

## July 11 rally was another unsuccessful conspiracy against the state, says PM Garibashvili

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Yesterday, Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Garibashvili made a statement at a Government session, referring to the events of the past few days in Georgia. Garibashvili called the recent days' developments "another failed conspiracy against the state" and evaluated the remarks voiced at the July 11 rally as "anti-state, anti-church, and anti-national." Garibashvili also stated that the demonstrators demanded the arrest of the Patriarch of Georgia.

Garibashvili offered condolences to the family of TV Pirveli cameraman Lekso Lashkarava, who died few days after being severely beaten by far-right violent groups on June 5, and stressed that "anti-state and anti-church forces" have used his death to achieve their political goals. As he noted, no matter what the reason for his death is, "all offenders will be punished severely".

According to the PM, the ruling party welcomes the existence of independent, impartial media in the country, however, he stressed that opposition-minded TV stations, namely Mtavari Arkhi, TV Pirveli and Formula, are run by Mikheil Saakashvili.

Garibashvili also referred to Tbilisi Pride events that occurred on July 5 and stated that a very wide-scale provocation was co-organized by 'Saakashvili and his



According to Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili, the only parade he recognizes is that of Georgia's army.

radical groups'.

"Perpetrators were aiming at making

the State use its power against our own people and citizens. Of course, we pre-

vented it. We had all the risks assessed well in advance and we did not make it happen," the PM stated.

According to Garibashvili, prior to the counter-protests, the LGBT community had been gathering for 3 days without any restrictions or expression of aggression. However, as he noted, when 95% of the population is against the 'demonstratively promotional march or parade', the government shall obey the will of the majority.

"It is the viewpoint of an absolute majority of our population. Being an elected choice of our people, our authorities need to be considerate of it. It will no longer happen that minorities decide the fate of the majority in this country," said Garibashvili.

The PM also announced at the government session that Minister of Culture, Sport and Youth Affairs, Tea Tsulukiani and Minister of Environment Protection and Agriculture, Levan Davitashvili have been appointed as Deputy Prime Ministers.

On July 11 journalists, civil activists and politicians gathered in front of the parliament building demanding the resignation and the prosecution of the Prime Minister, following the death of TV Pirveli cameraman Lekso Lashkarava. Journalists believe that the violent acts that took place against the media representatives on July 5 were pre-planned and orchestrated by the government of Georgia. Over seventy Georgian media organizations have appealed to the international community claiming that "cases of violations of the rights of media representatives in Georgia have reached a critical level."



Lekso Lashkarava, a TV Pirveli cameraman died on July 10, few days after being brutally beaten up while performing his duties. The Interior Ministry has named drug overdose as a possible reason for his death.

# Protests continues, people gathered in front of Parliament demand PM's resignation

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Journalists, civil activists and politicians again gathered in front of the parliament building in demanding PM Irakli Garibashvili's resignation, following the death of TV Pirveli cameraman Lekso Lashkarava, who was one of the 53 media representatives attacked by the homophobic right-wing groups during the Tbilisi Pride counter rally.

Heads of various media organisations and opposition claim that the anti Tbilisi Pride rally was 'a special operation' planned by the government of Georgia, while the Georgian ruling party accuses the opposition of 'trading by tragedy'.

In response to demands for his resignation, PM Garibashvili also said that this is 'classic anti-state, anti-church and anti-national' protest.

Earlier that day, an extraordinary session of the Georgian Parliament, scheduled for the morning on July 12, began 3 hours late after members of the opposition, several media executives, and civil society activists occupied the speaker's seat, and refused to allow the ruling party to begin the session.

The picket was organised after the deadline set by media representatives and civic society to seek PM resignation expired at midday. There was a hand-to-hand confrontation in Parliament between opposing parties. According to Giorgi Vashadze of Strategy Agmashenebeli, he was physically confronted by Viktor Japaridze, a member of the Georgian Dream.

The opposition political party Lelo members left the session hall in protest. Party leader Mamuka Khazaradze stated the party left the session hall because of the policy that is being pursued in the country, the Russian rhetoric that PM Garibashvili is pursuing in Georgia at the behest of Ivanishvili and is serving to split the country. According to him, the only correct mechanism is the resignation of the PM and the solution envisions peaceful protest, a transitional government and peaceful local elections. Khazaradze also noted that the party members are protesting the attack on journalists which



Opposition MPs took the chair of the parliament and unfurled the flags of Georgia and the European Union.



At the rally the names of 53 media representatives, including Lekso Lashkarava, who were attacked while covering the violence of the right-wing groups on July 5 were read out loud.

took part on July 5, the Russian course, the non-fulfillment of the Charles Michel document, the appointment of judges, who were inherited by the United National Movement.

After leaving the Parliament session hall by majority of the opposition party members, only 3 MPs from two opposition parties

remained there – Aleko Elisashvili and Levan Ioseliani from Citizens and Pridon Injia from European Socialists.

According to MP Khatia Dekanoidze, the United National Movement will not continue working in the parliament. According to the UNM member, the party will participate in par-

liamentary life only if the issue of dismissal of members of the Georgian government or the adoption of a proportional electoral system is put to a vote.

"Either this parliament should remove Gharibashvili quickly, or the democratic opposition should leave this parliament and the situation should

be clear to all citizens inside our country and to the partners supporting Georgia's freedom outside the country," Giga Bokeria, the leader of European Georgia commented on the ongoing events.

Recall that US Ambassador to

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## Weather

Tuesday, July 13

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 32°C

Night T-storm

Low: 21°C

Wednesday, July 14

Day Rain

High: 30°C

Night Showers

Low: 20°C

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43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi,  
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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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## Parliament approves 6 Supreme Court judges



Non-governmental sector considers the six newly appointed judges as part of the so-called 'clan' in Georgian Judiciary.

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

Yesterday, during an extraordinary session Georgian parliament appointed six out of nine judges selected by the High Council of Justice to the country's Supreme Court. The elected judges are Gocha Abuseridze (79 in favour, 5 against), Giorgi Gogiashvili (79 in favour, 4 against), Levan

Tevzadze (77 in favour, 6 against), Revaz Nadaraia (77 in favour, 6 against), Bidzina Sturua (78 in favour, 6 against) and Lasha Kochiashvili (79 in favour, 5 against). The non-governmental sector considers these candidates as part of the so-called 'clan of judges' in Georgia's judiciary. Three candidates, Eka Zarnadze, Ketevan Meskhishvili and Giorgi Shavliashvili, failed

to get enough votes.

Part of the parliamentary opposition and the Public Defender's Office boycotted the interview process of the nine candidates. According to the Public Defender Nino Lomjaria, the selection process was a 'farce' and there was no point in participating in it. As Lomjaria remarked, the candidates that were the most qualified were



The majority of the opposition did not participate in voting as they had left the session in protest.

turned down.

The international community, opposition parties, NGOs have called on the ruling party numerous times to suspend the process in compliance with the EU-mediated agreement. US Ambassador to Georgia Kelly Degnan urged the Georgian government in June to halt the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court until fundamental reforms are implemented in the judiciary.

The extraordinary session was delayed as some media executives, including director of TV Pirveli Vato Tsereteli, civil soci-

ety and opposition groups broke into the parliamentary session hall, took the speaker's seat and hung the Georgian and EU flags from the tribune. They demanded the resignation of the Government, following the death of Aleksandre Lashkarava, a TV Pirveli cameraman who was brutally assaulted by radical groups at the Tbilisi Pride March counter-rally. Verbal as well as physical confrontation took place in the plenary hall.

Only three opposition parties attended the extraordinary session, with only six of 66 MPs casting their votes.

### News in Brief

PREPARED BY THE MESSENGER STAFF

## MIA detains protestors near GD office, including one journalist

The Ministry of Internal Affairs has detained 12 people near the Georgian Dream office.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs claims that the demonstrators, who are protesting against the brutal violence of July 5 and the inaction of the police, went beyond the law established by the right of assembly and expression.

"Once again we warn the organizers of the rally to ensure that the rally does not become violent and does not go beyond the norms allowed by law. Otherwise, the police will act in accordance with the law," says the agency.

Activists threw red paint and eggs at the Georgian Dream office, where a large number of police officers were mobilized. They did not allow the activists to display posters and stencils with the inscription: Irakli Gharibashvili killed Lekso Lashkarava.

One of the 12 detainees is Irakli Absandze, a journalist of the Public Broadcaster, who was detained near the Georgian Dream office.

He went to the protest site on the spot. He wanted to go close to the Georgian Dream office but was not allowed to do so.

Police urged him to leave the area, however, Absandze did not obey this call, which led to his arrest.

He was surrounded by police in a T-shirt.

Irakli Absandze has been openly protesting against the actions of the government in recent days - the violence of July 5 and the statements made after the death of Lekso Lashkarava.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs claims that the protesters, who are protesting against the brutal violence of July 5 and the inaction of the police, have exceeded the limits set by the law on the right of assembly and expression.

## Protests continues, people gathered in front of Parliament demand PM's resignation

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Georgia Kelly Degnan also made an announcement yesterday, according to her the authorities are responsible for providing a peaceful environment for citizens to exercise their constitutional rights, including the right to assembly, the right to freedom of expression and the right for

journalists to practice their profession in a safe environment.

Degnan noted that society didn't see a safe environment on July 5 and 6, when dozens of journalists were attacked while covering the rally of right wing activists against the Tbilisi Pride march. While talking about the demand of the media representatives and civil society, Degnan

noted that it is for the people of Georgia to decide who is going to lead the country.

She expressed her condolences over the death of TV Pirveli cameraman Lekso Lashkarava, noting that violence in any form is unacceptable.

The founder of political movement Unity, Essence, Hope Levan Vasadze said that the

events of July 5 happened because of the US Ambassador, 'who despite the church's calls didn't remain silent and called on the government to carry out this provocation'.

Degnan responded that everybody knows who pays for that kind of pro-Kremlin disinformation.

"And those people who want

to incite violence here, create instability, are busy at work, doing the Kremlin's work to cause dissension, cause instability here in Georgia", Degnan said.

Recall that as of now, the information about the commencement of investigation on the organisation of group violence on July 5, has not been spread.