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BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Georgian opposition parties have officially refused to take up their mandates in Parliament. Yesterday, MPs of opposition bloc United National Movement- Power is in Unity, which combines 36 representatives of the United National Movement party (UNM) and the Republican Party, asked the Parliament of Georgia to terminate their parliamentary mandates. On Tuesday, the Central Election Commission (CEC) annulled party lists of five opposition parties at their request, including the United National Movement-United opposition election bloc, European Georgia, Lelo, Strategy Aghmashenebeli, and the Labour party.

Opposition parties maintain that the elections were rigged by the ruling party and are dedicated to fighting until their demands are met and the government holds elections again.

Paata Manjgaladze, a member of party Strategy Aghmashenebeli stated that the Georgian Dream did not leave room in parliament for making politics and the parties were forced to make such a decision.

"In the reality that Georgian Dream created, we simply had no other choice. Of course, we will keep fighting. We did not fight for the mandates, we fought for the idea of a better Georgia," stated Manjgaladze.

UNM member Levan Bezhanishvili stated that their request on the annulment

## Opposition parties officially demand annulment of their parliamentary mandates



► So far, applications on termination of mandates have not been filed by Alliance of Patriots, Girchi, and Citizens.

of the mandates is not a form of whim or blackmail for political purposes.

"This is the opinion of our citizens. Georgian citizens were deprived of the right to vote. They demand from the opposition parties, which received the support of the majority of voters, to not enter rigged and one-party parliament of Bidzina Ivanishvili," Bezanashvili stated. According to him, Grigol Vashadze's request for the termination of

his parliamentary mandate has also been submitted. Vashadze left the National Movement as he did not agree with the tactics chosen by the majority of the party leadership without consultations with other members.

On December 11th, the 10th convocation of the Parliament of Georgia held its session without the attendance of any opposition parties that were voted into the Parliament. Speaker of Parliament

Archil Talakvadze called on healthy forces in the opposition to participate in the parliamentary process. He suggested opposition parties agree through dialogues not on categorical demands (such as holding repeat elections), "but on what the country needs today."

So far, applications on termination of mandates have not been filed by Alliance of Patriots, Girchi, and Aleko Elisashvili's party Citizens.



► "Let's agree through dialogues not on categorical demands, but on what the country needs today"- Parliament Speaker Archil Talakvadze called on opposition parties who refuse to take up mandates.

# Draft law on amnesty registered in Parliament of Georgia

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Mikheil Sarjveladze, Chairman of the Committee on Human Rights and Civil Integration, held a briefing on the initiation of the draft law on amnesty in the Parliament. According to him, the bill provides for the release from criminal liability and appropriate punishment of those who committed certain crimes under the bill before December 11, 2020, although the bill does not provide for some crimes such as murder or domestic violence.

The proposed amnesty initiative implies several principled approaches, according to which: 1. In the case of crimes specified in the draft law, which are related to causing property damage to the victim, in such a case, the obligatory precondition for release from the sentence will be compensation for damages, and in certain cases - the consent of the victim; 2. In some cases, no conviction is also a precondition. 3. It is also envisaged to release persons from the criminal fine imposed before October 1, 2012.

The presented bill, according to the above-mentioned approaches, includes a rather large list of crimes that will be subject to amnesty. According to Sarjveladze, these are theft, forgery, damage to property, some categories of bodily harm, etc. The amnesty covers a total of 44 offenses.

“By initiating this bill, we are opening consultations with stakeholders, during the process of which it will be possible to hear different opinions on the final version of the law to be adopted. At present, our initiative also includes drug crimes, in addition to key crimes,” said Sarjveladze.

According to the chairman of the committee, the amnesty project will also apply to those convicts who have been sentenced to life imprisonment and who are serving 15, 20, and some of them 25 years in prison. Sarjveladze separately mentioned Article 260, which deals with drug crimes.



► Sarjveladze said it is unlikely that the amnesty bill will affect Giorgi Rurua.

“Accordingly, those convicted of committing a crime under Article 260 of the Criminal Code, who has been sentenced to life imprisonment (and according to our information, currently 3 such persons are serving sentences in Georgian prisons), should change the sentence to 20 years imprisonment. And after that they will have the opportunity to use the improved, relatively preferential conditions provided by the Georgian legislation,” he clarified.

As for those convicted of other crimes who have been sentenced to life imprisonment, according to the chairman of the committee, the current legislation regarding them contains rather vague provisions for changing the sentence and mitigation.

Sarjveladze explained that with this in mind, the current legislative initiative also envisages a significant reform of the procedures for changing the sentence for a person sentenced to life imprisonment. In particular, a special training program will be set up for them, which will allow the judge to make an informed and fair decision within the timeframe set by law. Such an approach will help to create rehabilitation and resocialization prospects for persons sentenced to life

imprisonment, and also it is a European standard for the protection of the rights of persons sentenced to life imprisonment.

“Of course, the rights of the injured party will be important at this time as well,” Sarjveladze said.

According to him, the official

procedures regarding the bill have started and the public will see it in the coming days.

On the questions regarding the alleged political prisoners, Sarjveladze stressed that it is unlikely that a new amnesty bill will affect Giorgi Rurua.

“I do not know anything

about the existence of a political prisoner in our country and in no case can I agree with this assessment. As for spreading it to specific individuals, it would be better to talk about it in the future. It is unlikely that this will affect the people you are questioning.”

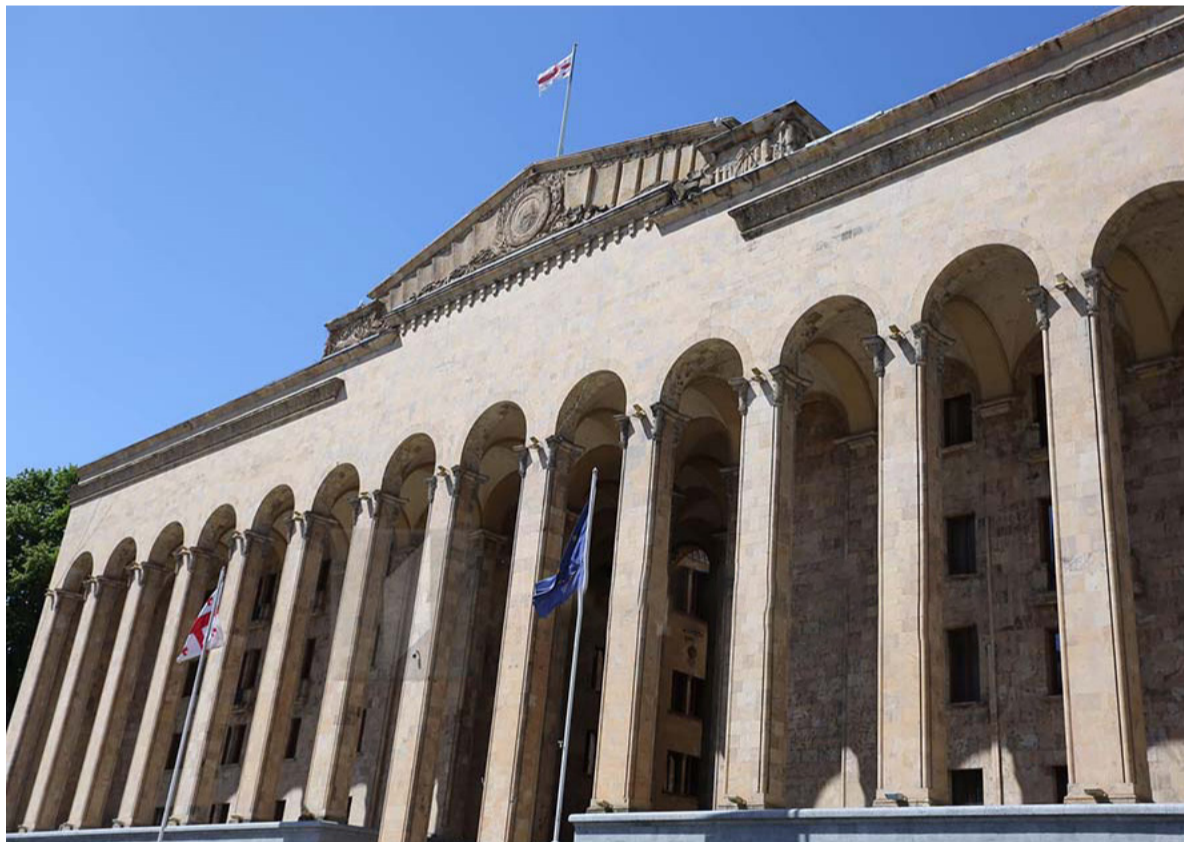
He also clarified that the draft law on amnesty does not provide for the article under which the Davit Gareji case is being investigated.

According to Anri Okhanashvili, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Legal Affairs, the draft law on amnesty is a humane act that concerns non-violent actions.

Okhanashvili called on opposition groups to enter the parliament and take part in the discussion of the bill:

“We call on the opposition groups to come to the Parliament, to carry out their duties, and to be directly involved in the process of discussing this amnesty. If you have a more interesting offer, the door is open, come and fix it.”

According to Sarjveladze, the opposition has a good opportunity to take part in two important issues, since the draft resolution on the country’s strategic document, a resolution on the foreign exchange rate of the country has also been registered.



► The draft law provides for the release from criminal liability and appropriate punishment of persons who committed certain crimes under this bill before December 11, 2020.

THURSDAY DECEMBER 17

Day Partly Cloudy  
High: 10°C  
Night Partly Cloudy  
Low: 3°C

FRIDAY DECEMBER 18

Day Sunshine  
High: 10°C  
Night Clear  
Low: 0°C

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Founded by Prof.

**Zaza Gachechiladze**

**Tamar Gachechiladze**

Publisher

Phone: +995 99 56 56 21; +995 77 76 00 00  
E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge  
http://www.messenger.com.ge/

**Nino Metreveli**  
Commercial Director

**Mariam Mchedlidze**  
Editor-in-Chief

**Natalia Kochiashvili**  
Executive Editor

**Nino Kavelashvili**  
Design and Layout

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## OECD releases investment policy assessment document for Georgia

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has prepared an investment policy assessment document for Georgia, which includes information on the investment climate in the country and recommendations for reforms. One of the main challenges that the OECD emphasizes is the need to strengthen the independence of the judiciary in Georgia.

The document reads that the reforms implemented in Georgia during the last 3 decades have improved the defining framework of the country's investment environment. Georgia is now open to investment in most sectors, and restrictions remain largely on agriculture. The legislation establishes fair play rules for both local and foreign investors and sets transparent rules for property rights.

“However, despite these achievements, several important challenges remain, including the importance of judicial independence, accountability and efficiency,” says the report. According to the review, efforts need to be made to systematically reform the judiciary so that it can enjoy investor confidence. It is also important to strengthen intellectual property rights and ensure their effective enforcement. The unified registration of lands must be improved and the institutional



► OECD is an intergovernmental economic organisation with 37 member countries, founded in 1961 to stimulate economic progress and world trade.



► “To increase investor confidence, the Georgian Judiciary needs to increase its independence.”

infrastructure for alternative dispute resolution should be built.

Even though the return on investment is not fully realized in terms of employment and export development, the report holds that the volume of foreign direct investment attracted in recent years is still high for the scale of the economy. The OECD indicates that the reason for this is that a

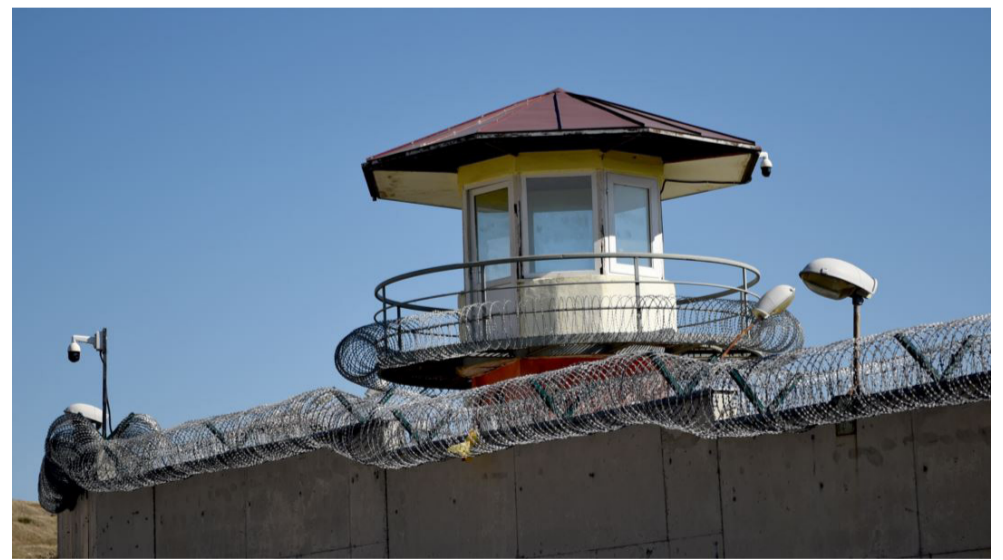
significant portion of investments is made in sectors that do not increase Georgia's export opportunities, such as the real estate and construction sectors.

In the first 9 months of this year, \$719 million were transferred to Georgia in the form of foreign direct investments, which is 24% or \$228 million less than in 2019.

## Two detained on charges of negligence in connection with attack on Giorgi Rurua in prison



► Convict Giorgi Rurua and his lawyer believe the attack was politically motivated and believe the government is responsible for the incident.



► Employees of #8 Penitentiary Institution will face a fine, house arrest for a term of six months to two years, or imprisonment for up to three years if convicted.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

The General Inspectorate of the Ministry of Justice arrested a Chief Inspector of the Security Department of Penitentiary Institution No 8 and a Chief Inspector of the Legal Regime Department under the charge of neglect of official duty regarding the case of group

beating of inmate Giorgi Rurua, a co-founder and shareholder of TV channel Mtavari Arkhi.

Rurua was attacked by other inmates in prison on November 2nd. As a result of physical and verbal assault, Rurua received bruises on his face. The Special Penitentiary Service has made the video-footage public “to avoid any political specu-

lations.” Rurua's lawyer and opposition members believe that the attack was politically motivated.

According to the Ministry of Justice, an investigation launched by the Eastern Investigation Division of the General Inspectorate has revealed that the chief inspector of the Security Department of the facility

Sh. M. and chief inspector of the Legal Regime Department, L.G improperly performed their duties leading to group attack on Rurua.

The mentioned individuals have been arrested under the first part of Article 342 of the Criminal Code of Georgia and, if convicted, they will either face a fine, house arrest for a term

of six months to two years, or imprisonment for up to three years.

Rurua was sentenced to four years in prison for the illegal possession and carrying of firearms earlier this year. Opposition parties consider him a political inmate and demand his release on the ground of the March 8th agreement.