

POLITICS

Emanuel Macron welcomes election of Gocha Lortkipanidze as Hague judge



FULL STORY ON Page 2

ECONOMICS

Germany's bilateral support for Georgia during COVID-19



FULL STORY ON Page 3

Muslim and Christian communities clash in Buknari village



► According to EMC- the Human Rights Education and Monitoring Centre, the conflict between Muslim and Christian communities over the mosque construction has been going on for a month.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

On Tuesday, the Muslim and Christian community clashed in Buknari village, in Chokhatauri municipality. The conflict which resulted in physical confrontation started as part of the Christian locals of the village oppose the Muslim community's request for arranging a mosque. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, one individual has been detained for attacking two people. Minors have been transferred to a hospital with head injuries and their lives are not in danger.

The Muslim community has been living in Buknari village for several decades now. They first settled in there 70 years ago and currently represent half of the local population. According to EMC- the Human Rights Education and Monitoring Centre, which responded to the conflict, the local Muslim community has been asking to build a mosque in the village since 2007. 10 months ago they bought a house in the village to perform religious services there, which resulted in the confrontation yesterday. According to EMC, Muslim residents claim that they were not going to build a mosque, as they did not want to irritate the neighboring Christians.

EMC notes that according to the Muslim community, some of the local Christians do not allow them to pray as they believe they do not 'have the right' to build a mosque on 'the Chris-

tian land'. EMC states that the conflict over the issue has been ongoing for a month, mainly in the form of verbal

confrontations. According to the Human Rights Education and Monitoring Centre, in recent years, a chain of religious

conflicts has been created against the Muslim community characterized by a common social and cultural context. Some of the conflicts remain unresolved and Muslims are unable to exercise their rights properly. EMC calls on the Ministry of Internal Affairs to take appropriate steps to prevent violent practices, de-escalate conflicts, and ensure a timely and effective investigation of the incidents, also, to take all relevant measures to ensure that the Muslim community conducts religious services in a safe environment.

According to the mayor of Chokhatauri municipality Irakli Kuchava, for the past three weeks joint as well as separate meetings were held with Muslim and Christian communities. Such dialogue between the opposing sides was supposed to take place in the region on Tuesday, but the meeting was not held. According to Kuchava, the local government and the police will do their best to resolve the problem without any excesses. The mayor stated that negotiations with representatives of both communities would continue.

The Muslim Mufti of Kobuleti and Guria, Aslan Beridze arrived in the village yesterday and stated that local Muslims do not demand a fundamental building and added that a site for organizing chapel would be allotted after the agreement is reached between two parties. Beridze emphasised that prayers would not stop in the village.



► According to the mayor of Chokhatauri municipality Irakli Kuchava, the local government and the police will do their best to resolve the problem without any excesses.

Emanuel Macron welcomes election of Gocha Lortkipanidze as Hague judge

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

French President Emmanuel Macron welcomes the election of Gocha Lortkipanidze as a judge of the International Criminal Court with a letter sent to Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili.

In the letter Macron writes that pro-Europe Georgia is considered by France as an important partner, with whom, he wants to deepen relations:

“This is evidenced by the establishment of a bilateral strategic dialogue, which we have established together and has already begun to function and show the first results. In the troubled context of the South Caucasus, the proximity between our countries is of great importance, which was emphasized in the December 12 French-German statement,” the French president wrote.

Macron is answering Zourabichvili’s question on the candidacy of Gocha Lortkipanidze, the Minister of Justice of Georgia, who was elected a judge at the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The French president noted that in her letter the president of Georgia highlighted Lortkipanidze’s rich professional experience in international law and assistance to victims of war crimes, his excellent professionalism, as well as his impartiality, qualities that are essential to his work in the International Court



► President Zourabichvili publishes a letter from the President of France, in which Emmanuel Macron talks about the importance of partnership between the 2 countries and the establishment of a strategic dialogue.

of Justice.

“Indeed, the Independent Advisory Commission has confirmed that your candidate has the necessary qualifications for the position of a judge of the International Court of Justice, and we also mentioned in an open discussion that Mr. Lortkipanidze was an excellent candidate. That is why I welcome the election of Mr. Lortkipanidze as a judge at the International Criminal Court in New York and wish him success in his duties for the next 9 years. It is particularly important that our countries maintain and strengthen their support for the International



► Minister of Justice of Georgia Gocha Lortkipanidze was elected as International Criminal Court Judge on December 18, 2020.

Criminal Court, which is a source of peace and stability in the world,” wrote Macron.

Gocha Lortkipanidze was elected a judge of the ICC in December 2020. This is the first time that a candidate nominated by Georgia has become a member of the ICC Board. Lortkipanidze will start acting as a judge in a few months. 76 delegates voted for him, nominated by the Eastern European quota. Lortkipanidze will hold a new position in the International Criminal Court for 9 years - until 2030. The new judge of the Hague tribunal will also be able to work in the Georgian government. Recall that he is the only new face in the Georgian government - he replaced Tea Tsulukiani as Minister of Justice, who became a Member of Parliament.

The International Criminal Court is the first permanent international tribunal to hear individual criminal liability for the most serious crimes against humanity: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression. The court was established in 1998 on the basis of the Rome Statute, which entered into force in 2002. By 2020, the Rome Statute had been ratified by 123 states. Georgia acceded to the Rome Statute on September 5, 2003.

NOVAT terminates contract with Georgian prima ballerina Nino Ananiashvili

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Novosibirsk Opera and Ballet Theatre in Russia terminated its contract with Georgian prima ballerina and Artistic Director of the State Bal-

let of Georgia Nina Ananiashvili as the information on their cooperation was leaked before an official announcement. NOVAT (Novosibirsk State Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet) announced yesterday that as a result of negotiations between the artistic director of NOVAT Vladimir Kekhman and Nina Ananiashvili, it was decided to terminate the previously concluded contract by agreement of the parties.

Last week, NOVAT reported about suspending its contract with Ananiashvili as the Georgian prima ballerina had provided information about her engagement with the Novosibirsk Opera and Ballet Theatre in an exclusive interview with Radio Freedom published on January 6. Ananiashvili voiced in the interview that she had decided to head the ballet troupe of the

Continued on page 3



► Novosibirsk Opera and Ballet Theatre announced the decision on ultimately terminating the contract with Georgia prima ballerina and Artistic Director of the State Ballet of Georgia Nina Ananiashvili yesterday.

THURSDAY		JANUARY 14	
Day		Partly cloudy	
		High: 13°C	
Night		Cloudy	
		Low: 6°C	
FRIDAY		JANUARY 15	
Day		Rain	
		High: 7°C	
Night		Partly cloudy	
		Low: 1°C	

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Germany's bilateral support for Georgia during COVID-19

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected all countries throughout the world, but it has been especially difficult for small countries, whose economies mostly depend on tourism and the merits of globalisation. Georgia's already challenging economical state has been no exception and if it wasn't for the help of international partners and organizations, be it assistance, loans, or specific products, consequences would have been even harsher.

Among other states that Georgia closely cooperates with, the support of the German government during the 2020 world crisis of Covid-19 is remarkable and numbers make this statement clearer. Approximately €2.5 million was spent on technical cooperation and as for financial relations, €201 million worth of loans and grants were issued.

In 2020, Germany assisted Georgia with Protective gear, disinfectants, laboratory supplies, and test kits worth €89 000. People in need were provided with food and hygiene kits worth €20 000. Food parcels were delivered to members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church that were in need and technical equipment was handed for online church services (€ 2,500). Most importantly, the German government gifted 5 breathing units to the Georgian ministry of health, utilities that have been in deficit since the outbreak of the virus.

The support for internally displaced people and suffering communities was expressed by Infrastructural rehabilitation of IDP settlements and sanitary facilities at public schools and centers for children and elderly people; Distribution of hygienic kits; Capacity development of public actors; Psychological support, COVID-19 awareness-raising campaigns, provision of internet packages for students. € 1.2 million were spent on that.



► Germany has provided 5 breathing units for the treatment of patients with Covid-19 in Georgia.

As the country's budget for 2020 was cut due to Covid-19, the German government stepped in to provide funds to support the National Forest Agency with

surveillance equipment. Furthermore, Germany financed the agreement for forest protection work and support for the rural population with jobs in forestry,

spending €440 000 overall. €185 000 were spent on financing agreement for forest protection work and support for the rural population with jobs in study



► The German development agency GIZ has provided Georgia with protective gear, disinfectants, laboratory supplies, and test kits.

and advice on the disbursement of state social welfare at a municipal level according to the central government's COVID-19 crisis plan. Procurement of computers and scanners for municipalities was ensured to enable the local population to apply for social benefits in a digital way. Women starting businesses as small entrepreneurs were promoted and supported too.

The private sector suffered no less than budget-based organizations and for their development, as well as the support of vocational education, half a million euros were issued by Germany. The fields included IT, transport & logistics, tourism, and wine.

€20 000 were allocated for legal advice for companies in the areas of construction and clothing on the consequences of COVID-19. Enabling participation of Georgian clothing companies in international online-trade shows was supported. Small and medium enterprises were provided with consultation regarding the development of online segments.

As for the support of the Georgian economy in general, €180 million loans were issued to promote competitiveness and crisis resilience of the economy of Georgia. €15 million worth loans and €5.8 million worth grants were provided to ensure social assistance to those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (unemployed, informally employed, and vulnerable groups).

Besides the bilateral support Germany has contributed also in many multilateral ways, here just a few examples: EU response package for the Eastern Partnership Countries: Germany contributed €2.4 billion; UN: additional \$530 million humanitarian funding in reaction to the UN COVID-19 Response Plan were provided by Germany; WHO: German contribution of €500 million.

NOVAT terminates contract with Georgian prima ballerina Nino Ananiashvili

from page 2

Novosibirsk Opera and Ballet Theatre and was supposed to arrive in Novosibirsk at the end of January to meet the group. According to her, she would work in parallel with the troupes in both countries. On January 9, NOVAT published a statement where it was stated that disclos-

ing the identity of the director before the official introduction to the team is an extreme manifestation of the disrespect of the troupe.

"Information has been published in several media platforms that Nino Ananiashvili has been invited to lead the ballet troupe at the Novosibirsk Opera and Ballet Theatre. The

management of the theatre believes that announcing the name of the director before a formal presentation of the new artistic director to the troupe is extremely disrespectful to the team," reads the statement released by NOVAT.

Ananiashvili has not commented on the termination of her contract with NOVAT yet.



► In an exclusive interview with Radio Freedom, Ananiashvili stated that she was not yet officially announced in the position of the head of the Novosibirsk Opera and Ballet Theatre troupe.