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Journalist Gabunia's possible murder plan

Main Channel's Director General demands the maximum disclosure of materials.



Gvaramia claims that by order of Ramzan Kadyrov, it was planned to liquidate one of the famous journalists Giorgi Gabunia.

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Nika Gvaramia, General Director of the Main Channel, spoke at a special June 15th briefing about the possible liquidation plan of TV journalist Giorgi Gabunia. According to Gvaramia, the Georgian Counter-Terrorism Service has

detained a Russian citizen, born in Ingushetia, Vasambek Bokov. Gvaramia claimed the official pretext for his arrest was different, however, the reason was real.

"As far as I know, he was arrested for another reason, but the main thing that became known to the Georgian authori-

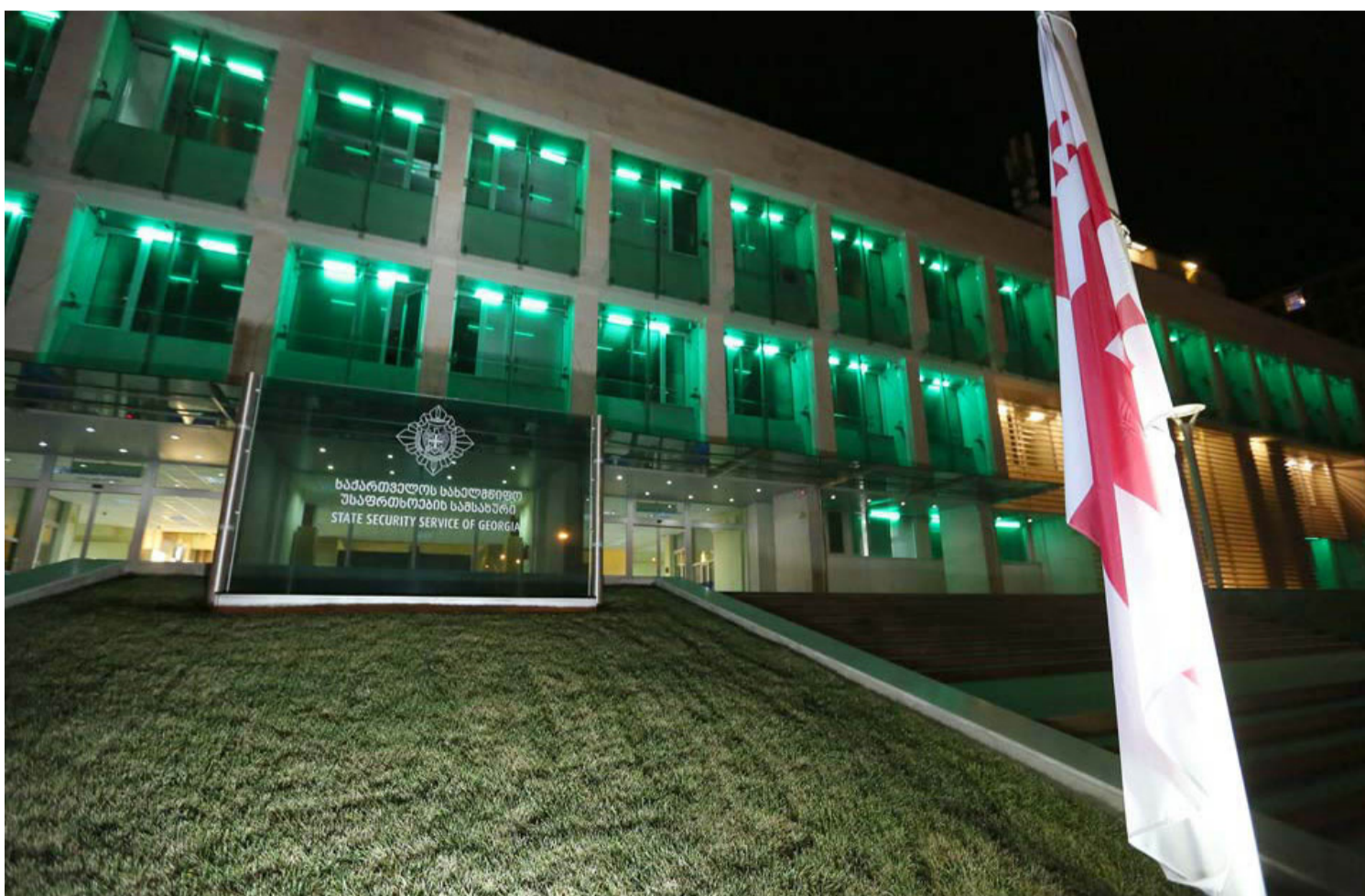
ties by the Ukrainian law enforcement is that he was planning the liquidation of Giorgi Gabunia, the distinguished figure and face of this channel, this country's journalism and prominent citizen of this country in general, by order of Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov," Gvaramia announced, adding that this topic was discussed by the time and everyone remembered Kadyrov's statements and warnings from 'our Caucasian friends and not only.'

Founder of the Main Channel revealed that according to his source, the information became known from the counter-terrorism department and an investigation was launched on the territory of Ukraine.

Gvaramia notes that the planned liquidation of Giorgi Gabunia was coordinated on the territory of Ukraine, which was managed from the territory of Russia, in particular, from the Chechen Republic. According to him, direct actions were taking place in Georgia.

The director general says that Giorgi Gabunia has been under surveillance for months, which is why the TV channel has strengthened his protection. "I will not hide from you that we thought it was the government of [Georgia]. All our leading faces are being monitored by the government," Gvaramia added.

According to the head of the Main Channel, the investigation was carried out on the territory of Ukraine without informing Georgia. "The reason for this was that Georgia is not a reliable partner when an investigation is launched against Russian citizens, and there was



SSS: "V.B. was arrested as part of a premeditated murder case, we urge everyone to refrain from disseminating inaccurate information."

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The renewed budget and upcoming rally

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

One of the highlights of last week was the government's presentation of an updated version of the 2020 budget, which drew strong criticism from the opposition. Other political issues have been overshadowed by expectations of June 20th, when the opposition plans to hold a protest rally after a long pause caused by the epidemic.

On June 9th, the draft budget for 2020 adjusted by the government was submitted to the Parliament of Georgia. Instead of a 4.5% increase in the budget due to the global crisis caused by the global pandemic, now a 4% drop is expected. Budget revenues are reduced by ₾1.8 billion. The budget envisages ₾3.4 billion for anti-crisis measures promised by the government. To fulfill these promises, the government borrows ₾650 million, while loans from international partners amount to ₾4 billion 470 million. Budget expenditures 1 billion. It will increase by ₾491 million and will reach 15 billion 924 million ₾ in total.

Parliamentary discussions on

the draft budget are still ahead. However, opposition officials have already said that the draft budget does not contain a specific plan for overcoming the country's economic crisis, or even a general vision. According to the opposition, the government's anti-crisis promises are aimed at the Georgian Dream's party goals and election campaign. Prime Minister Gakharia does not share the criticism of the adjusted version of the budget, saying the criticism is 'fake and propaganda.'

The results of a public opinion poll commissioned by Transparency International Georgia coincided with the presentation of the draft budget in parliament, which showed that the previous government was able to achieve the fight against corruption - to eliminate corruption at the current level (only 1% of respondents have encountered such a fact in the last 12 months), but elite corruption remains a serious problem (63% of respondents think so). These people are not mistaken. In 2015-2017, only 1,740 corruption cases were registered, of which

only 12% were opened.

A few opposition members claim that the tender offers announced by the government contain high risks and that only government-affiliated companies tend to win. According to Giorgi Kobulia, former Minister of Economy of the Georgian Dream, Bidzina Ivanishvili could have eliminated the corruption schemes in the Georgian government, but he did not wish to do so. According to him, there are 4 main problems in the country's governance system: 1 / low-skilled and demotivated state machine, 2 / biased transactions in state structures; 3 / Reputable severely damaged court system, which prevents foreign investment in the country; 4 / Absolutely collapsed foreign policy, both in the West and in Russia.

The united opposition is preparing for the first protest rally after the pause caused by the epidemic, which will be held on June 20th. The opposition intends to commemorate last year's bloody events and on this day symbolically intends to nominate common candidates in

8 majoritarian constituencies in Tbilisi. If the united opposition really manages to do so, it will be a significant success for the opposition. However, much will also depend on the scale of the upcoming rally. Authorities are planning to count the "heads" of those who came to the rally and suggest about 200 people will come. The small number of protesters will be a 'visible confirmation' of the weakness of the opposition.

The issue of June 20th became another reason for the government and the opposition to make mocking statements. Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia considered the opposition political spectrum "toxic", while former parliamentary speaker Irakli Kobakhidze compared the opposition to a cow.

The opposition continues to call on the government to abide by the March 8 agreement, and G. Rurua's release, however, is still being ignored by the authorities. If this demand is not met, opposition representatives are not going to support the constitutional changes, the public discussion of which has formally begun, and, therefore, the government will have to mobilise its forces to get it.

The June 8th visit of US Ambassador Kelly Degnan to the Prosecutor's Office and her

statement that 'voter bribery and intimidation are unacceptable' caused a variety of reactions. According to the unanimous explanation of the opposition, Georgia's strategic partner directly pointed out to the government that the upcoming parliamentary elections should be held fairly and transparently. Such an interpretation of the ambassador's visit irritated the government. Prime Minister Gakharia said such an explanation was not true. However, it is clear that the upcoming elections will be of great interest to the West in defending democratic standards.

Georgian Dream does not intend to 'hand over power' and considers its own government as an alternative. The government is also facing the need to form its own electoral list. The issue of who was at the top of the Georgian Dream list became the subject of discussion last week. Irakli Kobakhidze, Giorgi Gakharia and former Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze were nominated. As Bidzina Ivanishvili determines the electoral list of the government, the remembering of the former Prime Minister is connected with it.

(Translated by Mariam Mchedlidze)

Journalist Gabunia's possible murder plan

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strong suspicion regarding leaking information from here," Gvaramia suggested, connecting the linkage of the case to Georgia's law enforcement to the loss of control due to the pandemic.

"Georgian authorities have not taken this information seriously. Considered a provocation of the great Georgian lobby in Ukraine. Nevertheless, it has strengthened control over the movement of Giorgi Gabunia, and this is welcome." Gvaramia said. He added, that, one of the main faces of television and his deputy has been under mortal

threat at the behest of the world's number one terrorist, Vladimir Putin's main terrorist base, Kadyrov.

Gvaramia says he will blame the Georgian government for any damage caused to any employee of the Main Channel. He called on Georgian and Ukrainian law enforcement to make public as much information as possible at this time.

According to the TV host himself, he did not have any information about which Gvaramia spoke at the special briefing, but added that he was generally informed that he was in danger. "The voices came to me to be careful, when you go abroad and so on. But I still did not have specific information," Gabunia said, adding that danger was very clear, especially after Kadyrov said that 'someone would meet me somewhere and something would happen to me'.

On July 7th, 2019, Giorgi Gabunia, who at the time worked at Rustavi 2 channel, cursed Russian President Vladimir Putin in the Rustavi 2 program 'Postscriptum', using swear words in Russian. Soon Gabunia's words caused protest at the rally near TV company Rustavi 2, which demanded the change of management and for Gabunia to leave the channel. The Georgian authorities negatively assessed Gabunia's swearing; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs called on the international community and international organizations working on issues of press freedom to give journalist Gabunia's behavior proper evaluation.

Putin also responded, saying "It is a great honor for him to initiate such a criminal case. May he cover in the future as well."

Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov has advised Giorgi Gabunia to hide after cursing the Russian president, as "there are millions of young people who respect the Russian president."

The State Security Service

(SSS) conducted a special operation in Tbilisi on June 12th.

Later, on 15th of June, the SSS responded to media reports that the Counter-Terrorism Center has detained a citizen of the Russian Federation under the first part of Article 362 of the Criminal Code of Georgia on charges of purchasing, storing and using a forged document.

According to SSS, the accused V. B. has been arrested on the basis of an investigation into a criminal case initiated on the order to prepare for premeditated murder, which was carried out by the Counter-Terrorism Center of the SSS on the basis of relevant operative information.

SSS reported that in the course of the investigation of the mentioned criminal case, in order to obtain evidence and attach them to the criminal procedure, on the basis of the judge's decisions, a number of open or covert investigative actions were carried out; At the same time, the accused V.B and related persons were under operative control, as a result of which the fact of crime was revealed, in particular the

purchase, storage and use of a forged document, by V.B.

According to the statement, based on the unequivocal and conclusive evidence obtained by the investigation, the investigating authority accepted decision to detain him, as a result of which, on the one hand, the person found guilty of the crime was held criminally liable, and at the same time, another more serious crime was avoided.

At this stage, as SSS says, the case is being intensively investigated, a number of examinations have been scheduled, within the framework of international cooperation, through Interpol channels, additional information has been requested, and witnesses are being questioned.

The SSS urges all persons, including the party to the criminal case, to refrain from disseminating any kind of accurate or inaccurate information so as not to obstruct the investigation and to disseminate essential and/or false information that would ultimately harm the principal. It is in the public interest to establish an objective truth about the case.

Weather

Wednesday, June 17

Day  Partly Cloudy

High: 32°C

Night  T-storm

Low: 19°C

Thursday, June 18

Day  Partly Cloudy

High: 31°C

Night  Mostly Cloudy

Low: 19°C

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Money transfers to Georgia down by 9.6% in May



Koba Gvenetadze calls the dynamics of remittances 'encouraging'.

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The National Bank of Georgia (NBG), released the information on money transfers to Georgia in May. According to the statistics, the volume of money transfers from abroad constituted \$131.8 million (€ 421.6 million), which is 9.6% (\$13.9 million) less than the amount in May 2019.

The vast majority (92.8%) of all money transfers from abroad came from 14 largest partner countries, with the volume of transfers from these countries each exceeding \$1 million last month. In May 2019, the share of these 14 countries constituted 89.9% percent of the total volume of money transfers.

In May 2020, \$13.6 million was transferred from Georgia,

which is 33.7% less as compared to \$20.5 million in May 2019.

According to the National Bank, the decline was the sharpest from the Russian Federation, from which \$19.77 million was transferred in May, 43% less than the previous year. From Italy, the volume of remittances increased by 35% instead of decreasing.

All in all, Italy, Russia and Greece were the largest remittances

senders in Georgia in April 2020. Georgia received \$27.59 million from Italy and \$18.82 million from Greece (13% increase over the previous year).

After Italy, Russia and Greece, other countries regularly sending money transfers to Georgia in May 2020 included: United States – \$15.21 million; Israel – \$11.28 million; Turkey – \$7.42 million; Germany – \$5.34 million; Ukraine – \$3.67 million; Azerbaijan – \$3.56 million; Spain – \$3.23 million; Poland – \$2.02 million; France – \$1.86 million; Canada - \$1.39 million; UK - \$1.03 million.

Koba Gvenetadze, President of the National Bank of Georgia, published a post on his Facebook page regarding the statistics of May remittances. Gvenetadze wrote that the 42.3% drop in re-

mittances in April was followed by a decrease of only 9.6% in the volume of remittances in May, which is a reliable indicator against the background of the COVID-19 crisis and the negative expectations associated with it. Gvenetadze said that if the reduction in remittances is in this range, then the tax balance deficit will no longer be as high as originally suggested.

"The dynamics of remittances are encouraging: If remittances fell 42.3% year-on-year in April, the decline was only 9.6% in May... If this tendency continues, the current account deficit will not be as high, as projected by basic prognosis so far. This, in turn, will have a positive impact on both economic activity and the exchange rate," Gvenetadze wrote.



Italy, Russia and Greece were the largest remittance senders in Georgia in April 2020.

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Newly renovated building for sale or rent in the heart of Tbilisi

It is a fully equipped boutique hotel, which also can be transferred into a representation office

- Location – in the heart of Tbilisi, Next to the Ministry of Defense
- Newly reconstructed and newly renovated with high standards
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- 26 rooms, fully equipped with high standard furniture and equipment
- Common spaces (two terraces, one large area for lunches, one conference room)
- Fully equipped restaurant with the EU standard equipment
- The EU quality of ventilation and air conditioning (each room has a source of fresh air)
- High standard of electricity and fire safety in all rooms
- Autonomous supply of water (reservoir) and electricity (generator)

Total area: 1500 m²

Suggested rent: 9000 USD (excl VAT) - Substantially lower to market price, due to the pandemic

Suggested selling price: USD 2.5 million, including all equipment and furniture

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