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The program is supported by EU and ENPARD

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Citizens protest Covid-19 related restrictions imposed by the Government



The participants call on the government to lift restrictions on winter resorts, schools, public and intra city transport, curfew, and many others from February 1

BY NIKA GANTSEMLIDZE

According to rally participants who have recently protested the extension of the Covid-19 related restrictions imposed by the government, the existing rules worsen the already difficult social situation in the country, while also violating basic human rights.

The participants call on the government to lift restrictions on winter resorts, schools, public and intra city transport, curfew, and many others from February 1.

Initially, the government was

planning to lift the restrictions starting in mid-January. A few weeks ago, it was announced that the restrictions would last until February 1, but a few days ago, the representatives of the government said that restrictions will remain in big cities until March 1.

The protest participants announced that they give the government 48 hours to lift the restrictions, or they will start picketing the buildings.

According to Elene Khoshtaria, one of the leaders of the Georgian opposition, the government is not paying attention to those who are struggling the most. She noted that 'blind restric-

tions' are not a solution.

"We need optimal management, the situation requires vaccination, testing, and a number of other measures to prevent people from starving to death," said Khoshtaria.

Representatives of the political parties Girchi - More Freedom, Lelo and Strategy Agmashenebeli also joined the planned rally in front of the government building. "People should go out to the streets and show their power to the government. The country should fully open," said the leader of Girchi Zurab Japaridze.

Lelo also released a special statement saying that the only outcome to the government not responding to people's

demands is protest.

As for Strategy Agmashenebeli, they claim it is vital for them to force the government to change the 'unproportioned restrictions', which is worsening the social well-being of Georgian citizens.

Another rally was held in Mziuri Park demanding that education processes in schools continue in classrooms. As one of the participants of the rally Nino Robakidze noted, the wishes and legitimate interests of the students were not taken into account at any stage of the pandemic management.

The educational process has been going on online platforms for a year.



Initially, the government was planning to lift the restrictions starting in mid-January



Another rally was held in Mziuri Park demanding the restoration of education processes in schools

Special statement of the Spokesperson on the judgement of the European Court of Human Rights

On 21 January, the European Court of Human Rights Grand Chamber issued a landmark judgement in the inter-State case concerning the armed conflict between Georgia and the Russian Federation in August 2008 and its consequences. The ruling clearly concludes that after 12 August 2008 the Russian Federation, exercising effective control over South Ossetia and Abkhazia, violated several provisions of the European Convention of Human Rights.

Achieving justice and accountability is an important part of conflict resolution and the EU calls upon the Russian Federation to ensure the



The statement is about the ECtHR's recent ruling

proper follow-up of the ruling. The European Union is fully committed to supporting conflict resolution, which also requires efforts to address the legacy of past conflicts, including through its engagement as co-chair in the Geneva International Discussions, the efforts of the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia, and the crucial role played on the ground by the EU Monitoring Mission. The European Union firmly supports the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders.

The national vaccination strategy is known - the government is considering 4 scenarios



The Ministry of Health estimates that the vaccination campaign will cost between ₾ 64 and 158 million

BY NIKA GAMTSEMLIDZE
There are four possible scenarios by which the Georgian government plans to

conduct the vaccination process this year; one of them include the National Vaccination Strategy against COVID-19. Scenarios include procedures for purchasing vaccines from different manufacturers and distributing them to 60% of the population (1.7 million citizens).

The Ministry of Health

estimates that the vaccination campaign will cost between ₾ 64 and 158 million - the difference of almost 100 million is due to the fact that it is not clear at this time which manufacturers will provide vaccines for Georgia. This is also indicated by a Bloomberg article, according to which Georgia has a contract for vaccines only enough for 186 thousand people, or 5% of the population.

According to the first scenario, the country imports 200,000 doses of Pfizer/ BioNTech vaccines, from the COVAX platform, the country gets AstraZeneca's 1,484,000 doses. Additional doses of the vaccine required to vaccinate 60 percent of Georgia's adult population will also be imported by the government from other sources. In total, the

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According to the plan, Georgia needs 3,979,327 doses of vaccine

Weather

Monday, January 25

Day ☀ Clear
High: 9°C
Night 🌙 Clear
Low: -3°C

Tuesday, January 26

Day ☀ Clear
High: 11°C
Night 🌙 Clear
Low: -1°C

published by
The Messenger

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 3.3044; Euro - 4.0228; GBP - 4.5138; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.4121; Swiss Franc - 3.7351

Georgian farmers increase incomes and productivity with EU and FAO support



More than 700 farmers from all over Georgia participated in training

More than 700 farmers from all over Georgia participated in training programmes organized by FAO in 2020 with the support of the European Union (EU), under the ENPARD programme. FAO international and local agronomists conducted a comprehensive training programme through hands-on field trainings throughout the country.

The sessions covered many critically-important topics, including soil preparation and seed selection, irrigation, harvesting, post-harvest storage and transportation to the markets. With more than 40 demonstration plots established in various regions of Georgia, the country's farmers have had the opportunity to observe and learn the best agricultural practices in the field first-hand. Many of these

farmers have already succeeded in bringing these modern innovations to their plots and enjoyed the benefits.

Special series of trainings were provided to hazelnut growers in the Kakheti region. 263 farmers participated in these sessions covering topics like theoretical introduction to hazelnut growing and care, postharvest handling and pruning of hazelnut trees of different ages etc.

Sessions on climate-smart agriculture methods such as drip irrigation, minimum tillage, no tillage, mulching, and Integrated Pest Management practices, amongst others, were conducted in eleven municipalities of Kakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Shida Kartli, Imereti, Guria and Adjara.

Lali Sikhashvili, a female farmer from the Akhmeta

municipality, who works a 0.27-hectare melon plot, was one of the participants of the FAO's training programme. She was particularly excited to have a demonstration plot established on her land.

FAO agronomists provided technical support and helped Lali to set up a drip irrigation system and protective nets that help to minimize the effect of hail, which is becoming increasingly common in the region. According to Lali, the plot serves as a training location for locals, but also attracts farmers from neighboring communities who want to see which new methods can be used in melon production.

FAO farmer's training programs continue all year round, covering both the normal season production as well as off-season production. FAO agronomists supported

open field production, but also helped farmers to establish and properly manage greenhouse production.

Drip irrigation systems, bed formation and mulching, were introduced in several locations, leading to great harvest of cabbage (Tamariani in Lagodekhi), lettuce (Chaduniani in Lagodekhi), cucumbers (Opshkviti in Tskaltubo), and off-season production of cucumber, spring onion, cauliflower and broccoli (Chiauri in Lagodekhi).

The installation of drip irrigation was particularly important, allowing for farmers to better use water and deliver the exact amount of fertilizer that plants need, avoiding the overuse of inputs and saving costs.

Another important innovation promoted by the FAO is the use of the no-tillage or

minimum tillage methods for sowing wheat, barley, maize, and others. The no-till approach is a component of conservative, climate-smart agriculture methods, which involve the minimal disturbance of soil, as opposed to traditional deep plowing. It is not only cost-efficient, but also protects the soil from erosion, and reduces the risk and impact from short draughts, which are becoming more common in various Georgian regions due to climate change. This approach was successfully implemented in Kakheti and Shida Kartli on approximately 200 ha production plots.

The pandemic also didn't stop the training process, since FAO specialists continue to provide Georgian farmers with support, following governmental regulations for public gatherings.

The national vaccination strategy is known - the government is considering 4 scenarios

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country gets 3,979,327 doses of the vaccine according to this scenario.

The second scenario shows that the country gets 200,000 doses of Moderna's vaccine, 1,484,400 from the COVAX

platform, and remaining needed doses from other sources. In total, the country gets 3,979,327 doses.

The third scenario indicates that the country gets any vaccine that needs to be kept between -2-80 degrees in the amount of 200,000 doses. From

the COVAX platform, Georgia gets 1,484,400 doses, and for the remaining doses, the country gets AstraZeneca's vaccine. The total amount is 3,979,327 in this scenario as well.

The fourth scenario indicates that the country only

gets AstraZeneca's vaccine and uses it for everyone. The total amount is still 3,979,327 doses.

In total, the country needs a total of 3,979,327 doses to vaccinate 60% of the population. At the moment, Georgia has guaranteed 1,484,400 doses of vaccine from the

COVAX platform in 2021. The financial resources are estimated for the total amount of vaccines that are needed for the country, assuming that Georgia is able to import an additional 2,494,927 doses from alternative sources.