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United Opposition should dialogue, UNM's chairman Vashadze says, opposition leaders react



Grigol Vashadze

BY LIZA NORWICH-GERWIK

In his interview with Newpost, Grigol Vashadze called on political parties to move the process to a peaceful table and replace the street with a tribune of legislators of all levels, demanding CEC's chair Tamar Zhvania's resignation. According to him, Georgia is in a very dangerous situation as it faces economic, social, political, and demographic challenges, adding that the global pandemic of Covid-19 is out of control. The UNM leader also mentioned the military-political situation in the Caucasian region and called it 'extremely aggravated'.

Vashadze thinks that the solution to all existing problems regarding the legitimacy of 2020 parliamentary elections is the peaceful dialogue:

"I appeal to all political parties: urgently move the process to the negotiating table, replace the street with a tribune of all levels of the legislature, and call on all forces to pull the state out of the deep crisis."

"A commission of inquiry should be set up in the next parliament to investigate irregularities in the current elections, identify those responsible and ensure an electoral system and environment that eliminates fraud and misappropriation of

voters once and for all," Vashadze said.

However, UNM's Vashadze's statement received a lot of criticism from the United Opposition leaders, and most of them clarified that they are staying true to their plan of protesting and refusing to join Parliament.

UNM's Khatia Dekanoidze released a statement saying that Grigol Vashadze's statement was not approved by the rest of the party leaders, assessing the situation of not cooperating with other party leaders as 'unfortunate'. The identical opinion was presented by Nika Melia, also one of the UNM leaders, who told the media that even the United National

Movement's press service was not aware of the statement and does not represent any of the party's views whatsoever. They have clarified that they are not against the dialogue, but for this dialogue to happen, United Opposition's demands should be carried out.

Lelo for Georgia's leader Badri Japaridze told reporters that it is difficult for him to comment on contradictory statements and said that Lelo is heading to the same course:

"Four parties have agreed on a statement that directly affirms the CEC results are practically fraudulent to us. Therefore, we are going to continue the same course, we are not going to enter the parliament, we are calling for new elections and we are ready for dialogue."

After the criticism Grigol Vashadze has released a statement clarifying that the protest should continue in the streets, adding a few components to his previous statement:

- Protests must continue
- A political component to this protest must be added immediately through the mediation of strategic allies in the form of negotiations on the implementation of the principles of fair elections
 - Until / if the negotiations are successful, we will neither participate in the second round nor enter the Parliament;
 - Ensuring that street protests in the future do not replace the 'normal' process of rigging elections

After the clarification of Vashadze's statement, the United National Movement stated that the second updated version is final and unlike the first one, is not open to interpretation.



Khatia Dekanoidze

2020 US Election Reaction Offered Readers in Georgia

BY MARITA SPARRER-DOLIDZE

“Protect the integrity of the elections system” – said Trump and promised to move the Supreme Court to stop vote counting as he considers himself to be the real triumphant of the 2020 elections. Is history repeating itself like the year 2000 when the winner could not be confirmed until a Supreme Court made a ruling a month later? Nevertheless, as we like to say in Georgia, ‘the caravan keeps going’ and the people of America have spoken – this article offers a brief overview of the presidential race based on the results as of 10 November 2020. The article does not cover the electing of new members of Congress.

With Twitter and social media platforms, it becomes virtually impossible to control who wins an overnight celebrity badge or which country attracts worldwide media attention. Take for instance the case of the US – the whole world has been praising the country for holding a presidential election in the throes of a pandemic that continues to poison our lives. On the other hand, the lesser favorite kid of social media, the Govern-

ment of Georgia could not advertise it well enough for broader audiences that we also held elections on the 31st of October, and before that other European countries managed to hold elections in their countries, including Croatia, Greece, Ireland, Azerbaijan, Spain, Poland, Italy – to name the few and to deliberately leave out Belarus.

Yet, there is a reason why the Statue of Liberty and her homeland get all the media attention these past weeks: the election results in the country of freedom are very likely to dictate not only internal political dynamics but also influence all of us. This year Donald Trump and Joe Biden competed to win electoral college votes. In the US, each state gets a certain number of electoral college votes, building up to 538 total votes. As of right now, Joe Biden has collected 290 – 20 more than needed to win the race.

Set aside the record-breaking number of Americans opting for early voting in the polls – 100 million! – this election was the most expensive in history, costing a total of \$14 billion. Seeing Massachusetts, my second home, light up blue was not unexpected but along with all people in this world concerned with the



Photo: BBC

future of democracy, I was hoping the rational majority would win in the rest of the US.

In the end, the result was astonishing – Biden broke the record and received the highest number of votes ever for a presidential candidate. Says much about Biden but even more about Trump, ha? In 1918, the Spanish flu and WWI were the two factors that resulted in a 1918

midterm election voting drop but this time the nation was determined to elect from the blue camp. Trump is the first president since George Bush Sr. (1992) to not get reelected – since Bush Sr. all Presidents, including Bill Clinton, George W Bush, and Barack Obama have been reelected.

Luckily the aghast and worrying will not be needed, as of right

now – the oldest candidate (78 years) in the history of the US is President-Elect, beating the second oldest Reagan by one year.

This election is also unique in terms of the VP role: Kamala Harris will take the post as the first female Vice President. She is the first South Asian nominee for the role of the US Vice President and the first black woman to run for Vice President in the country.

Peaceful protest to be continued, United Opposition parties release a joint statement

BY LIZA NORWICH-GERWIK

European Georgia’s leader David Bakradze voiced four parties’ decision to continue peaceful protests in the streets. The parties include European Georgia, Lelo, Girchi, Strategy Builder, and the United National Movement.

According to David Bakradze, parties have revised and finalized the main principles of protesting forged elections: Peaceful rallies will continue on streets, the dialogue will only occur with Georgian Dream if it will regard new dates of Parliamentary elections but this time without electoral fraud. The above-mentioned parties are still refusing their mandates and will not participate in the second



David Bakradze

round of the parliamentary elections.

“We would like to voice it again that we are not planning on recognizing Parliamentary elections which were frauded,

also not participating in the second round of elections and are not entering an illegitimate parliament.

We will continue to protest against electoral fraud. Our de-

mands remain the same: setting dates for the elections to be held again, CEC administration change, and freeing political prisoners. These should be discussed with Ivanishvili, through

the mediation of our international partners,” the statement reads.

Four parties also urge the Interior Ministry for police forces to not be in close contact with protesters, because their competence and experiences are not eligible to manage these types of situations within the law. They also called on protesters regardless of which party they are supporting to not engage in a physical confrontation with police forces.

Four of the opposition parties’ statements also read that they are ready for long-term peaceful protests and announced new dates for protests in front of the Parliament, November 14 and November 21.

To the question of why only four parties are involved in this announcement, Bakradze said that these four parties have more in common, but noted that they would present it to other parties, and hopefully, they join as well.

Weather

Wednesday, November 11

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 16°C

Night Partly Cloudy

Low: 7°C

Thursday, November 12

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 13°C

Night Partly Cloudy

Low: 7°C

published by

The Messenger

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All contributions should be submitted by e-mail.

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therefore, the opinions expressed in some articles do not necessarily coincide with those of the newspaper. We take no responsibility for any claims made in advertisements.

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Armenia and Azerbaijan sign Nagorno-Karabakh peace deal brokered by Russia



Defeat sparks crisis in Armenia. Photo: Associated Press



President Aliyev said the agreement was of 'historic importance,' and amounted to a 'capitulation' by Armenia. Photo: Eurasianet

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, and Russian President Vladimir Putin have agreed on a ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Pashinyan called the text of the agreement 'incredibly painful' for him personally and for all Armenians. "I will kneel before all our victims. We fought to the end. And we will win," wrote Pashinyan, who vowed to talk about the details of the agreement in the near future.

According to Putin, all hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh have been suspended since November 10. He expressed hope that the tripartite agreement will lead to an exchange of prisoners, the opening of all transport hubs in Karabakh, and the deployment of Russian peacekeepers in the region.

Under the November 9 agreement, A Russian peacekeeping contingent will be deployed along the dividing line and the Lachin corridor - It will send 1969 troops, 90 armored vehicles, and 380 units of automobiles and special equipment to Nagorno-Karabakh. The Aghdam region and the territories occupied by the Armenian side in the Gazak region will be returned to Azerbaijan by November 20, 2020; The peacekeeping contingent of the

Russian Federation shall be deployed in parallel with the withdrawal of the Armenian Armed Forces for a period of 5 years unless either side withdraws 6 months before the expiration of the term; A peace center shall be opened to increase the effectiveness of the control of the implementation of the agreement by the parties to the conflict; By November 15, 2020, Armenia will return Kelbajar district to Azerbaijan and by December 1, the Lachin district, and will retain the 5-kilometer Lachin corridor, which will provide a connection between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, but not the city of Shusha.

According to the agreement of the parties, a plan for the construction of a new route through the Lachin corridor will be defined in the next 3 years, which will provide a connection between Stepanakert and Armenia, and this route will be guarded by the Russian peacekeeping contingent; Azerbaijan ensures safe movement of citizens, transport, and cargo in both directions through the Lachin corridor;

Internally displaced persons and refugees shall return to the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding areas under the control of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; Prisoners of war and other detain-

ees and corpses shall be exchanged.

The return of Nagorno-Karabakh was celebrated in Azerbaijan until the morning, and mass riots broke out in Armenia. Pashinyan has been accused of a capitulation agreement with Azerbaijan. Protesters stormed government and parliament buildings. The speaker of the Armenian parliament, Ararat Mirzoyan, was physically assaulted and taken to hospital. Several opposition groups demanded the resignation of Pashinyan and the entire cabinet after Yerevan acknowledged the loss of control of the strategic city of Shusha in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Armenian President Armen Sargsyan has called for immediate political consultations on an agreement on Nagorno-Karabakh, sparked by widespread anti-government protests and unrest.

"The settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a matter of national importance. Any step and action regarding the security of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) and Armenia and the rights of the entire Armenian people, especially the signing of any document, should be the subject of universal discussion and consultation," Sargsyan said in a state-

ment. The president himself said that he only heard about the tripartite agreement through the press and did not take part in any negotiations as president.

Georgia expressed hope that the agreement reached between Azerbaijan and Armenia on a full-fledged ceasefire will facilitate a full-fledged conflict resolution process.

"Georgia supports dialogue between the two sides. At the same time, we express our readiness to facilitate the implementation of the peace process together with the international community." The Ministry of Foreign Affairs wrote yesterday.

Intense fighting for Nagorno-Karabakh resumed on 27 September. During this period, Azerbaijan regained control of a number of districts.

Azerbaijan lost control of mostly Armenian-populated Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding areas in the early 1990s. Since 1994, the conflict has been virtually frozen, however, with a periodic ceasefire violation. There has been an OSCE group co-chaired by Russia, France, and the United States for years to resolve the conflict.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Prepared by Messenger staff

Police fines a socially vulnerable person for breaking the curfew

Police have fined a homeless man, Mamuka Diakonidze, 57, with ₾ 2000, in front of the Metro Rustaveli around 23:00 for breaking the curfew, which restricts any movement in a few big cities from

22:00 to 5:00. Dekanoidze reported to Radio Liberty about the fact, noting that he has an official status of a socially vulnerable person.

"I told them I was a pauper and that I am asking for money in the streets.

For five years now, I have been in this situation. I have many implants, and I require an operation, which they refuse to finance. They made me into a pauper.

Tonight, I have been asking police cars to stop for help, but they keep driving past. I have no home, nowhere to sleep. Here is my cup to collect the money. Would they like me to collect 2000 with this cup?"

A Facebook group Mamuka Diakonidzistvis (მამუკა დიაკონიძისთვის) has been created to help him gather the money for the operation and other ex-

penses. A volunteer lawyer has been found who is willing to help Diakonidze annul his fine.

Lelo appeals the curfew in the Constitutional Court

Tornike Artkmeladze, a member of Lelo-Georgia, held a briefing to announce that the regulation regarding the curfew, which bans any movement from 22:00 to 5:00 is unconstitutional and that the party will appeal against it in the Constitutional Court.

First of all, the Constitution of Georgia directly stipulates that the right of assembly and movement of people during an epidemic may be restricted only during a state of emergency and based on a decree issued by the President,"



Artkmeladze said.

Artkmeladze stated that they are not going to wait for months until the Constitutional Court decides on this lawsuit. We demand that the ban on movement be suspended before the case is resolved. Lelo demands that the Constitutional Court schedules a hearing as soon as possible.

