

## POLITICS

52<sup>nd</sup> round of Geneva International Discussions



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Georgia to receive about 100,000 doses of Sinopharm vaccine in April



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Georgia is preparing to apply for full EU membership in 2024, says Garibashvili



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By VERONIKA MALINBOYM

Christian Danielsson, the special representative of the President of the European Council Charles Michel, returned back to Georgia in order to resume the talks between the country's ruling party and opposition amidst the ongoing political crisis. Upon his arrival, Danielsson stated that "now is the time for compromise":

"I am very glad to be returning to Georgia and I expect cooperation with the leaders of the political parties, opposition, and the ruling party, in order to help them reach an agreement and end the ongoing political crisis in the country. Now is the time for compromise and compromise should not be viewed as a sign of weakness, as it is a sign of strength. Compromise proves that democracy does

## EU-mediated talks between the ruling party and opposition bloc to resume next week in Georgia



► Christian Danielsson

work in Georgia and compromise is the European way," Danielsson said.

Amidst the upcoming talks, both the ruling party and the representatives of the country's opposition bloc have already expressed their readiness for dialogue and ultimately achieving an agreement. Founder of the opposition Strategy Ag-mashenebeli party Giorgi Vashadze said that the EU's position should be "strict and well-defined" especially in relation to the Georgian Dream:

"In my opinion, the position of the EU should be much better-defined and much stricter this time, especially in relation to the Georgian Dream party, as it was them who jeopardized the previous rounds of talks", Vashadze explained.

Georgian Dream party member Mamuka Mdinardze, in turn, stated that the ruling team is ready "for a constructive dialogue even with the most destructive part of the country's opposition."

Earlier today, Christian Danielsson met with representatives of a few local NGOs to hear their views on how the ongoing crisis should be approached. According to Nino Dolidze, founder of the Fair Elections non-governmental organization, the political crisis that the country faces today can be used as an opportunity to solve the systematic

shortcomings in Georgia. She added that "the constitutional and legislative initiatives presented in the parliament are insufficient." Dolidze noted that the only way to address the existing prob-

lems of the system is by "balancing the electoral system, election commission, and the judiciary" to ensure equal opportunities and participation for the opposition.



► Nino Dolidze



# 52<sup>nd</sup> round of Geneva International Discussions

NEXT ROUND WILL BE HELD ON JUNE 29-30, 2021

By NIKA GAMTSEMLIDZE

On March 26, 2021, the 52nd round of Geneva International Discussions was held. During the meeting, key topics were discussed, including increased security and humanitarian concerns in occupied regions of Georgia in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Activation of the de-facto annexation process by the Russian Federation and the issue of release of illegally detained Georgian citizens by the occupation forces was also discussed.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia stated that during the talks, the Georgian delegation spoke in detail about the historic decision of the European Court of Human Rights, noting it is an important international legal instrument in the process of peaceful settlement of the conflict.

Also, the Georgian representatives stressed that the European Court had confirmed the “effective control and occupation of Georgia’s Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions that Russia has” and, consequently, held the Russian Federation responsible for human rights violations in the aftermath of the August 2008 war and occupation.

Significant attention was paid to the growing militarization and regular military exercises in the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions of Georgia, the continuing creeping occupation near the village of Chorchana, as well as to the tools of Russia’s intensified hybrid warfare to destabilize the situation in the country.

It was noted that impunity in the murder cases of Davit Basharuli, Giga Otkhazorlia, and Archil Tatumashvili contributes to the promotion of ethnic violence and crime. The Georgian delegation again raised the issue of the need to administer justice in these cases.

The co-chairs of the Geneva International Discussion also issued a statement regarding the meeting. According to the statement, all participants reiterated the importance of the GID process.



► Several key issues, including Covid-19 and its impact on occupied regions of Georgia, were discussed at the meeting

“As the global COVID-19 pandemic continues, the GID Co-Chairs and participants focused on the needs and concerns of conflict-affected people. Participants also discussed pos-

sibilities for joint efforts to address the pandemic and mitigate its impact on humanitarian and socio-economic situations and threats to livelihoods,” reads the statement.

With the statement, co-chairs once again call on all participants to increase the efforts to build trust and confidence among them and to address all elements of security.

According to the statement, the participants agreed to hold the next round of meeting in Geneva on June 29 and 30, 2021.



► The representatives of Georgia once again raised the concerns around illegal detentions of Georgian citizens

<b>MONDAY</b>		<b>MARCH 29</b>	
<b>Day</b>		Partly sunny	High: <b>13°C</b>
<b>Night</b>		Partly cloudy	Low: <b>5°C</b>
<b>TUESDAY</b>		<b>MARCH 30</b>	
<b>Day</b>		Rain	High: <b>11°C</b>
<b>Night</b>		Light rain	Low: <b>6°C</b>

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# Georgia to receive about 100,000 doses of Sinopharm vaccine in April

CURRENTLY, THERE ARE TWO VACCINES AVAILABLE IN GEORGIA, PFIZER AND ASTRAZENECA

BY NIKA GAMTSEMLIDZE

The head of the National Center for Disease Control Amiran Gamkrelidze said in an interview with Georgian Public Broadcaster that Georgia should receive about 100,000 doses of Chinese Sinopharm vaccine in April.

According to him, the country also continues negotiations with other companies, such as Pfizer, Novavax, Johnson & Johnson, as well as with others.

29,250 doses of Pfizer vaccine were delivered to Georgia on the morning of March 25. Thus, the Georgian was able to get vaccinated against coronavirus by choosing between two, AstraZeneca and Pfizer.

Gamkrelidze also said that it would be a huge shame for the country if “we can’t use up the doses that are available right now.” He said that if more people in the risk groups don’t volunteer to get jabbed, mass vaccination would be discussed.

Gamkrelidze has recently talked about mass vaccination in the country and noted that, most probably, mass vaccination in the country should begin after July.

Today, medical workers and citizens over 65 have the opportunity to be vaccinated in Georgia. However, Deputy Health Minister Tamar Gabunia does



► As of March 26, 4,152 people have been vaccinated, and 11,273 registered on the vaccination portal

not rule out the possibility of including citizens over 55 in the vaccination process.

According to the National Center for Disease Control, as of March 26 14:00, 4,152 people have been vaccinated, and 11,273 people have been registered on the vaccination portal, [booking.moh.gov.ge](http://booking.moh.gov.ge).

The number of confirmed cases has drastically increased in Europe over the last few days, resulting in several countries, including Germany, Italy, Netherlands, and France expanding lockdowns.

According to the Minister of



► Gamkrelidze said that the country has negotiations with other companies, such as Pfizer, Novavax, J&J, and many others

Health Ekaterine Tikaradze, the third wave is expected, and adopting further restrictions is not ruled out.

“The third wave of coronavirus is expected, and the increasing numbers give us the suspicion and reason to significantly tighten all of the measures. By this, I mean, first of all, wearing face masks, social distancing, and personal hygiene,” said Tikaradze.

On Sunday, 365 new cases were reported in the country. In total, Georgia has reported 280,301 cases.

# Georgia is preparing to apply for full EU membership in 2024, says Garibashvili

BY VERONIKA MALINBOYM

Marking the 4th anniversary of visa-free travel to the EU member-states for Georgian citizens, the Prime Minister stated that Georgia is currently preparing to apply for full EU membership in 2024. PM Gakharia added that he would do everything in his power to let the Georgian society, as well as the population of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region, enjoy the benefits of Georgia’s European integration:

“Today we are celebrating the fourth anniversary of introducing the visa-free regime between Georgia and the EU member states/ countries of the Schengen zone. The historical decision of March 2017 marked the EU’s recognition of Georgia as a reliable partner. This showed that our efforts in strengthening democracy and ensuring further development, as well as the reforms that we have carried out did not go unnoticed [by our European partners].



We will continue working towards achieving a full membership status with the EU, and we are now preparing to apply for it in 2024. We will do everything in our power to have our society,

as well as the population of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions, enjoy the benefits of Georgia’s integration into the EU to the fullest”, said the prime minister in his statement.

On his Twitter page, PM Garibashvili also noted that the ‘visa-free travel’ is one of the most visible successes in the history of relationships between Georgia and the EU:

“We are marking the 4th anniversary of the entry into force of the visa-free regime on March 28th. Visa-free travel is one of the most visible successes in Georgia – EU relations. Georgia’s recognition as a reliable and worthy partner by the EU has brought us even closer to the European family”, read the prime minister’s post.

Former Ambassador of Georgia to the EU Natalie Sabanadze, who resigned a week ago after eight years of service, noted that receiving visa liberalisation on March 28, 2017, serves as a symbol of “breaking down barriers and acquiring a privilege of freedom.”

As per the existing regulations, citizens of Georgia can travel to the countries within the Schengen zone for 90 days within 180 day period, both as tourists or on family or business trips.