

## POLITICS

European Court of Human Rights rules in favor of killed lecturer's mother from Georgia

FULL STORY ON Page 2

## THE NEWS IN BRIEF

FULL STORY ON Page 2

## ECONOMICS

Almost 150 thousand tourists visit Georgia in June, highest during pandemic



FULL STORY ON Page 3

Festival Golden Fleece holds marks 200th anniversary of the Greek Revolution

FULL STORY ON Page 3

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The investigation carried out by the Ministry of Internal Affairs revealed that on July 5, 2021, in parallel with the planned rally organized by Tbilisi Pride on Rustaveli Avenue, the participants of the protest group demonstrated violence, obstruction of journalistic activities, and homophobic attitude towards LGBTQI+ community and its supporters. Journalists and cameramen from various TV stations, Internet publications, print media were persecuted on transphobic motives due to intolerance of gender and sexual identity. Journalists were actively targeted while on professional duty.

The 'March of Dignity' by Tbilisi Pride was canceled on July 5 due to fears of continued violence from right-wing counter-protesters.

Four defendants who attacked journalists at the Tbilisi Pride march counter-rally have been denied release on bail. Three of them were sent to pre-trial detention for a violent attack on the journalists and cameramen of Tabula, New post agency, TV channels Rustavi 2, and Mtavari Arkhi.

Defendant Chaava, who hit journalists with a moped, denied the intentional act of violence and blamed it on the malfunction of his vehicle. One of the defendants, Mchedlidze, confessed his offence and blamed his actions on excitement, while

## 15 counter-protest activists accused of violence arrested after July 5 events



Opponents of the march push a man as they block off the capital's main avenue to prevent an LGBTQI+ march. Photo: AP Shakh Aivazov

another defendant Devdarishvili believes that he didn't commit violence.

The detainees were charged with 3 articles of the Criminal Code. They face between 4 and 6 years in prison.

Police who were arrested 3 people for raiding the Tbilisi Pride office face between 2 and 6 years in prison. The detainees are being investigated under Article 225, Part 2, Article 156, Part 2, Subparagraph 'a' and Article 160, Part 3, subparagraph 'a' of the Criminal Code of Georgia, which

stipulates participation in group violence or involves a threat of violence and the group violation of the inviolability of an apartment or other property.

According to the latest data, a total of 15 people have been arrested by law enforcement officers in connection with the attacks on journalists, harassment, gang violence, threats, and group violations of the inviolability of property, 8 of them have been charged. As of now, 25 people are known to be victims in the case, includ-

ing 19 journalists and cameramen. Out of the fifty-five people injured, 53 are media representatives.

As for the July 6 rally, 3 of the 32 detainees were fined for administrative violation, the maximum fine for which is €3,500.

Georgian Interior Minister Vakhtang Gomelaury said in the response to a question on July 5 about the Tbilisi Pride contract and the insufficient number of police officers at various locations in the capital, that a special task force had been deployed in the city and a total of 3,200 law enforcement officers were working that day, which is a maximum number the ministry could send at 20 different locations.

Gomelaury says that such aggression against journalists planned within the framework of Tbilisi Pride has never happened and the police were doing everything they could. According to him, the events developed in Tbilisi on July 5-6 and the work done by the Ministry of Internal Affairs were discussed at the meeting with the representatives of the Patriarchate in the Administration of the President of Georgia.

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has released a press release regarding attacks on journalists in Georgia, condemning the criminal passivity of the government, and called on relevant institutions to punish everyone responsible for violent attacks on peaceful protesters.



The interior minister condemned the attack on journalists and said police had done everything it could.

# European Court of Human Rights rules in favor of killed lecturer's mother from Georgia



BY VERONIKA MALINBOYM

European Court of Human Rights has announced its decision in the case of Tkhelidze v. Georgia. According to the court ruling, the police “systematically failed to prevent gender-based violence” which led to Marika Tsivtsivadze, lecturer of the English language, being murdered by her ex-husband.

The lawsuit to ECHR was filed by the mother of Tsivtsivadze who has failed to find justice in the local courts in Georgia. An investigation into the case was launched in 2014 but was later dismissed due to the fact that the person liable for the crime passed away. However, according to the mother of the deceased Tsivtsivadze. The inaction of the

police in regards to the case could be regarded as ‘gender-based discrimination.

The ECHR has found that the Georgian police were aware that the murderer of Tsivtsivadze had a history of drug abuse, pathological jealousy, and “and was otherwise mentally unstable, becoming particularly aggressive when drunk.”

The court also ruled that the police officers must have known that Tsivtsivadze was in danger but failed to implement necessary protective measures:

“All in all, the Court finds that the law-enforcement authorities demonstrated a persistent failure to take steps that could have had a real prospect of altering the tragic out-

come or mitigating the harm. In flagrant disregard for the panoply of various protective measures that were directly available to them, the authorities failed to display special diligence to prevent gender-based violence against the applicant’s daughter, which culminated in her death. When assessed against the similar findings of

the international and national monitoring bodies, the Court finds that the police inaction in the present case could be considered a systemic failure,” the ECHR ruling reads.

According to the ECHR decision, Georgia will have to pay EUR 35,000 to the mother of the deceased lecturer in respect of non-pecuniary damage.

## THE NEWS IN BRIEF

PREPARED BY THE MESSENGER STAFF

### Lelo’s Japaridze says Patriarchate has nothing to do with violent radical groups

Lelo for Georgia Leader Badri Japaridze believes that the Patriarchate is not responsible for the mass violence in the streets of Tbilisi on July 5-6. Japaridze commented that statements of specific clergy-

men were voiced at the rally of violent and homophobic groups, they have nothing to do with the position of the Patriarchate.

He thinks that the statements and appeals of the clergy should not be generalized. Japaridze says it is in the interests of the country’s enemies to attack the church.

Japaridze says that the violent groups in the contraction are members of specific political organizations.

### Papuashvili on July 5: Police were inadequate numbers, confrontation was not expected

Georgian Dream member Shalva Papuashvili believes that an adequate number of police officers were mobilized in the streets of Tbilisi on July 5.

He said since the evening of the March 5 honor march was scheduled, there was no expectation that a confrontation would take place. As for the whole Pride Week, the

MP evaluated the work of the Ministry of Internal Affairs as effective. Papuashvili says that the majority is also discussing the summoning of Interior Minister Vakhtang Gomelauri to the parliament.

Homophobic and violent groups physically assaulted 53 members of various media outlets in front of police during an anti-Pride rally in Tbilisi on July 5. The Ministry of Internal Affairs has detained only 15 people for violence so far.

FRIDAY		JULY 9	
Day		Rain	High: 26°C
Night		Rain	Low: 19°C
SATURDAY		JULY 10	
Day		Rain	High: 25°C
Night		Rain	Low: 19°C

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# Almost 150 thousand tourists visit Georgia in June, highest during pandemic

THE MAJORITY OF TOURISTS WERE FROM TURKEY, ISRAEL, AND UKRAINE

BY NIKA GAMTSEMLIDZE

According to the official data, Georgia was visited by 146,664 tourists in June 2021. Compared to the same period of the last year, it is a 286.8% increase. However, it is 80% less compared to 2019. The number of tourists who visited Georgia in June 2021 is unprecedentedly high compared to any other month during a pandemic.

91% of foreign visits in June were tourist - which means that visitors spent at least one night traveling to Georgia. It should also be noted that more than half of the total visits, 52.5% were made by air, which indicates the



closed borders to limit the spread of the virus. In 2020, the number of foreign visits in Georgia decreased by 80 percent.

Last year, 1.5 million people visited Georgia. Inflow from tourism also declined, the National Bank of Georgia estimated that the sector earned \$2.7 billion less than it would be able to earn due to pandemics. Last year, the tourism sector made \$541.7 million in Georgia. As for 2021, in January-May, Georgia has already earned \$176.5 million from foreign tourism.

According to official data, most people visited Georgia from Turkey in June. The number of Turkish tourists in Georgia was as much as 29,6 thousand, which is an 87 percent increase compared to the same period of last year. From Israel, Georgia was visited by 15,8 thousand tourists, which is over a 34,000% increase.

Earlier this week, the Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development, Natia Turnava, presented the 10-year development plan of Georgia, which shows that Tourism remains one of the biggest industries in the country. According to her, Georgia should receive as much as 13-14 million visitors by 2030, who will spend over \$6.5 billion in the country.



► Economy Minister Natia Turnava presented a plan that shows that Georgia plans to receive 13-14 visitors by 2030

► According to official data, Georgia received 286.8% more tourists in June 2021 than the same period of last year.

activation of air traffic in Georgia. In June of this year, the largest number of visitors came from Turkey, Israel, and Ukraine. Tourists from these countries made up 41.5% of the total visits.

As for the data of the first six months of the current year, statistics show that in January-June 2021, a total of 464,126 for-

ign visits were made to Georgia, which is 62.2% less than the data of the same period last year.

The ongoing coronavirus pandemic had a devastating impact on the Georgian tourism industry. As the virus spread globally, the majority of the countries, including Georgia, imposed restrictions on movement and

## Festival Golden Fleece holds marks 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Greek Revolution

In the framework of the program 'Teaching Greek in the Schools of Georgia' supported by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, a cultural and educative Festival under the name 'Golden Fleece' is organized yearly by TSU Institute of Classical, Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies.

It aims at motivating Georgian students to enrich their knowledge about Greek civilization and enhance the learning procedure of the Greek Language.

This year, the festival was dedicated to the 200th anniversary of the Greek Revolution. With all the restrictions that the pandemic imposed, most of the activities of the Festival were carried out online, via Zoom platform. Ninety two (92) students from eighteen Georgian Schools participated to the Festival and the student Mr. Teimuraz Domuzashvili under the tutoring of his teacher Lali Chanchaleishvili, presented the best essay under the theme "The Meaning of Freedom in ancient Greece and in modern era".



On the 30th of June, H.E. Ambassador Dimitrios Karabalis, hosted the student Mr. Teimuraz Domuzashvili, his teacher Ms. Lali Chanchaleishvili and from the TSU Institute of Classical, Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies the members of the organizing committee of the Festival, Ms. Nino Badashvili and Ms. Tamar Tskhvediani at the premises of the Embassy and handed to the student and his teacher, two laptops as a symbolic award for their excellent work.