraine, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Russia, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan) and Turkey.

Tsetskhladze added that between 2003 and 2011 Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Georgia amounted to 8,511.5 million USD. The highest inflow of FDI – 2,015.0 million USD – was seen in 2007. In 2009 FDI inflows started decreasing due to the Russian-Georgian war of 2008 and the global financial crisis. Since then the situation has improved, she assured the guests.

Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Georgia Chen Jianfu expressed similar sentiments. He said that Georgia is a fast developing economy and that the government is paying a lot of attention to improving people's living standards. "Georgia has been on a path of rapid development, which is not easy to achieve considering the downturn in the global economy. The improvements in infrastructure and public order have made investment in Georgia more attractive for foreigners, including the Chinese. Nowadays there are upwards of 20 Chinese companies operating in Georgia's engineering, construction and trade sectors; the number of Chinese enterprises registered in Georgia sets a new record time after time," he told the business forum, mentioning that many agreements on economic cooperation had been signed between the two countries.

The Ambassador stated that during the last 20 years, Georgian-Chinese cooperation has brought benefits to both parties, and they are developing in the same direction. "The Georgia-China business forum is a great success," he concluded.

According to GNIA, in 2013 China was Georgia's fourth biggest trading partner after Turkey, Azerbaijan and Ukraine. Recent statistics suggest that trade turnover between the two countries amounts to 750 million USD. In January-February 2013, it was 150 million USD, 11 percent greater

than in the same period of 2012. However, this trade is unbalanced: imports from China accounted for 8 percent of Georgia's total imports, while exports to China accounted for only 2 percent of total exports.

"We hope this situation changes soon and Georgia becomes as strategic a partner for China as China is for Georgia, as there is great potential for that," Zurab Simonia, Vice President of the Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCC), stated.

Zhang Wei, Deputy Chairman of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT), added that Georgia is a member of World Trade Organisation (WTO) and "a very important transit corridor", so it has huge trade development possibilities. "The first thing we must do is enlarge the scale of our cooperation with this Caucasus country. Although separated by thousands of kilometres our two states have always had good, friendly relations, partly due to Georgia's strategic location on the Silk Road. Today we have more opportunities to cooperate than ever, and we shall not let this chance slip. It is also worth mentioning that we focus on improving the living standards of Georgia's population, not only doing business," he declared, emphasising that China is also interested in attracting Georgian investors, and another business forums will be held in Beijing aimed at attracting Georgian entrepreneurs to the Chinese economy.

As part of their trip the members of the Chinese delegation visited the seaside city of Batumi and Georgia's Free Trade Zones. "We like your country. It has beautiful landscapes and natural resources. It might be profitable to develop tourism here. Hopefully we will be back soon with a clear business plan," William Shiof the Beijing Century Philanthropy Group explained.

## Turkish Embassy Celebrates Children's Day

By EMMA BAIRAMOVA, GT

**The Turkish Embassy in Georgia celebrates a unique annual festival dedicated to children. Each year it invites students from a different Georgian school to the celebration, and this year the Embassy's guests were the pupils of Quality School International.**

"Children are the flowers of life!" - For every citizen of Turkey this expression has a special meaning. One of the national characteristics of Turks is their selfless love for the younger generation. Turkish families tend to have many children, three or more per family being the norm. The state does not offer any special incentives to increase the birth rate and nor does it seek to limit it.

There is a special festival of children in Turkey – "Cocuk Bayrami", which is held every year on April 23. This is the date of the first convocation in 1920 of the Great National Assembly in Ankara, now seen as the first

act of the national war of liberation from Ottoman rule, which established the modern Republic of Turkey. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the first President of Turkey, believed that the future of the nation lay in its children and therefore decreed that on this day adults should "give up" their authority for children for a while. Turkey's main streets and schools are decorated with flowers, balloons, traditional portraits of Ataturk and Turkish flags. In secondary schools, the traditional home of this festival, pupils are elected as deputies, ministers and mayors of the school and some are allowed to work in its personnel department for the day. Columns of pupils in school uniform parade through the streets and children from all over the world come to Turkey to celebrate with them.

Children's Day is considered one of the most important holidays in Turkey, which is why the Turkish Embassy in Georgia invites children from Georgian schools to celebrate it with them. Quality School International teaches the Turkish language, amongst others, as part of its

curriculum so attending the celebration had extra significance for its students.

The school children began their day by watching an animated cartoon about Turkey and then took turns in sitting in the Turkish Ambassador's chair.

"Today is Children's Day. I love this holiday. It was established by Ataturk, who loved children very much. I participated in the celebrations of this holiday in Turkey. It is especially interesting when children from all over the world come to Turkey to celebrate with us. I've lived here for two years, but I celebrate this holiday here," told Jeyda Susal, one of the celebrating children.

Turkish Ambassador to Georgia, Levent Murat Burhan, explained that April 23 is the holiday Ataturk gave to children and at the same time the date of the inauguration of the parliament of Turkey in 1920. Turkish children celebrate this holiday with children from all over the world. This festival is unique. Our Embassy marks this holiday by inviting pupils from different Georgian schools, and there are no



special criteria for who should be invited. We will invite any school. After lunch I have to visit the 54th school, where we have also organised a Children's Day celebration, and also an orphanage in the countryside. We try our best to celebrate this holiday with a range of different children. We want to inspire chil-

dren to become self-reliant and develop a sense of patriotism and love of their country."

The Turkish Embassy in Georgia, with the support of the Turkish International Cooperation and Coordination Agency, also sends hundreds of Georgian schoolchildren to Turkey each year to participate in this festi-

vals in various cities. Under a special programme developed by the Ministry of Education of Turkey, Georgian children between the ages of 10 to 13 live with Turkish families for a week, exchanging their national traditions with Turkish children and visiting Turkey's historical and cultural sites.



# Armenians Commemorate Genocide Victims

By LISA TONAKANYAN, GT

**Ninety-eight years have passed since the Ottoman authorities arrested and murdered some 250 Armenian intellectuals in Constantinople. Every April 24 Armenians all over the world pay tribute to the victims of this massacre and the murder and forced deportations of Armenians between 1915 and 1923. The Armenian community of Georgia always holds a number of events to commemorate these tragic events.**

Late in the evening of April 23 around a hundred young Armenians held a traditional candle-lit demonstration, marching from Vake Park to the Turkish Embassy in Tbilisi. This parade is an annual protest against Ankara's denial that a genocide of Armenians took place.

The next day Georgian-Armenians laid a wreath at the Khachkar (cross-stone memorial) at the Khodjivank Pantheon of Armenian Writers and Public Figures and attended a service at the Surb Echimadzin church. Gedevan Popkhadze, a

member of the Georgian Dream coalition, joined the service to express his solidarity with the Armenian nation. "Armenians should understand that we also feel their pain," he said.

However, another member of the coalition, Levan Berdzenishvili, said that Georgia does not owe Armenians anything. "We gave them shelter, thus expressing our position. Demanding more political support from us is unfair," he noted, adding that April 24 is as painful a day for him as it is for any Armenian but Georgia will not recognize the events it commemorates as genocide, as Armenia demands. However, Archil Choidze, Chairman of the Irakli the Second Community, said that the world would not have seen the Holocaust if the Armenian genocide had been recognized.

After the service, the Georgian Armenians moved to the Turkish Embassy and held a peaceful demonstration. "We aim to inform the world about the Armenian genocide, as it is very important to encourage its recognition," Levon Isakhanyan, Head of the Legal Department of the Armenian Diocese

in Georgia, told the Georgian Times.

Isakhanyan said that a week ago a few public organizations had appealed to the Georgian Parliament to recognize the genocide but no statement was made in response. "No one had great expectations though, because strategic partnership with Turkey prevents Georgia taking such an attitude," he emphasized.

Head of the Yerevan-based Center for Political and Legal Studies Johnny Melikyan linked Georgia's neutrality with the country's economic dependence on Turkey – some 500,000 Georgians work in or trade with Turkey, which is Georgia's number one trade partner. Melikyan proposes holding a referendum in Georgia on recognition of the Armenian genocide.

Inna Sukiasyan, who took part in the demonstration, says that it's her duty to contribute to achieving recognition by informing more people about the events which took place in 1894-1896 and 1915-1923 in what is now Turkey. "I am a descendant of Armenians who were deprived of everything, who barely escaped with their lives. They survived to tell the



world their story, and how human beings should not behave," she told GT. She believes Turkey needs this recognition more than Armenia does, as this would "prove its right to belong to the civilized world".

Most of Armenia came under Ottoman rule during the 15-16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The vast majority of Armenians were grouped together under the name "Armenian Millet". The first mass killings of Armenians took place under Sultan Abdul Hamid, who was called the "great assassin" and "bloody Sultan" in the European and American press for murdering between 100,000 and 300,000 Armenians. The Young Turk Revolution of

1908 ushered in the resolution of the "Armenian Issue" through the planned massacre and deportation of local Armenians, on the pretext that Armenians were supporting Russian troops against the Turks. On April 24, 1915 Armenian notables were arrested and later executed by the Ottoman authorities, and from then until 1923 up to 1.5 million Armenians were killed and hundreds of thousands forced to embrace Islam.

The overwhelming majority of historians, and academic institutions which conduct Holocaust and Genocide Studies recognize the Armenian Genocide. Uruguay was the first nation to do so, in 1965, followed

since by Russia, France, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Poland, Lithuania, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, Greece, The Vatican City, Cyprus, Lebanon, Canada, Venezuela, Argentina, Chile and 42 U.S. states. The genocide has also been recognized by the European Parliament, Council of Europe, World Council of Churches, Human Rights Association (Turkey), and the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal. However, Turkey itself denies that the word genocide is an accurate description of the events of that period. Azerbaijan, in solidarity with Ankara due to territorial disputes with Armenia, takes the same position.

## PUBLICITY



International Chamber of Commerce  
The world business organization

### ICC-Georgia attends ICC 8th World Council in Doha, Qatar

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
24 April, 2013

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This weekend the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) held its World Council meeting in Doha, Qatar prior to the 8<sup>th</sup> World Chambers Congress being held in the same city this week. The World Council meeting in Doha was attended by representatives from ICC's national committees throughout the world. ICC Georgia's National Committee was represented in Doha by Executive Director, Ms. Andrea Wilson.

Various issues were discussed at the World Council meeting, including ICC's involvement in the G20, which will meet in St. Petersburg, Russia this year; ICC's efforts to obtain observer status at the United Nations, the establishment of a new ICC Court of Arbitration in New York and the activities of the ICC's Banking and Trade Commissions. ICC's new leadership was also elected.

Of particular interest to ICC Georgia was the discussion at the World Council of the status of the Abkhaz Chamber of Commerce. It was affirmed at the World Council meeting that a chamber of commerce cannot be a member of the World Congress Federation or the International Chamber of Commerce unless they become a member through their country's established National Committee. The Abkhaz Chamber of Commerce is currently not affiliated with ICC Georgia, and therefore, cannot be accepted as a member of the World Congress Federation or the International Chamber of Commerce.

The International Chamber of Commerce is the largest, most representative business organization in the world. Its unparalleled global network comprises over 6.5 million companies, chambers of commerce and business associations in more than 130 countries, with interests spanning every sector of private enterprise. The United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the G20 and many other intergovernmental bodies, both international and regional, are kept in touch with the views of international business through the ICC.

## PUBLICITY



### Welcome to Hotel Sharden Villa

Tbilisi 0160; Leselidze ave#42

Tel/Fax: +995 32 2753000; 2 724412;

[Info@shardenvilla.ge](mailto:Info@shardenvilla.ge)

[www.shardenvilla.ge](http://www.shardenvilla.ge)

#### Guest Review:

Hoetel Sharden Villa has the best location in Tbilisi's Old Town, right near pedestrian streets with restaurants/bars. Our rooms and the 360-degree rooftop terrace offered incredible views of the fortress and restored section of the Old Town on the hillside. The hotel's staff members were as friendly and welcoming as I could imagine. We left at 4.30 AM and they brought coffee and cakes to our room since we did not have time for breakfast. Sharden Villia is new; it opened in late Summer 2012.

Brian  
Young couple  
Atlanta, United States of America

[www.times.ge](http://www.times.ge)

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# TOP 50 Companies in Georgia

## Named by The Georgian Times and GORBI

The order of the following is a list of participants has no significance

- LTD Heidelberg Cement Georgia
- LTD Zedazeni 2012
- "Goodwil" Chain of supermarkets
- JSC Georigan Bank
- LTD Gaz-Energy Company Geocell
- LTD Sokar Enegry Georgia
- JSC TBC Bank
- "PSP Pharma"
- LTD "Raddisson Blue Iveria"
- LTD "Aversi Pharma"
- LTD "Rustavi's Azot"
- JSC Wissol Petroleum Georgia
- LTD Barambo
- GIG-Georgian Industrial group
- JSC Nikora
- "T and K" restaurants MacDonalds
- San Pertoleum Georgia Gulf
- LTD Coca-Cola Bottlers Georgia
- Carrefour Chain of Markets
- LTD Geoplant
- Zestaphoni Manufacture "Fero"
- JSC Telasi
- JSC ProCredit Bank
- JSC Telavi Winery
- Rustavi Metallurgical Company
- LTD VTB Bank
- Silknet
- JSC "Davit Sarajishvili and Eniseli"
- Company Caucasus Online
- LTD Marshe
- Dairy products manufacturing company "Ecofood"
- GWP "Georgian Water and Power"
- LTD Georgian Sugar
- "Sante GMT Products"
- "Natural Mineral Water - Nabeghlavi"
- Georigan Bear company Natakhtari
- LTD "Lukoil Georgia"
- "Aldagi BCI" Insurance company
- GPS Pharm Company
- JSK Smart Retail
- LTD Rompertol Georgia
- LTD Elit Electronics
- Bank Republic
- JSC Bagrationi 1882
- GPI Holding
- Company Beeline
- LLC "Barvil Georgia"
- JSC Madneuli Mining
- Georgian Carriage Builders Holding

# Was Saakashvili Right?

## Appliance Detained in Strange Twist

By I.G. CHOPAN, GT

**The ongoing investigation into the mysterious death of former Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania took an unusual turn this week. The former United National Movement government initially claimed that an idling motorcycle had poisoned the Prime Minister with carbon monoxide, but subsequently revised this assessment and claimed that an Iranian-made heater had been responsible. Eyewitnesses have now confirmed that this heater is sitting in the Ministry of Justice, where it is helping investigators with their enquiries.**

Spokesman Giorgi Tskndishvili confirmed to GT that, “the heater has long been a suspect in this case and has

therefore been brought in for questioning, as every other suspect will be. We cannot say at this stage how long it will be detained. Its rights will be protected and the questioning will be conducted under the terms laid down by the law”.

Many commentators have welcomed this move. Ushangi Matiashvili of the Friends of the UNM praised this apparent volte face. “Ever since they took power the Dreamers have only arrested UNM-supporting embezzlers and abusers of power and ignored the real criminals, the people who voted the wrong way. Now they are acting on real, independently verified intelligence, although we do not hold out much hope of an impartial investigation.” Thomas Jefferson Birch of the Society for the Prevention of Un-American Justice stated, “Of course it’s guilty, all Iranians are. They all are in that part of the world. America is the land

of the free. If they don’t do what America wants, they ain’t free, and if you can’t eat their food you can’t trust them.” However others have raised concerns over the detention of the appliance. Asmati Metreveli of Flash Lawyers for World Domination stated, “According to our information this heater was detained by three Justice Ministry personnel, one of which had attached the buttons to his uniform with black cotton rather than the regulation navy blue. This is a clear violation of the Criminal Code and the heater must therefore be released immediately as it is a political prisoner”.

GT has conducted its own investigation into the detention of the heater and this has raised a number of questions. For example, when the heater was observed in the Justice Ministry no lawyer was present. We are unaware of whether a lawyer was present during its ques-

tioning, but the law clearly states that whilst in detention a suspect should have access to their lawyer at all times. Furthermore, we have found no evidence that the heater was informed of its rights in Farsi, or any other Iranian language, or in a language spoken and understood by domestic appliances. This would also be a violation of the Criminal Code and accepted international practice. We have also found no evidence that a translator was present during its questioning or that the heater ever confirmed that it understood the translator or understood the questions being asked. Furthermore, the Iranian Embassy was not informed of the heater’s detention and nor was it asked whether the heater enjoyed diplomatic immunity, as it had been installed in Zhvania’s flat in an official capacity, by the state. There is also the question of habeas corpus –Georgian law

clearly states that a suspect can only be detained for questioning for 24 hours before being either charged or released, and our sources have confirmed that the heater has been sitting in the Ministry of Justice for at least a week, and perhaps longer, without any charges having been brought.

GT has asked the Ministry to comment on these concerns but it is refraining from doing so while the investigation is ongoing. However Ushangi Matiashvili stated, “The heater was declared guilty by an investigation conducted under the authority of President Saakashvili. Saakashvili is always right, which is why he became President, and none of these so-called concerns of yours change that. Justice begins and ends with the President”. Thomas Jefferson Birch commented, “Why do the guilty need lawyers? How is that justice? It was made in Iran by people who don’t follow American codes. You have to look at probable cause here. What the hell was this heater doing in a terrorist country in

the first place if it wasn’t under orders to kill a friend of America? Is your newspaper full of pinko subversives like the rest of your damn country?” Asmati Metreveli noted, “These questions of yours concern legal matters, and as such should be raised, addressed and argued over by members of our organisation. Justice is what we say it is, and can only be arrived at after the appropriate fees have been paid. You will find a schedule of these on our website”.

The official version of Prime Minister Zhvania’s death has long been a source of controversy. However the detention of the heater raises the possibility that, however outlandish this version appears, it may have a grain of truth in it. The new government is keen to present itself as balanced and impartial rather than vengeful, and as such has a vested interest in claiming that its predecessor got something right, some of the time. We await further developments with interest.

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# The Caucasus: The Knowledgeable Need Not Apply

By KENDRA PARADIS, GT

**Thomas de Waal’s ‘The Caucasus: An Introduction’ is a slight misnomer, only addressing the three independent states of the South Caucasus. The book contains a historical overview from Tsarist Russia to present day arguing, ‘Geography is destiny’ which de Waal lays out in his opening chapter.**

In somewhat of a disclaimer de Waal points out, “The whole picture is deeply complex and makes the Balkans seem simple by comparison.” Acclaimed as the foremost historian of the Caucasus, ‘The Caucasus: An Introduction’ - despite all its drawbacks - is one of the best independent references for anybody who is generally interested in the region. Indeed, even on some international forums from the OIC through the EU and up to the UN, we witness far too often overly simplistic and plainly incorrect views on the Caucasus and its people.

The book does a satisfactory job introducing the context of the South Caucasus however; given the naively utopian recommendation in his closing section it is clear we can’t ex-

pect to gain anything more from his work. De Waal posits the only chance for the Caucasus in truly unlocking its huge potential both in talent and natural resources lies in the united region with transparent borders and its nations working and living together in peace resisting both outside influence and inside nationalist forces.

In terms of clarity the book as a whole is very readable and often concise in its informative and detailed structure although sometimes oversimplified in its conclusions or heavy-handed in focus. Unfortunately, while still readable and interesting; it is littered with numerous spelling and grammatical errors. The book has several highlighted epaulets which are helpful in giving readers a more detailed look at some of the important places, figures, or questions being considered in each chapter; however, of fourteen only five concern topics outside of particular Georgian-ness or Georgian focus. This is an overall theme in the book.

Other than an honorable mention in the timeline of political peace process demands, de Waal does not deal with the complexities of the Azeri enclave of Nakhichevan or even mention such conflicts as those of Armenian minorities in the Samtskhe-Javaketi region of Georgia. To the book’s defense

de Waal gives a brief description of many ethnic minorities including for example Kurds, Pontic Greeks and Jews. Concerning inaccuracies the most worrisome concerns a casual observation about Abkhazia’s 2004 Presidential election in which he claims it, “did not involve its Georgian population” although the Gali region’s Georgians did participate; but de Waal’s intimate and anecdotal knowledge of the region as a whole far outweighs any nit-picky claims critics would be quick to produce.

While for newcomers, information on modern developments in the Caucasus is arguably more interesting and relevant; his coverage of the more distant past leaves much to be desired. When describing the history of Armenians and Georgians he writes, “the first tangible chain of continuity form the past comes with the arrival of Christianity” although thankfully several pages later he mentions Armenia’s gold-age dating back to the first century BC of King Tigran’s ruling. His historical descriptions rely almost fully on imperial Russian perspectives, at one point stating that Prince Mikhail Vorontsov, the first viceroy of the Caucasus, “ushered in a period of enlightened autocracy” which is a far cry from what most Georgians

consider the time of “great sleeping” of the Georgian people.

In his chapters on contemporary politics, although his overview of oil politics (at the end of the book) is very informative, de Waal deals primarily with modern conflicts in Georgia, reserving two entire chapters for modern Georgian developments and- especially compared to his highly acclaimed book Black Garden and his renown expertise on the topic- he glosses over the Karabakh conflict without much perspective. Furthermore, unlike his surprisingly sparse coverage of the Armenian-Azeri conflict, there is no question about his clear and direct coverage of the Georgian conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia; starting in his description of the assimilation policy against the Abkhaz during Soviet years continuing on to reprimand present-day Georgian nationalists.

When speaking of the Soviet legacy de Waal states, “all three countries still live with an authoritarian political culture...” as well as citing that, “since 1991 no incumbent leader... has been defeated at the ballot box by an opponent” which since the October elections- in spite of the arguability of its many successes and faults - proves this to be no




longer relevant. His critical eye on Georgia persists as he describes Mikheil Saakashvili as a strongman, albeit intelligent and sophisticated, of the more typical post-communist mold and is not hesitant to point out which side started the 2008 war with Russia.

The late 1990s and early 2000s were a period of economic development and peace, but certainly not peace treaties or normal relations as his sections on contemporary peace processes demonstrate. The book provides an informative run down on the failures of politicians and great powers to deliver, supporting his closing recommendation in which he laments, “zero-sum thinking prevails.” Sadly, concerning these processes de Waal gives in to speculation for example in reference to the Beslan tragedy’s role in Russia-Ossetian relations, “Had there been no fight-

ing... 2004 might have been a promising moment... to end the conflict peacefully.”

Though ‘The Caucasus: An Introduction’ gives a readable and reasonably detailed analysis of Georgia’s conflicts and contemporary political dynamics, de Waal does not discuss any of the other tragedies that have taken place in the Caucasus across the last two decades in any real detail. This is a definitively important book for newcomers who are looking to place their new home in context and others may find this an interesting starting point. However, readers who are already at least moderately knowledgeable or keen on learning about the Chechens, Dagestanis and other ethnicities living in the North Caucasus should look elsewhere; for example Frederik Coene’s equally but more aptly titled ‘The Caucasus: An Introduction’.

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# Future Shorts Georgia “eager to show a ‘better’ form of art to Georgians”

By TAKO AGARASHVILI, GT

**In 1873 when Edward James Mugeridge photographed a horse in fast motion he had no idea he had just taken the first step into what would become the biggest entertainment industry in the world. He had no idea that people around the world would be grateful to his bold attempt to capture a moving object on film. Basically, he started cinematography.**

Cinematography is a lifestyle. Either you have it under your skin, or it bypasses you. It's one of the greatest forms of art of all times. Don't say you love movies if you are following the Hollywood box office. Go deeper than the profit; go beyond the celebrities; go aside the special effects and follow the art of true cinematography. It knows exactly what to feed you. It's a long and hardworking journey to success. As much as Hollywood is proud of its dazzling movies, there is much more to it. There are short films that are not glamorous and are therefore in less demand. The most prominent names in the business started with doing shorts.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences defines a short film as “an original motion picture that has a running time of 40 minutes or less, including all credits”. You would be amazed if you knew how many genius directors have spent a lot of time producing shorts. Sadly, full length films are more advertised. Short films have their own certain and very loyal audience, but is generally much underrated. Directors like Jim Jarmusch, Alejandro González Iñárritu, Wim Wenders, Spike Lee, Bernardo Bertolucci, István Szabó and other outstanding names have done their fair share of shorts. I'm pretty sure and hope they are willing to create more of this truly amazing form of cinematography – short films – in the future.

Future Shorts is the world's largest pop up film festival and is a short film label based in London in 2003. It started as Future Shorts One and was a monthly screening of short films by filmmakers from all over the world. Working across exhibition, distribution and experiential events, Future Shorts

is the product of 9 years of audience development, experimentation and of reacting to the demand for another way of experiencing film. At first it covered 12 countries; now it does over a hundred. Georgia is a country well known for its art and the dedication and boldness in the industry. Yet, no one except Nino Togonidze acted on the dedication to shorts. She attended Future Shorts events while living in London. The Georgian girl was captivated enough to know she wanted to be a part of it. All she had at the moment was a desire, enthusiasm and the ticket to Georgia. Since she couldn't join them in London, she brought Future Shorts with her to Georgia. Thanks to her every season we can go to a place, get comfortable and dive into the utopia of short films.

**When did Georgia become part of Future Shorts and how did you come across it?**

It was in 2011. I was living in London. I studied digital cinematography at At SAE Institute in London. I was also interning at Onedotzero. The company works with promi-

them. Right by the time I was leaving for Georgia for good; they contacted me. They were ready to hire me. I couldn't take the job, but I offered them to let me take the festival to Georgia. They had me write a detailed project and conduct research about Georgia. They wanted to know what was happening here.

**Did they agree right away?**

No, they were pretty skeptical at first. After some negotiations they agreed. Our first event was like a test for them, but we knew for sure we would and could let it happen. Georgian National Film Center helped us a lot. Future Shorts never regretted taking us in. After the last event they contacted us and told us how happy they are with our work and they wanted us to be more involved. And I'm proud of it.

**Is it hard to find sponsors?**

It is hard. They don't really understand the concept. Companies expect profit from sponsorship. That is not the way to do it. We do find them, but it's extremely hard.

**How much do your events cost?**

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nent artists of many kinds. They did Pet Shop Boys Pandemonium Tour visuals. I took part in making visuals for them on a song “You're always on my Mind”. It was a fun and truly priceless experience for me. I have worked on major projects; I was right on the spot. I learned how to plan and manage some huge projects. Meanwhile I attended Future Shorts' events a few times and I loved it. I actually had filled out the application to work for

The last event DJ Phon.o cost us \$15,000. Tbilisi has not yet seen a DJ from such a popular and quality label as him. He works with Modeselektor's label Monkeytown. It's the same label Thom York works under. We didn't really make any money out of it. The commercial interest is not what motivates us. We want to inculcate Future Shorts in the country. So far, events are costing us – the team. We have paid quite some money out of our

own pockets for the events.

**Who are you – the team?**

It's 5-6 people. It's a group of people who have the same interest for art. It's a friendly yet professional team. We

ing.

**Have you ever thought about ditching the project? Did it ever get that hard?**

Not really, I never thought about quitting. This project has a great potential. I believe it's very important for it to exist in this country. It's also important for people who are authentically interested in this art, to have a place and time to meet up, hang out and exchange ideas. These people are humble. They don't go yelling all over the city about their interests and lifestyle. Once they know where to find what they like, they go and spend time there with other people who have gone to the same place for the same reason.

**Who arranges the program?**

The Future Shorts. They pick the program and Future Shorts all over the globe shows it. It's so interesting seeing the pictures of the seasonal events from around the world. It feels like we are a part of a one big unlimited dedication for art. It makes us whole. And it's rare now and here. “Karaoke” kinds of projects have sponsors and they make a lot of money; when we can hardly get sponsors for our events. It's heartbreaking. If we stop, if we give up, then the country won't advance. This is a quality art we are bringing in. Art is commercial, but not yet in Georgia. That's why we are not giving up on this. We are eager to show a “better”

form of art to Georgians so that the nation can evolve and once it does so will Future Shorts Georgia.

We are thinking about reaching out to more people. We are relying on Facebook at this point to advertise the events. Also Rustavi2 is our partner, Magazine and Radio “Tskheli Shokoladi”, as well as magazines “Tbilisi Out” and “Focus”. We want to go beyond this and make it bigger.

**Georgians go clubbing with the aim of going to a certain club. Do you agree with that?**

Absolutely, and it's sad. I see that a lot too. And what makes me really happy, is that people who love cinematography and quality art come to Future Shorts' events. People don't just find themselves at these events; they know for sure what they are going to see.

**Do you see the difference from season to season popularity wise?**

I certainly do. After the first couple of events we were devastated after finding out how hard it was. But, we truly want to promote this art. We had to set the priorities. Most importantly we want to develop Future Shorts in Georgia, make it stable and accessible for certain people. From season to season I see more people coming to the events, I see better feedback, I see more enthusiasm and fun. And that makes it all worth it.



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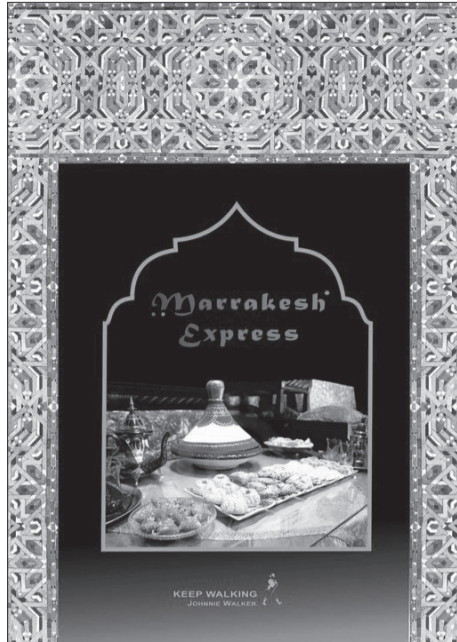
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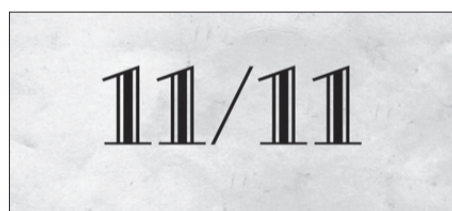
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