

## Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova sign memorandum on forming Associated Trio



Foreign Ministers of Georgia David Zalkaliani, Ukraine Dmitry Kuleba and Moldova Aureliu Chokoy signing the memorandum on establishing Associated Trio.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Foreign Ministers of Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova, David Zalkaliani,

Dmytro Kuleba and Aureliu Ciocoi, signed a memorandum on establishing Associated Trio in Kyiv on May 17. The aim of establishing a cooperation format is to enhance European integration.

According to the memorandum, all three countries recognize that their absolute goal is EU membership, based on Article 49 of the EU Treaty. Georgia,

Ukraine, and Moldova will fulfill their responsibilities under the Association Agreement to achieve the ultimate goal of European integration.

According to the statement published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, the Associated Trio will cooperate on issues of common interest, including the implementation of the Association Agree-

ments and the further development of the Eastern Partnership. The three countries will work together to move closer to the EU, strengthen political dialogue and economic and sectoral integration.

The Associated Trio aims to promote and accelerate full integration into the

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The memorandum aims to further strengthen cooperation between the three countries for common European goals and EU membership.

# Ethnic Azerbaijani and Georgian locals confront each other in Dmanisi



“Ethnically Azerbaijanis are our citizens, Azerbaijan is our strategic partner, our ally, our friend, and we should not allow this [ethnic confrontation]. Anyone who says that this is an ethnic conflict is the enemy of the country,” Gomelauri said.

the past. The seller and the owner say their answer was followed by verbal abuse and threats. The shop is owned by ethnic Azerbaijanis.

The family member of the shop owner and the citizens confronted each other which led to calls to police who arrived to calm down the situation on the spot.

Later, the persons involved in the incident near the store returned to the scene with a large group, after which a fight started between them and those gathered near the store.

Dmanisi locals and government officials rule out ethnic motives in the fight.

The situation became tense on Monday morning, after ethnic Azerbaijanis who were injured in yesterday’s confrontation, tried to hold a rally in Dmanisi. Ethnic Georgians living in Dmanisi came out in the streets to express their opinion against them. Police and riot police stood

between ethnic Azerbaijanis and eco-migrants from Svaneti to prevent physical retaliation.

Mayor of Dmanisi Giorgi Tatuashvili says that the police investigation launched under the article of violence between young people, which, according to him, could have happened for any reason.

The interior minister Vakhtang Gomelauri arrived in Dmanisi, and stated that “The fact is very unfortunate,” and this issue should not escalate into ethnic controversy. He also emphasized that despite raised police presence, the force was not enough.

Later that day, representatives of the opposing parties attended a meeting at Dmanisi City Hall, where the sides said the conflict was over.

The meeting was also attended by members of parliament, Muslim clerics, representatives of local authorities and the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

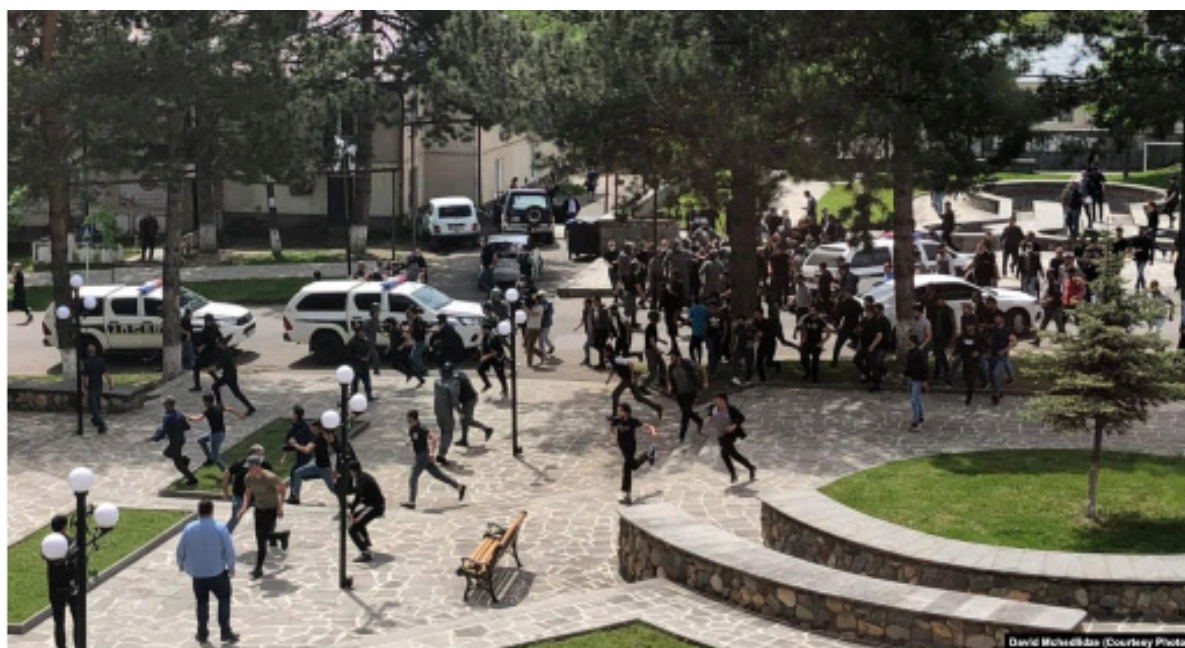
The Ministry of Internal Affairs called on the citizens in Dmanisi to obey the police so as not to contribute to the escalation of the conflict into an artificial ethnic confrontation.

According to the MIA, the investigative measures carried out at this stage have established that on May 16, locals confronted each other on the ground in Dmanisi, which grew into a group violence. The employees of the MIA were mobilized on the spot to maintain public order.

CCTV footage published by media and social networks show that ethnic Georgian and Azerbaijani students physically

confront each other. The footage shows young people hitting each other with sticks in a hand-to-hand fight. As can be seen in the video footage, the police were trying to defuse the situation. They detained persons involved in the confrontation. According to media outlets working at the scene, several people were injured in the confrontation, including police officers. The cars were damaged.

According to the locals, the reason for the controversy was the dispute that started in one of the shops. Several ethnic Georgians entered the store and demanded beers without paying, which they were refused, because they had not paid their debts in



Minister of Internal Affairs, the head of the regional police department, MP Sozar Subari and the governor of the region held a meeting in Dmanisi police. Photo: RFE/RL.

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EU single market. The statement reads that at the same time, the three countries jointly

continue to further develop the dialogue between the European Commission and the Associated Trio in priority fields such as transport, energy, digital transformation, green economy, strategic communications, etc. In addition, Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova will boost cooperation with the EU on security and defense issues.

The memorandum emphasizes the importance of the EU’s

strong support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its associated partners within its internationally recognized borders. The document also says that Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova will move forward to ensure the EU’s greater involvement in the peaceful settlement of conflicts.

The memorandum was signed within the framework of Georgian FM’s official visit to Kyiv.

During the visit, the parties discussed the Georgian-Ukrainian strategic partnership, various areas of cooperation, and prospects for further deepening of relations. Yesterday, Zalkaliani met with Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal. Shmyhal reaffirmed the Ukraine-Georgia strategic partnership and emphasized the joint efforts of the two countries to achieve common goals, European and Euro-Atlan-

tic integration. Georgian FM expressed concern over the developments on the borders of Ukraine and the temporarily occupied Crimea and reaffirmed Georgia’s support for Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. As Ukrainian PM announced at the meeting, he will pay a visit to Georgia.

Zalkaliani’s official visit to Ukraine ended yesterday.

### Weather

Tuesday, May 18

Day Partly Cloudy  
High: 27°C

Night Mostly Cloudy  
Low: 14°C

Wednesday, May 19

Day Partly Cloudy  
High: 26°C

Night Clear  
Low: 13°C

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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

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# Georgian authorities reduce night-time curfew, allow open-air terraces and cafes to operate on weekends

BY VERONIKA MALINBOYM

Following the meeting of the Inter-agency Coordination Council, Georgian authorities have announced that the existing curfew will be reduced, and will now be in effect from 23.00 – 05.00:

“Based on a detailed analysis of the epidemiological situation in the country, the council has made a decision to ease some restrictions. In particular, starting from today, the restriction on movement will be effective from 23:00 to 05:00”, said one of the members of the council.

The 21.00 – 05.00 has been in effect for 6 months and has only been lifted twice – on New Year’s eve and on the eve of the Orthodox Christmas celebrations.

The Interagency Council has also made a decision to permit cafes and restaurants with outdoor terraces to serve customers over the weekend. Restrictions on large gatherings and celebrations remain in effect in Georgia.



Giorgi Ghibradze, Chief of the Operational Staff at the Inter-agency Coordination Council stated that the epidemiological situation in the country will be

monitored closely, and the council will revisit the issue of easing more regulations on June 1.

Earlier today, during the briefing of the National Center

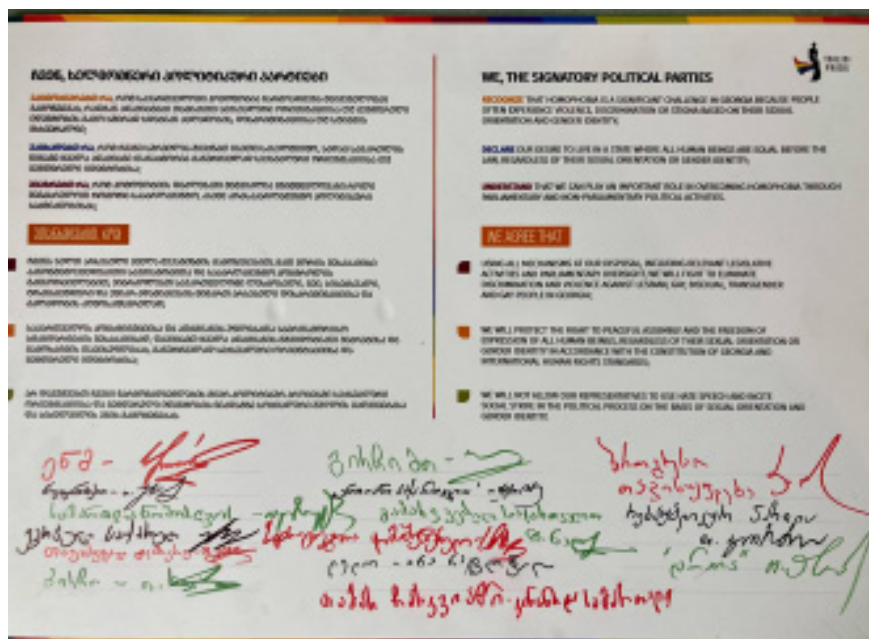
for Disease Control, center’s head Amiran Gamkrelidze stated that Georgia is currently going through the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. He added

that the situation is improving, but the death rates remain high:

“Death rates act as one of the most important indicators, and, unfortunately, in our country, the death rates remain quite high. The death rates increase two weeks after the peak of the virus spread. Right now, we are entering this stage, which is why we should follow all the regulations even more carefully,” Gamkrelidze explained.

As of the last 24 hours, 504 new cases of the COVID-19 have been detected in Georgia, as well as 2,038 recoveries and 27 deaths. A total of 11,665 tests have been conducted, 5,528 of which were PCR tests and the remaining 6,137 were rapid tests. The total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Georgia since February 2020 has reached 330,879, 310,859 of which have recovered and 4,469 have died. Out of the 504 new cases recorded in Georgia over the last 24 hours, 263 have been detected in Tbilisi.

# 15 political parties sign a joint agreement on LGBT rights



The signatory parties agree to use all available means to eradicate discrimination and violence.

May 17 is marked as an International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

According to a non-governmental organization Tbilisi Pride, on May 17, on the International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia, 15 political parties signed a joint agreement on LGBT rights. The signatory parties include United National Movement, Girchi, European Georgia, Girchi - More Freedom, Republican Party, Law and Justice, Strategy Builder, Lelo, Reformer, Movement Droa, For justice, United Georgia, Free Democrats, Progress and Freedom, and Victorious Georgia. The memorandum is symbolic and does not have any legislative force.

Tbilisi Pride says that for the 2020 parliamentary elections, with the support of the NDI, the organization began working with political parties to reach a general agreement on this issue. “Considering the homophobic and transphobic at-

titudes in Georgia, we deem it important that political parties have a common position regarding the fundamental rights of queer people. To this end, Tbilisi Pride reached out to all major pro-Western political parties in Georgia,” reads the statement published by the organization.

Tbilisi Pride said the parties agreed to fight to eliminate discrimination and violence against queer people, defend the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression of all citizens regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity. Parties also agreed not to allow the use of hate speech and incitement of social strife in the political process based on homophobia.

Regarding the International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia, a group of diplomatic missions in Georgia released a statement expressing support for the LGBTIQ+ community in Georgia.

According to the statement, LGBTIQ+ people in Georgia face bias, stigma, lack of opportunities in political, social, and economic life, as well as experience violent hate incidents and crimes. The representatives of the diplomatic corps call on all relevant actors in Georgia to take action to end all forms of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression.

“We urge Georgian state, political, civic and religious leaders to give high priority to fighting discrimination and stigma through education and leadership within their respective areas of responsibility, including by vigorously preventing violence, adopting and embracing respectful and compassionate public discourse, investigating attacks and prosecuting offenders, and ensuring proper legal response to and protection from violent acts that hinder LGBTIQ+ organizations from operating freely,” reads the statement.

It is also stressed that Georgia has shown progress in combating discrimination and homophobia towards LGBTIQ+ persons, including the adoption of the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination in 2014. In this context, the representatives of the diplomatic corps welcome the legal recognition of a transgender person by the Georgian authorities, for the first time in 2021.

The joint statement is issued by the United Nations system in Georgia, the Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, the Embassies to Georgia of Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States, the Head of the Council of Europe Office in Georgia, and the Head of the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia.