

EU, US Ambassadors to Georgia support opposition's demand to postpone election of judges



RFE/RL Graphics

BY VERONIKA MALINBOYM

The US Ambassador to Georgia Kelly Dignan and the ambassador of the

EU Carl Harzel have expressed their support towards the moratorium on the election of judges in the to the country's Supreme Court, as well as the appointment of non-judge members to the High Council of Justice. Both the US and the EU ambassadors state that both the elections and the appointments can only take place after the reform of the judicial system outlined in the EU-brokered agreement between the ruling party and the opposition are fully implemented.

In her address to the Parliament, US Ambassador stated that going through with the appointment would undermine the April 19 agreement and noting that such processes should occur in a new,

reformed space and after the debates in which all parties can participate:

"The April 19 agreement reached by the political leaders as a result of the negotiations implies the improvement and overall independence of the judiciary. It is a time-consuming process. Georgia has been working on it for the last 20 years and there is still a lot of work to be done in order to make it more independent," Ambassador Dignan stated.

Earlier last week, opposition MPs have also called for the moratorium claiming that the current High Council of Judges consists of 'biased judges' who undermine public's trust and respect for the institution.

One of the current non-judge members

of the Council of Justice Nazi Janezashvili stated that 4 judge candidates have already withdrawn from the Supreme Court appointment process thus speeding it up significantly:

"Last night I received information from the High Council of Justice that the last 4 candidates who had to appear for the interview have withdrawn their candidacies. From today, the members of the High Council of Justice will start evaluating the candidates, the evaluation will be written and later published on the council's website, but I will not be among the evaluators and I will refuse to participate in this process out of protest," Nazi Janezashvili stated.

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PREPARED BY THE MESSENGER STAFF

Anti-HPP activist Varlam Goletiani urges the protestors to respect each other's rights

One of the organizers, Varlam Goletiani, reiterated his position from the stage after the wide-ranging discussion following the May 25 incident at the rally against Namakhvani HPP, in which an activist who was wearing an LGBTQ badge was attacked by a violent group also participating in the protest.

According to Goletiani, the rights of every person who came to the rally will be protected. According to him, the actions against Namakhvani HPP have set a precedent for relations between different groups, and in case of confrontation and disorder, the constitutional rights of citizens aren't guaranteed to be protected.

Goletiani called on the citizens at the rally to respect each other and said that the rally organizers take into account the interests of each person or group.

Former PM Gakharia to present his newly created political party

According to the information obtained

by Formula TV, one of the versions of the name of the party of the former Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia is 'Unite for Georgia'. The presentation of the former Prime Minister's party will be held at the Expo Georgia exhibition space on May 29 at 6 p.m.

The final location of the presentation was determined by the expected worsening weather. Prior to that, the presentation was scheduled for May 26.

Gakharia announced his return to politics soon after leaving the post of Prime Minister. After this announcement, several people from the Georgian Dream joined his team, including 6 members of parliament.

Exchange Rates: US Dollar -3.2993; Euro - 4.0420; GBP - 4.6735; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.4922; Swiss Franc - 3.6868

Georgian parliament suspends voting on the amnesty bill

By VERONIKA MALINBOYM

After the meeting with the speaker of the parliament, leaders of the parties that have already entered the Georgian Parliament have announced that the voting on the amnesty bill will be suspended. MP from the ruling Georgian Dream party Anri Okhanashvili stated that no agreement on the issue has been reached and the discussion will continue later this week:

“We will meet on Thursday to discuss it again. We have strong arguments. The opposition believes that they have opinions and they want us to think about them again. Of course, when we signed this document [the EU-brokered agreement of April 19], we have all realized that we have a responsibility to cooperate politically, no matter how much we disagree with each other”, MP Okhanashvili said.

In turn, one of the co-founders of the opposition Lelo for Geor-



gia party said that it is difficult to say how the parliament will pass this bill:

“It’s a very difficult question.

We have to try to and agree on something. Otherwise we will have to agree to disagree”.

The amnesty bill in question

is a part of the agreement signed by the ruling party and the opposition bloc which followed a series of EU-mediated negotia-

tions. There are currently two versions of the bill considered in the parliament – one proposed by the ruling party and one drafted by the opposition. Earlier this month, the victims of the June 2019 protests, which the amnesty bill aims to address, sent a joint letter to the ambassador of the EU and the US to Georgia, stating that they are strongly opposed to the provision of amnesty to all those charged with violations which occurred during the protests, including the violations conducted by law enforcement officers. In response, the Ambassador of the US Kelly Degnan and the Ambassador of the EU Carl Hartzell have sent a joint letter to the activist stating that although June 2019 protests will remain as a dark episode in the history of Georgia, but , “it is now vital that all stakeholders ensure its successful implementation in the interest of ending Georgia’s paralyzing political crisis.”

Georgia opens land borders starting June 1



Regular flights resumed in Georgia on February 1, while the land borders will open on June 1.



Restaurants, bars, cafes will be allowed to receive guests indoors on weekends starting June 1.

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The Interagency Coordination Council made a decision to open Georgia’s land borders on 1st of June. As Giorgi Ghibradze, Chief of the Operational Staff of the Council, noted, it will be possible to cross the border with a complete vaccination certificate from any country and a PCR negative test re-

sult from some. People with the negative response of PCR tests made in the last 72 hours will be allowed in, from more than 50 countries. Such persons will be obliged to repeat the test within the next 72 hours. Further self-isolation will not be required if the test returns negative. It is recommended that all visitors should have health insurance, which also covers cases related to covid-19.

Canada, Japan, Kuwait, China, South Korea, Moldova and Oman were added to the list of countries whose citizens and residents will be able to cross the

Georgian border with a negative answer to the PCR test conducted in the last 72 hours.

According to the Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, Natia Turnava, from June 1, the opening of the land borders will be done carefully, in compliance with the regulations.

“The fact that we are gradually opening our borders to international tourists, first by air and now by land, is gradually affecting our economic situation, even the stability of the GEL exchange rate, which we all see now, which is influenced by vari-

ous factors and the first is the foreign exchange earnings brought in by tourists. Also, the positive expectations that this fact creates.” Turnava said, adding that the number of airlines that increase the frequency of weekly flights, or new airlines entering the market, is growing rapidly.

As Minister of Finance Lasha Khutsishvili stated, the strengthening of the national currency exchange rate is due to the positive expectations that exist regarding the resumption and opening of economic activity, as well as the relationship

with the tourism sector and the acceleration of economic growth.

In terms of economic activity and tourism, it’s important that to date, Tbilisi, Kutaisi and Batumi airports have more than 350 weekly flight applications from various airlines. In 2019, the year when the summer season saw a record number of tourists, there were about 800 flights a week. The Ministry expects this number to be restored by about half in summer of 2021.

Recall that the European Organization for the Safety of Air Navigation has improved its forecast for Georgia in terms of returning to the pre-pandemic mark and further growth last week.

The fast recovery of the tourism sector is very important for restoring the economy, since the sector constitutes 8% of Georgia’s GDP.

The council also decided that on weekends, starting next month restaurants across the country will work not only in the open spaces, but also indoors.

Restrictions on social gatherings of more than 10 people remain in force in the country in order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. This includes large-scale birthdays, weddings, funerals and other public and ritual events.

Weather

Wednesday, May 26

Day Partly Cloudy High: 24°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 12°C

Thursday, May 27

Day Partly Cloudy High: 25°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 16°C

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