

Politics

Former leader of European Georgia opposition party forms new political force 'Droa'

Strong Women -Strong Georgia: EU Ambassador issues statement and launches social media campaign to mark International Woman's Day in Georgia

FULL STORY ON Page 2

Georgian Dream describe leaked tapes as 'falsified', Georgia's civil society demands further investigation

FULL STORY ON Page 3

Tbilisi to be World Book Capital of 2021

FULL STORY ON Page 3

State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality meets with UN Representative to Geneva International Discussions



The State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality Tea Akhvlediani (in the middle on the left) and the UN Representative to Geneva International Discussions, Cihan Sultanoglu (on the right).

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

The State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality Tea Akhvlediani met with the UN Representative to Geneva International Discussions, Cihan Sultanoglu. According to the official in-

formation released by the ministry, during the meeting, the sides underlined the EU's involvement in the conflict resolution process, including the role of the United Nations in Geneva International Discussions and the importance of UN's humanitarian activities in the occupied

Abkhaz region.

The ministry's statement reads that during the meeting, the security, human rights, and humanitarian situation in the occupied regions of Georgia, which was further aggravated due to the Covid-19 pandemic, was thoroughly reviewed.

The State Minister particularly stressed the facts of illegal detention of Georgian citizens near the occupation line and emphasized the need for the active involvement of the international community, primarily the co-chairs of the Geneva International Discussions. She believes that posing pressure on the Russian government should continue to ensure an unconditional and immediate release of all the illegally detained persons.

The importance of the Geneva International Discussion and the need to make progress on the issues on the agenda were also emphasized. As the statement reads, the sides underscored the importance of restoring Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism format (IPRM) in Gali and ensuring the unhindered conduction of the same mechanism in Ergneti, in terms of maintaining stability and security on the ground.

The State Minister briefed the UN representative on the results of the Reconciliation and Involvement Policy of the ministry, including the implementation and future perspectives of the peace initiative - A Step To A Better Future.

The involvement of women in the peaceful reconciliation process was pointed out at the meeting as well. In this regard, the UN representative welcomed Georgia's efforts to act in line with the United Nations Security Council Resolution on women, peace, and security.



The State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality particularly stressed the facts of illegal detention of Georgian citizens near the occupation line and emphasized the need for the active involvement of the international community.

Former leader of European Georgia opposition party forms new political force 'Droa'

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

Former leader of the European Georgia opposition party Elene Khoshtaria has founded a new political force Droa (It Is Time). On Monday, Khoshtaria released a video address talking about her plans, which is to expose corrupt officials, abusers, fraudsters, thieves-in-law, nepotism, clan members, and those who have ties with Russia.

"The state propaganda is constantly trying to convince us that corruption, poverty, hopelessness, and occupation are our natural state and destiny. Of course, this is not true and we

need to change this with our efforts, consistency, and a clear plan. It is time to show the government we see what is happening and we will not tolerate it," says Khoshtaria in her video address.

Former leader of European Georgia stated that Georgia is "one of the poorest and most unjust countries in the world which has a potential to become successful and rich." Khoshtaria reviewed statistics according to which, out of the population of 3 million 700 thousand in Georgia, 400 thousand are socially vulnerable, 300 thousand are in the register of debtors, 600 thousand have pawnshop debt. In 2012-



Elene Khoshtaria in her video address: "It is time to show the government that we see what is happening and that we will not tolerate it."

2019 760 thousand people left the country. Based on the 2018 data provided by UNICEF, 69% of the population of Georgia is poor. As a result of unemployment caused by Covid-19, an additional 160,000 people may be put in poverty, and incomes of 400,000 people might be reduced. Khoshtaria said that in the last 8 years, the price of grocery products has increased by approximately 48%, and the price of medicine by 65-70%. External debt has tripled since 2012, and Georgia ranks 44th out of 46 European countries with an average life expectancy.

In an interview with RFE / RL, Khoshtaria revealed further new details about her political force. she specified that Droa is a platform and not a party, therefore this new political force will be able to cooperate with many organizations "that do not want party politics".

When RFE / RL's interviewer

asked Khoshtaria if there would be celebrities among the team, Khoshtaria said that the presentation would be held at the end of March and the team would be presented there. As she noted, there will be celebrities as well as strangers on the board, also, those who are in politics and those who have not been in politics so far.

Khoshtaria announced the three main directions of the new platform, which are to fight and expose; to raise the interests that are often lost in a political situation, especially in a crisis (including interests of groups with disabilities, groups of women and entrepreneurs in the regions), and to offer ways to solve problems.

Khoshtaria also mentioned the cooperations with other parties and stated that there have been specific initiatives with Zura Japaridze, Lelo, and Giorgi Vahadze for the development of self-government.



Elene Khoshtaria left the party European Georgia in December, after the 2020 Parliamentary elections.

Strong Women -Strong Georgia: EU Ambassador issues statement and launches social media campaign to mark International Woman's Day in Georgia

EU Ambassador to Georgia Carl Hartzell has issued a statement on the occasion of March 8, International Women's Day. The statement also launches an EU social media

campaign - "Strong Women-Strong Georgia" which will run through March.

Statement of EU Ambassador Carl Hartzell:

"Today we mark International Women's Day. A moment to celebrate all the women of Georgia. During my 2.5 years in this country, I continue to be impressed by the incredible work I see women professionals doing here, whether as entrepreneurs,

journalists, CEOs, community leaders or politicians in the big cities and also in the regions.

Women that are creating new jobs, assisting vulnerable groups or working to improve their communities. Not to speak about the much less visible work many women are doing to maintain the household, and caring for their children and elderly.

The contribution is significant, and yet on average women

still only earn 2/3 of men's salaries, and less than half of women are employed outside the home.

And let's not forget that many women are vulnerable to discrimination or worse, gender based violence, which is totally unacceptable.

Overall, Georgia is moving towards greater gender equality, but there is still a long way to go. And my message is simple - a country can only achieve its

full strength when everybody is given the same opportunity to reach their potential. It's time to work to remove the barriers that are holding back girls and women from fully contributing to making Georgia as strong as it can be.

This is the message that we will bring out in a campaign during the month of March on our social media channels under the motto "Strong Women - Strong Georgia". We hope you want to join the discussion.

The objective is clear and so is the potential. We just need to keep pushing - together.

Happy Women's Day!"

Weather

Tuesday, March 9

Day Clear High: 10°C
Night Partly Cloudy Low: 2°C

Wednesday, March 10

Day Clear High: 9°C
Night Partly Cloudy Low: 0°C

published by **The Messenger**

43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi, 0108, Georgia
Founded by Prof.

Zaza Gachechiladze
Tamar Gachechiladze
Publisher

Mob.: +995 599 565621; +995 577 760000
E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge
http://www.messenger.com.ge/

Nino Metreveli
Commercial Director

Mariam Mchedlidze
Editor-in-Chief

Natalia Kochiashvili
Executive Editor

Khatuna Gogichaishvili
Layout Designer, Photographer

The Messenger welcomes your contributions. If you are interested in submitting an article or news item please contact.

All contributions should be submitted by e-mail.

The Messenger Georgia's English language daily is an independent newspaper, and,

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.

The Messenger preserves the style of a source written in English where possible.

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 3.3202; Euro - 3.9640; GBP - 4.5835; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.4518; Swiss Franc - 3.5766

Georgian Dream describe leaked tapes as ‘falsified’, Georgia’s civil society demands further investigation



The joint statement notes that the tapes indicate that some individuals, including minors, were subjected to threats and prosecution due to their political beliefs. In the statement, the EMC claimed that although the tapes seem to be illegal, “they may point to the undemocratic practice of governing” of the ruling Georgian Dream party.

Many opposition parties have already expressed their concerns over the released tapes and called for the immediate investigation to be launched. They also demand the resignation of the

newly appointed PM Garibashvili who is featured in the tapes. However, in response to the outrage of the opposition bloc, MP of the ruling party, Mamuka Mdinardze said that the calls for the resignation of PM Garibashvili and head of the Head of the Special Service of State Security Anzor Chubinidze is the opposition’s attempt “to disrupt negotiations, revenge, overthrow the current government and seize the power.” Mdinardze stated that the tapes are ‘fabricated’ and aimed at ‘angering people’. He later

told the media that regardless of the negative impact that the released tapes have had, he is confident that talks between the government and the opposition bloc would continue.

The controversial tapes aired by TV Pirveli Channel on March 6 allegedly feature a discussion of the possible punishment to be implicated upon the minors who wrote negative comments on Bera Ivanishvili’s posts on Facebook. The authenticity of the tapes has not yet been confirmed.



By VERONIKA MALINBOYM

The ruling Georgian Dream party released an official statement regarding the leaked recordings that allegedly feature Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili, as well as Bera Ivanishvili, son of the founder of the ruling party Bidzina Ivanishvili.

The statement describes the tapes, which TV Pirveli aired on March 6, as fabricated and compiled out of various “phrases and words taken out of other recordings.” The statement also notes that the “leaked” tapes seem to have been a product of a long-term strategy, and that those

who produced them were just waiting for the right time to release them. Finally, the statement concludes that such action and use of illegal surveillance and fabrication is “typical of the United National Movement’s rule”.

Fifteen non-governmental organizations of Georgia, including Transparency International Georgia, Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center (EMC), and the Georgian Young Lawyer Association, signed a joint letter calling for the immediate investigation of the released audio tapes that allegedly contain evidence of the violation of Law by government officials.

Tbilisi to be World Book Capital of 2021



€ 846 000 will be spent on World Book Capital conference scheduled for April in Tbilisi.

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The World Book Capital is a large-scale project established by the General Conference of UNESCO in 2002. It aims to promote books and reading, development of the book industry and all related fields, modern authors, translators, libraries, and publishers.

According to the decision made by UNESCO, from April 23, 2021 to April 23, 2022, Tbilisi will be the World Book Capital. According to the project submit-

ted on behalf of the Tbilisi City Hall and in accordance with the goals of the Tbilisi Book World Capital, more than 10 events are planned to be implemented by the end of this year. € 846 thousand will be spent on organizing the UNESCO events in April.

On April 23, 2021, the project will officially open and Tbilisi will receive the status of the current World Book Capital from Kuala Lumpur. The opening event will include musical and theatre performances.

An exhibition of hitherto unknown archival material will be organized in connection with the 130th anniversary of famous Georgian poet Galaktion Tabidze. A museum for writers repressed by the Soviet authorities will open at the Writers’ House.

The project will place emphasis on the mobile application ‘Interactive Books’ and host an exhibition-festival on the theme of Georgian fairy tales.

According to the National Procure-

ment Agency’s statement, a new platform will be created for illustrators and designers, where about 50 artists will be presented with their own stand. Within the festival, several educational events and workshops, book presentations, and meetings with authors will be held. Also, a mass entertainment event is planned: a literary-musical performance will be held in the old part of Tbilisi, the central theme of which is the work of Sergo Parajanov. Representatives of UNESCO and members of the Advisory Committee will take part in the opening and key events.



The UNESCO programme Tbilisi World Book Capital for 2021 has started renewing Tbilisi public school library catalogues. More than 100 educational, cognitive and infrastructural projects are planned to be implemented this year.