

Politics

Georgian opposition parties do not meet the conditions

The US Department of Justice has released a copy of a letter sent by Georgian Dream lobbyist, DCI Group.



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Appeals to Strasbourg Court from Georgia



GYLA demands victims of June 20-21 to officially receive victim status

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Georgia MFA to monitor Ukraine's steps before the ambassador's return

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Georgia to Georgia Teimuraz Sharashenidze has arrived at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a consultation. Until 25th of May, the ambassador has been in the mandatory quarantine imposed to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

Speaking to the media before entering the ministry, the ambassador said he did not share the criticism, as if the embassy had been inadequate.

"Based on the newly created reality, we will discuss all issues of cooperation between the two partner countries. Consultations will begin today, I can't tell you when it will end, but all issues will be discussed carefully," he said, adding that he had had the highest level communication with Ukraine and the protest note has also been handed over.

According to Sharashenidze, his possible return to Ukraine will depend on the decision of the leadership.

The ambassador from Kiev was summoned for a consultation after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky appointed Mikheil Saakashvili, Georgia's third president and former head of the Odessa regional administration, as the Chairman of the Reform Committee.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia states that the issue of termination of diplomatic relations with Ukraine is not being considered, however, the appointment of the convict Saakashvili raises questions and consultations with the Ambassador are needed.

The MFA of Georgia states that they talked to the Ambassador of Georgia to Ukraine Teimuraz Sharashenidze about



"I do not share criticism that the embassy failed," says Georgian Ambassador to Ukraine about Saakashvili's Appointment.

the relations and prospects between the countries.

"Naturally, we will observe the development of processes in Ukraine, what steps the Ukrainian government will take in terms of normalizing relations with Georgia, and accordingly the decision will be made on the date of the ambassador's return to Ukraine," said the Foreign Ministry Press.

After the first working meeting within the framework of consultations the issues and prospects of bilateral relations between Georgia and Ukraine were dis-

cussed, taking into account the current situation. MFA once again clarified that the summoning of the ambassador to the capital for consultations is a step taken in diplomatic practice. "The Georgian side made this decision due to the appointment of a person convicted in Georgia by the Ukrainian authorities to a public office," said the ministry.

MFA also emphasized that Georgia continues to work with Ukraine on a number of strategic issues, including the occupation of territories, the process of European and Euro-Atlantic integration, and cooperation in the usual way.

Irakli Beraia, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, commented on the summoning of the ambassador to Georgia, saying that Georgia and Ukraine's strategic partnership and diplomatic relations are in no danger and Saakashvili will not be able to damage these relations. He spoke of the common challenges and priorities of the two countries, emphasizing that the cooperation in bilateral and multilateral formats, as well as diplomatic relations are not to be questioned.

Gia Volski, the Deputy Speaker of Parliament and Kakha Kaladze, Secretary General of the ruling Georgian Dream consider that all self-respecting countries would behave exactly as Georgia did, however, the strategic partnership should not be harmed.

According to Davit Sikharulidze, Chairman of the Board of the Atlantic Council of Georgia, the ambassador is usually being consulted about serious problems related to the country's sovereignty, territorial integrity and aggression. Therefore, in this case Georgian government has taken the wrong, inadequate step by expressing extreme protest. Sikharulidze says this once again confirms that 'the state has been seized



Georgian Foreign Ministry: "We will monitor the steps taken by Ukraine to normalise relations with Georgia and decide on the date of the return of the ambassador."

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Georgian opposition parties do not meet the conditions

Please find below a statement in which Georgian Dream calls on the opposition to cease this political farce – and get fully behind the vital electoral reform that will strengthen Georgia’s democracy and accelerate the nation’s path toward the European Union and NATO.

Thanks,
Jerry

Statement:



The letter sent by Jerry Marconi.

BY ANASTASIA SOKHADZE

The DCI Group spokesman, Jerry Marconi, wrote a letter to US political circles on May 16th, saying that the President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili, had taken an important step to support the electoral reform agreement, but the opposition parties are not fulfilling their conditions.

“The US Embassy in Tbilisi immediately welcomed President Zourabichvili’s decision, saying it had created a ‘more favorable political environment for a free, fair and transparent election process.’ The embassy called on all parties to ‘fully

implement the agreement’ so that the elections scheduled for the fall would be ‘free and fair,’” Marconi’s letter read.

“Opposition parties, led by the United National Movement (UNM), European Georgia and others, are not fulfilling their terms,” Marconi said. “The National Movement and former President Saakashvili, along with other opposition parties, must renounce threats, boycotts and other forms of manipulation. The time for political games is over.”

Attached to the letter by Jerry Marconi is a copy of the Georgian Dream’s statement calling on the Georgian ruling party to

stop its ‘political farce’ and support electoral reform.

The letter was uploaded to the website of the Department of Justice on May 18th, where the

first letter on behalf of the lobbying company was found on March 10th. The letter announced the March 8th political agreement and informed the groups working on Georgia in the United States about it. The March 10th letter focused on the agreement on the electoral system and did not mention a statement by which the parties agreed to respond to the politically perceived cases of the election process and to avoid similar actions in the future.

The Justice Department’s website also published the March 31st letter from the DCI Group, the Georgian government’s successful fight against Coronavirus, and the letter from April 20th about former Prime Minister and businessman Bidzina Ivanishvili’s ‘generous charity’ a special COVID-19 transfer fee of \$100 million. The letter states that Ivanishvili’s donation was called ‘surprising’ by the British newspaper Sunday Express.

The Georgian Dream signed

an agreement with DCI Group on February 14th, 2020, and instructed the company to present Georgia’s ruling party as a stable partner for democracy and the United States. The agreement is valid until October 31st, 2020, and the Georgian Dream will pay the lobbying company \$33,333 a month. Under the U.S. law, lobbying companies are required to publish all activities and communications on behalf of their foreign customers.



The contract between Georgia and DCI group.

Georgia MFA to monitor Ukraine’s steps before the ambassador’s return

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by one man and MFA is not serving the interests of our country, but interests of this man and Georgian Dream.

Sergi Kapanadze, one of the leaders of European Georgia, responded to the statement of the MFA, saying such an attitude

leads the country to a dead end. According to him, challenging the ambassador was harmful enough, and saying that we will act in accordance with what Ukraine will do about appointments, is a disaster. “What happens if appointments are not changed, will we ruin relations with Ukraine?” he asked, adding that this situation once again shows why current leadership has to be removed so that “they do not pursue the country’s foreign policy with specific ambitions, plans and some kind of one-man show.”

Safety comes first as Georgia relaxes COVID-19 lockdown

With Swiss and Austrian support, UNDP delivers 23,000 face shields to 23 municipalities

TBILISI. 25 May 2020 – As Georgia begins to relax lockdown rules imposed to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, citizen safety remains in focus both in Tbilisi and the regions. To help people stay safe as workplaces and shops reopen, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has joined forces with Switzerland and Austria to distribute 23,000 protective face shields to 23 municipalities in the Kvemo Kartli, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, Racha-Lechkhumi-Kvemo Svaneti and Guria regions.

The deliveries are part of a larger initiative that has already seen 16,000 face shields distributed to ambulance crews and other front-line emergency workers, with support from the European Union, and 7,500 face shields sent for use in Abkhazia, Georgia, with support from the United States. The protective gear is manufactured by CaucasPack, a local plastic packaging company that swiftly retooled its production to respond to the pandemic, in the process protecting the jobs of 99 com-

pany employees.

Under the new initiative, the face shields will be transferred to UNDP’s partner civil society organizations in the 23 targeted municipalities and distributed to civil servants, front-line healthcare workers, vocational teachers and students, volunteers, civic activists, small business operators and vulnerable groups.

“Georgia’s successful response to the pandemic has cleared the way to restart the economy,” said UNDP Head Louisa Vinton. “But vigilance is necessary to ensure that efforts to return to normal do not jeopardize people’s health and lives. To stay safe, proper protective gear will be an everyday necessity.”

“Switzerland is a strong supporter of Georgia in its fight against the pandemic,” said Danielle Meuwly, Regional Director of the Swiss Cooperation Office for the South Caucasus. “We are proud to be assisting rural communities, especially in the remote and mountainous municipalities, to protect people from the threat of the virus and to help bring the local economy back to life.”

“People’s lives and livelihoods

are the focus of our assistance,” said Dr. Gerhard Schaumberger, Head of Coordination Office for Technical Cooperation of the Austrian Embassy in Tbilisi. “We are reaching out to the most vulnerable communities and national minorities.”

UNDP has been working since the earliest days of the coronavirus outbreak, in partnership with the Government, donors and other partners, to extend support to vulnerable and marginalised groups.

With guidance from the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure, UNDP has worked through local and regional development programmes funded by Switzerland and Austria to undertake an information campaign in Georgia’s rural and remote municipalities involving the distribution of leaflets and posters on COVID-19 prevention and stickers for marking social distancing; to ensure the accessibility of the Government’s official website www.stop.cov.ge and other informational materials for people with disabilities and national minorities; and to distribute protective gear and sanitary supplies.

Weather

Tuesday, May 26

Day ☀ Clear
High: 25°C
Night 🌙 Clear
Low: 13°C

Wednesday, May 27

Day ☀ Clear
High: 26°C
Night 🌙 Clear
Low: 15°C

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43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi,
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Founded by Prof.

Zaza Gachechiladze

Tamar Gachechiladze
Publisher

Mob.: +995 599 565621; +995 577 760000
E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge
<http://www.messenger.com.ge/>

Nino Metreveli

Commercial Director

Mariam Mchedlidze

Editor-in-Chief

Khatuna Gogichaishvili

Layout Designer, Photographer

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Appeals to Strasbourg Court from Georgia



European Court of Human Rights

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

At the session of the Legal Issues Committee of parliament, Deputy Minister of Ministry of Justice of Georgia, Gocha Lortkipanidze, introduced a report about executing the decisions of Strasbourg court.

As Lortkipanidze stated, despite the state of emergency, in a predetermined time frame, the report of Strasbourg Court has been introduced to the parliament for the fourth time. He con-

siders Parliament's engagement as a very significant component so that international obligations will be properly fulfilled.

Based on the statistics, Lortkipanidze paid attention to the significant decrease in terms of appeals to Strasbourg court from Georgia. As he stated, if there were 395 complaints in 2011 and 367 in 2012, according to the data in 2019, there were considerably few-130 complaints sent to the European Court of Human Rights. Lortkipanidze

also focused on the cases against Georgia reviewed by the European Court, which were 2883 in 2012 and 600 by 2019.

"This is not regular statistics, this is a reflection with almost photographic accuracy of the effort and the results of reforms implemented since 2012. It is noteworthy that all this serves to establish institutional democracy," said Lortkipanidze.

As he stated, on the basis of European Court decisions made by major prosecution in 2017-

2019, a criminal proceeding was launched against 13 individuals on five different criminal cases.

Lortkipanidze added that the fight against torture and mistreatment is a crucial interest of theirs and as a result, such behavior is no longer typical for the system. As he said, before 2012, the appeals with regard to the facts of torture and mistreatment were most common alongside the facts of attempt of life.

Chairperson of the Legal issues committee, Anri Okhanashvili stated his loyalty to the principles of European court. As he said, the state still spends millions of Lari from the budget to compensate the individuals whose rights had been

strictly violated before 2012.

Okhanashvili mentioned that in the decision of Strasbourg Court, it is explicitly said that the inmates during the 'Prison Riot' were killed by the state. He hopes that on the plenary session of this week, he will be able to debate on this very subject with the responsible side which is the former ruling party- National Movement.

The most massive revolt of inmates in Georgia took place on March 27th 2006 in Tbilisi's Prison N5 and is known as the 'Prison Riot.' During the clash between special forces and the prisoners, several inmates died, which later became the reason for severe political debates.



According to Okhanashvili, the decision of Strasbourg court says that the inmates during the 'Prison Riot' were killed by the state.

GYLA demands victims of June 20-21 to officially receive victim status



Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA)

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

On May 25th, Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA) released a statement on the June 20-21 events, where they note that 23 individuals injured as a result of the raid, were once again rejected to receive victim status by the prosecution. GYLA reports the verdict to the court and demands the victims to be assigned with relevant legal status.

According to GYLA, unless the victims officially receive the status, they will not be able to effectively participate in legal proceedings, nor will they be introduced to the case materials, which hinders them from observing the effectiveness of the prosecution.

The General Prosecutor's office of Georgia, investigates a case of criminal justice in terms

of exceeding working powers by using weapons and violence on the activists of June 20-21. In the frame of the mentioned case, GYLA once has already referred to prosecution to give the persons under GYLA's defence an official status of victims, but neither prosecution, nor the court satisfied the appeal. The reason for rejection was explained to have been an absence of examination results (by the time of appeal), which was supposed to examine the injuries of the affected people. Later, only Mako Gomuri and Giorgi Sulashvili received the status, but regardless, the victims and the GYLA were not fully introduced to the details of the case.

As GYLA states, even after a year after launching the investigation, the prosecution still names absence of examination results as a reason for leaving 23 people without the status and explains that "the fact of even doubtless damage to health, cannot be considered as the only basis of considering somebody affected since the offensive nature of the damage should be confirmed as well."

GYLA believes that repeated rejection of their demand will be an illegal and unreasonable manner of prosecution. According to the organisation, the current legislation clearly deter-

mines the legal basis of giving away victim status, according to which, a person is considered as affected, if he/she had been harmed mentally, physically or materially as a result of criminal act and as GYLA states, considering this prosecution is liable to recognise a person as a victim, when the damage (injury) is determined to have been caused by the criminal act, regardless of whether the offender has been identified or not.

According to the statement, it is explicitly established that the damage to the part of affected people had been caused by illegal use of rubber bullets, which were also used on journalists, who were on the site to report the events.

As the statement notes, the dynamics of the June 20-21 case also prove

the existence of shortcomings in the investigation. Apart from the fact that the victims are not properly contributed to the legal proceedings, the inability of the prosecution to finally confirm the sources of injuries and obtain the report of expertise also doubts the objectiveness and comprehensiveness of the inquiry.

The statement reads, unless the manner of investigation is amended and the appeal is satisfied, GYLA will refer to the European Court of Human Rights.

On June 20-21, 2019, which is also known as Gavrilov's

night, Georgian Law enforcement dispersed the crowd gathered in front of Parliament of Georgia, in response to the appearance of member of the Russian Duma, Sergei Gavrilov on the chair reserved for the head of parliament. Local and international NGOs believe that non-proportional police force was used against civil protest as they used tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse the protestants. Approximately 240 demonstrators were injured during the clashes with police and 305 protesters were arrested. Two people experienced eye injuries and lost eye vision due to rubber bullets.



June 21st.