

## Politics

### UN's 43<sup>rd</sup> session of the Human Rights Council



### Journalists file a lawsuit in the Strasbourg Court

The European Court of Human Rights must decide whether to accept the case or not while Journalists in Strasbourg are still seeking to be declared as victims.

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## Economics

### How have wages fallen in May?

GD parliament members initiate salary subsidization bill.

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## PM chairs a coordination council



Coordination council

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

On June 22<sup>nd</sup>, Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia chaired the interagency coordination council, where MPs discussed the epidemic and highlighted the importance of

maintaining those results of controlling the virus on the background of high mobility. Also, special attention was paid to the tourism sector and as the press service of the PM informs, relevant decisions around the sector are made based on the

tendency around the world.

Georgia had successful dialogues with its partners such as Israel and some countries of the EU, however, they have decided to postpone opening tourism and international borders for some time. As the press service states, the government attentively learns about the tendencies in the EU, according to which, on the first phase only domestic tourism opened as for the cases of other countries, the agreement is not reached yet and such decisions in terms of international tourism will be made based on the current condition and introduced to the people in the near future.

At the meeting, the MPs made a decision, according to which, to facilitate tourism, standards determined for tourist transport are equalising to the regulations defined for intercity transport.

Gakharia noted that the elections amid the pandemic is a global challenge, "which will enable the country to accumulate successful experience." "We have mentioned numerous times that a more proportional electoral system is the only way to improve political culture step by step in the country and to make it more democratic and European, to help us reach our final purpose, to the Euro-Atlantic integration," he said.



PM: "Altering the electoral system is a further improvement of the country's democracy."

# UN's 43<sup>rd</sup> session of the Human Rights Council

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

Within the frame of the UN's 43<sup>rd</sup> session of the Human Rights Council, general debates were held, where the representatives of the EU, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, France, Great Britain, and Greece made statements supporting Georgia.

As the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia reports, the delegations welcomed Georgia's tight partnership with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the progress achieved in terms of Human Rights defence in the country.

According to the Ministry's statement, delegations expressed their concerns about the harsh human rights and humanitarian conditions in Georgia's regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali in Covid-19 terms. In particular, the delegations condemned imposing further restrictions on freedom of movement and proceeding with an illegal process of raising artificial barriers by the Russian occupation forces. They expressed disturbance on the facts of several types of discriminations, imprisonment, deprivation of life, illegal arrests, violation of healthcare and ownership rights, deprivation and restriction of mother tongue education for ethnical Georgians in the regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali, which, according to the delegations, hinders achieving further tangible progress in the international discussions of Geneva.

As the statement notes, special attention was paid to the facts of restricting the freedom of movement including the cases



UN Human Rights Council



Occupied region of Georgia, Abkhazia

of refusing emergency medical evacuation from Tskhinvali/South Ossetia, which especially in the context of COVID-19, further aggravates the existence of the population impacted by the conflicts and negatively affects their rights and health condition. In addition, according to the statement, speakers stressed the necessity of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and human rights international mechanisms to enter Georgia's occupied regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali and a need of carrying out monitoring there. They called on The Russian Federation to respect international Justice norms and provide immediate and unconditional admission of Human rights defence international mechanisms in the occupied regions of Georgia.

The Delegations welcomed Georgia's initiation of annual resolution 'cooperation with Georgia,' in the frame of UN's 43<sup>rd</sup> session of the Human Rights Council agenda, and confirmed their support to the resolution.

According to the statement, it is noteworthy that in the frame of the UN's 43<sup>rd</sup> session of the Human Rights Council, the mentioned resolution is being voted. In the resolution, the Human Rights Council reaffirms its commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders. It is an annual resolution, which was first adopted in 2017 and obligates the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to introduce verbal and written reports about the issues laid in the resolution.

## Journalists file a lawsuit in the Strasbourg Court

By ANASTASIA SOKHADZE

Guria News journalist Merab Tsaava reports that only his hand, which covered his face, saved him from being blinded on the night of June 20<sup>th</sup> last year. Beslan Kmuzov, a journalist from the Caucasian Uzel, was

shot six times, including in the head, which required suturing. According to Kmuzov, he was only filming the night.

According to the Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics, 39 media outlets were injured during the June 20<sup>th</sup> rally. Riot police aggressively dispersed the rally without any warning. Some media outlets point out that riot police fired rubber bullets at the targets while cursing at them.



June 20<sup>th</sup>.

### Weather

Tuesday, June 23

Day Mostly Clear

High: 34°C

Night Clear

Low: 21°C

Wednesday, June 24

Day Clear

High: 35°C

Night Clear

Low: 20°C

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## How have wages fallen in May?



In May 2020, the state budget revenue from income tax amounted to 14.6% less than the same period last year.

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The Treasury of the Ministry of Finance has published a report on the implementation of the May 2020 budget. According to the document, in May 2020, the state budget revenue from income tax amounted to ₾234.1 million, which is ₾39.9 million or 14.6% less than the same period last year. Consequently, the decrease in the amount of budget revenues in the form of income taxes indicates a decrease in the amount of salaries issued in the country. More specifically, this decrease indicates a reduction of almost ₾200 million in salaries.

The income tax rate in the country is 20% and it is mostly paid by contract employees. Due to the economic crisis of COVID-19, more than 90 thousand people have already applied to the Ministry of Finance for ₾200 compensation, therefore, they have lost their income in the form of salary. Another factor affecting the reduction of the income tax

is the exemption of ₾750 from the income tax for the private sector and partial exemption from the income tax up to ₾1500.

The profit tax amounted to ₾43.7 million in May, which is ₾28.2 million, or 39% less than the previous year.

Like income tax, income from VAT and profit tax is reduced.

The amount of VAT declared by value-added taxpayers last month was a total of ₾196.3 million, which is ₾118.2 million or 37% less than the VAT paid in May 2019.

The increase in value-added tax is directly related to the turnover of the business sector in the country, while its annual decline of 37% indicates a sharp decline in economic activity in May.

It is the turnover of VAT-paying enterprises that is based on Geostat's assessment of monthly economic growth. The economic decline in the country in April was 16.6%, and the economic growth in May will be announced on June 30<sup>th</sup>. It is expected that due to the 37% reduction in VAT,

the economic decline in May will be as dramatic as it was in April.

It's noteworthy that Georgian taxpayers may be required to subsidize the salaries of those employed in the private sector - this will happen if the

parliament passes a bill prepared by members of the Georgian Dream. The bill was discussed at the sitting of the Parliamentary Committee on Health and Social Affairs.

According to the author of the bill, Sophio Kiladze, the bill will be an 'expression of care' by the state. The name of the bill is 'On Supporting Employment' and its initiators are Georgian Dream MPs - Sophio Kiladze, Irakli Kobakhidze and 16 others.

The mechanism that GD MPs plan to introduce looks like this: under the bill, wage subsidies will only apply to certain categories of people, including people with disabilities, the socially vulnerable, and IDPs.

Companies that hire and employ these individuals in their own staff will receive a 50% subsidy on the salaries of these individuals, which will be paid to the additional employee.

According to the draft law, employment via subsidizing labor remuneration is a material benefit for the employer in order to employ a job seeker who is: a person with IDP or socially vulnerable status from 16 to 29 years of age; persons with disabilities or with special educa-

tional needs; a person between the ages of 16 and 29, who is under state care and is out of state care; and other persons approved by the Government by a relevant resolution.

The employer may, in order to employ the unemployed referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article, apply to the Agency for a labor remuneration subsidy if it offers the job seeker a contract of employment indefinitely or for a period of not less than 6 months.

An employment contract that provides for subsidies is concluded for a period of at least 9 months. Employees will be given a subsidy for no more than 3 months.

The employer is obliged to return half of the subsidy if the employment relationship is terminated less than 9 months after the conclusion of the employment contract at the initiative of the employer, without the grounds established by the labor legislation.

The content of the agreement on the issuance of the subsidy and the rules of payment shall be regulated by the legislation of Georgia and the resolution of the Government.



Subsidizing salaries – what mechanism the Georgian Dream MPs plan to introduce?

## Journalists file a lawsuit in the Strasbourg Court

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So far, the requirements of the Civil Society and Journalism Ethics Charter have not been met, and the prosecutor's office has launched a search under Article 154 of the Criminal Code, which stipulates illegal interference with journalists' professional activities. On June 20-21, none of the affected journalists were granted the status of victims, although some reported the fact of the violence itself and there are documents and strong proof.

"68 policemen and no journalists were recognised as victims. We went through all the instances here, asking for the victim's notice. We were refused

everywhere and then we went to the Strasbourg court," stated Dimitri Nozadze, Beslan Kmuzov's lawyer.

Gmtv.ge correspondent Zaza Svanadze comments:

"The police kicked the construction of the stage. It almost hit me. Then I had a general view of the stairs when one of the law enforcers shot at me with a target. Six bullets hit me, it was like a saber-toothed bullet that crashes after one shot. I declare with full responsibility that I did not say anything to them, I did not ask any questions. I took quick steps towards Baratashvili Street. The blood flowed to my ankles, and I could not stop the bleeding all night."



Strasbourg Court gets involved.

Zaza Svanadze is seeking asylum in Belgium. According to

him, the reason is that a political persecution has been

launched against him.