

Khazaradze initiates the formation of a shadow coalition government



"Agreement is needed today that law enforcement ministers will not be nominated by the National Movement in the next government."

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The leader of the party Lelo for Georgia Mamuka Khazaradze is initiating the formation of a coalition. According to him, due to the current situation, the opposition forces should start consultations on the formation of a shadow coalition government, as well as the candidate for Prime Minister. He named one condition - an agreement must be reached that in the next government, law enforcement ministers will not be nominated by the National Movement party, which was ruling the country before Georgian Dream in 2003-2012. He suggested the professionals from civil society for such positions instead.

"If the opposition can do that, then the current dream government will change and the country will embark on an irreversible path of rapid reforms and European integration," Khazaradze wrote.

According to the representative of Lelo, Saba Buadze, opening a discussion on this topic is essential to ensure that public expectations are met; there are no specific ultimatums on their part and the opposition needs to agree on a coalition model that will restore the public confidence in the process.

Buadze says there must be an agreement reached for elections on what the configuration will be and on what principles the future opposition coalition will be based, for voters to see who is donating to a country that will be a member of this coalition.

Lelo representative also clarified the party's position on law enforcement min-

isters being from the civil sector: "There are two reasons for this - irrational fears, which are more agitated by the Georgian Dream, and among them the experience that we had during the National Movement in power, which may create certain fears and threats for the population."

MP from Georgian Dream and Chairman of the Self-Government Committee of the Georgian Parliament, Sozar Subari, responded to Khazaradze's statement, doubting the unification of the opposition, saying that this initiative is 'playing government'. The opposition can form as many shadow/basement governments as they please, but they "will continue to run the country." According to Subari, if they want to take part in running the country, there is a parliament, where they have representation and can participate constructively - 'inclusion is good for the country and for democracy.' He reminded that the parliament is not the place for debauch, but rather for working on bills, staffing the Central Election Commission, and judicial reforms.

Khatia Dekanoidze, Chairman of the United National Movement - United Opposition Power is in Unity - responded to Khazaradze's initiative, saying the condition on law enforcement ministers is conceptually incorrect and outdated because no political force should be in the hands of law enforcement agencies, including small parties.

Girchi MP Iago Khvichia believes that Lelo's initiative regarding the coalition will provoke further conflict in the opposition. Even though Girchi doesn't see perspective at this moment, the party

doesn't rule out the prospect of consultations and communication. As for the National Movement, he said that it will take more to rebuild the trust towards that party.

Another parliamentary opposition party, Citizens representative Aleko Elisashvili called on Lelo to avoid inappropriate arrogance and discuss such ideas collegially before the press conference. According to him, Lelo can not imagine anything in the world without the National Movement, including the coalition.

According to him, the party Citizens

rules out a coalition with the National Movement.

Vice-Speaker of the Parliament Levan Ioseliani says Lelo wants to start a no-confidence motion, adding he will not be joining it.

"I do not take it seriously to stand up today and participate in the distribution of ministerial portfolios when there is no possibility of ending the no-confidence motion. It will be a disappointment for the citizens. I do not participate in shadow cabinets. It is unfortunate that I hear proposals like Lelo from the media."



Iago Khvichia believes that Lelo's initiative regarding the coalition will provoke a conflict in the opposition.

New wave of controversy in Georgian politics

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

The events of July 5-6 worsened the already polarized political process in the country and led it to a new circle of controversy. Much of the opposition in parliament is talking about boycotting with the free media accusing the government of the July 5 raid, the death of cameraman Lekso Lashkarava and the desecration of his memory. Opposition and free media representatives demand the resignation of Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili. Georgian Dream does not consider the protest wave dangerous and intends to make no concessions.

By appointing the judges, he showed everyone that he intends to fulfill the agreement reached through the mediation of Charles Michel only on their own terms.

It is clear that disrupting the planned march which was to be held in support of the LGBTQI+ community in the center of Tbilisi on July 5 was just a well-chosen excuse for the government to act on their intentions. The counter-rally organizers were well aware that quite a large part of the Georgian society disapproves of LGBTQI+ holding public rallies and intentionally used them as a tool.

The target of the violent crowd turned out to be the media and

even the EU flag raised in front of the parliament building, which was torn down twice - on July 5 and 6 - by the organizers of the rally. If the tearing down of the flag was a symbolic act, the raid on media representatives was brutal and large-scale. All media representatives were targeted and 53 were beaten, many of them - mercilessly.

Lekso Lashkarava, a TV 1 cameraman died as a result of the beating. Against the background of the Georgian media, Russia Today worked with no hindrances, broadcasting live coverage of the events for 77 minutes.

The opposition in Georgia is actively talking about the fact that Russia was interested in the events of July 5-6 and was probably actively involved in its organization. As for the government, the main culprit is Mikheil Saakashvili and, consequently, the National Movement. According to the Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili, the events of July 5-6 were another unsuccessful conspiracy against the state, planned by anti-state and anti-church forces.

According to Irakli Kobakhidze, a former parliamentary speaker and one of the leaders of the Georgian Dream, "the leader of these radical anti-Christian groups is Mikheil Saakashvili, who is leading the

process from Kiev."

This version is hard to believe for many, as a number of clergymen took part in the July 5-6 rally, or actively made supportive statements. In the role of direct organizers were people known for their anti-Western and pro-Russian position.

Alexander Dugin, a Russian imperialist and well-known ideologue of the Kremlin, reacted enthusiastically to the July 5 rally by writing on his Facebook page: "I sincerely admire these people...". Official Moscow also reminded us of these tense days for Georgia. The Russian Foreign Ministry has released a special report on the human rights situation in 43 countries around the world. These are the countries whose policies Moscow doesn't like. Naturally, Georgia was among them. The Russian Foreign Ministry claims that the Armenians living in Javakheti are demanding autonomy, while the Azerbaijanis living in Kvemo Kartli are demanding wider political representation. According to experts, by raising the issue of ethnic minorities, Moscow aims to intimidate Georgia and show that Russia is ready to manipulate this issue in the future.

Outside forces cannot be considered as direct organizers of the counter-rally on July 5-6. A wave of violence could have been avoided had the government

brought as much well-equipped police to the streets as it usually does to disperse opposition rallies, or to arrest Nika Melia.

Some believe that Russian-organized violent groups were also aided by the 'Russian oligarch-led' local government. According to some, the Georgian government only wanted to crack down on non-governmental organizations and the media but 'lost control of the situation' - it got a worse result than expected. That is why the police abducted the body of the deceased Lekso Lashkarava from the house for examination and the examination immediately concluded that the death was caused by drug overdose. The government's action is easy to explain - it must prove that the July 5-6 news did not result in casualties and that the severely beaten cameraman was not beaten to death.

But the statements made by the head of the government or the representatives of the Georgian Dream only increase the indignation of the part of the society that sees the government

as the main criminal of the events of July 5-6.

Part of the opposition, especially Lelo and the National Movement, has demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili. They have in fact gone into a boycott mode and will only take part in voting on changes to the constitution.

Lelo is starting the procedure of declaring 'no confidence' in the government. The 50 votes needed to start the procedure will be collected, but the opposition does not have the 78 votes needed to dismiss the government. Therefore, Georgian Dream is mocking this effort of the opposition.

In the conditions of the new wave of controversy, the calculation of the Georgian Dream government team is still classic - neither the opposition, nor the independent media, have the power to organize rallies large enough to make them think about changing the Prime Minister. Accordingly, the Charles Michel document will be implemented in the way and in the way that the Georgian Dream deems necessary.

President of the European Council meets Eastern Partnership leaders during South Caucasus visit

On 17-19 July, the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, visited Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to demonstrate the EU's commitment to the South Caucasus and give new impetus ahead of the upcoming Eastern Partnership Summit, which will take place in December 2021 in Brussels.

On 19 July, Michel attended the Batumi International Conference and met with the presidents of Georgia, Salome Zourabishvili, Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, and the Republic of Moldova, Maia Sandu.

"We count on your commitment to advance reforms, not to please Brussels, but in the interest of your people and your societies. Together, we must always stand up for human rights and the rule of law, equal rights, non-discrimination, and freedom of expression, assembly and the press. They define who

we are, and they are the best guarantee for prosperity," said Michel.

On this occasion, he also discussed with the Georgian government and the leaders of parliamentary opposition parties the latest developments in the country and the implementation of the 19 April Agreement.

"Determined progress in consolidating the rule of law through political and judicial reforms is of particular importance. Judicial reform is a core part of the 19 April Agreement and a condition for the disbursement of EU macro-financial assistance to Georgia. The recent fast-track confirmation of Supreme Court judges did not fully reflect the results of consultations with international and domestic stakeholders. This was clearly a missed opportunity," said Michel.

The President also stressed that the "rights of minorities are not a marginal issue - respect for diversity and human dignity are essential to our fundamental value".

On 18 July, Charles Michel had detailed and intensive discussions in Baku with Ilham Aliyev, the President of Azerbaijan, on the essence of the relationship between the European Union and Azerbaijan.

In Azerbaijan, Michel also visited a number of future-oriented innovation projects both in the satellite sector and concerning infrastructure, which are designed to increase the port of Baku's level of

ambition as regards development, including at regional level.

"The partnership between the EU and Azerbaijan is not primarily a partnership based on financial support provided through subsidies. It is a partnership based on the desire to make a joint commitment to innovation in the technological sector and to dialogue on economic matters. In keeping with this, the EU's two priorities in terms of economic development - climate change and the digital revolution - can be at the heart of the projects..." said Charles Michel.

On 17 July, President Michel visited the Genocide Memorial in Yerevan, where three years earlier he had symbolically planted a tree in memory of the victims, and met the Acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. Michel congratulated Pashinyan on the outcome of the recent elections and confirmed the EU's decision to mobilise an unprecedented financial package of Euro2.6 billion in support of Armenia's priorities.

Michel also promised to support the vaccination process in the country based on the European Council decision to export before the end of the year around 50% of the vaccines produced each month (at least 100 million doses) and to maximise access to vaccination technology capabilities worldwide.

The European President also reiterated the EU's support for Armenia in overcoming the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

News in Brief

PREPARED BY
THE MESSENGER STAFF

GD officially nominated Kakha Kaladze as Tbilisi mayoral candidate

Georgian Dream has nominated Kakha Kaladze, the incumbent mayor of Tbilisi, for the self-government elections.

Irakli Kobakhidze, the chairman of the party, believes that Kaladze will win the self-government elections. He nominated Kaladze as the next mayor.

"Our party will present to the public the candidate for Tbilisi mayor, the future mayor of Tbilisi. Our present presentation will not be a surprise, but it will be more pleasant than any surprise for the public, Tbilisians, members of our party and supporters ...

"Georgian Dream nominates Kakha Kaladze, the best mayor of Tbilisi of all time, as a candidate for Tbilisi mayor," said Irakli Kobakhidze, chairman of the Georgian Dream.

Kakha Kaladze has been the Secretary General of the Georgian Dream since 2013. From 2012 to 2017, he was the Minister of Energy and Vice Prime Minister of Georgia.

Kaladze took the position of Tbilisi Mayor in the October 21,

2017 self-government elections.

The event was held in Mtatsminda Park amid protests. The rally was held by media representatives and civil activists. Journalists had photos and posters of the deceased cameraman, Lekso Lashkarava, with the caption - 'Punish the perpetrators'.

Ilia II thanks Kirill: 'Such steps evoke a sense of gratitude in the population'

Ilia II thanks Russian Patriarch Kirill for the release of Zaza Gakheladze. The letter is published by the Patriarchate, which is dated July 19.

Ilia II notes in the letter that "such steps strengthen our relations and evoke a sense of gratitude in the population."

"Your Holiness, I greet you with Christian love, respect and wish you health, longevity and further success in your high service.

We would like to express our gratitude to you personally and to all the people who worked for the release of Zaza Gakheladze, which was not an easy task, but thank God, everything ended well and he returned to his family on July 14. Such steps strengthen our relationships and evoke a sense of gratitude in the population. May God grant peace and love to our churches and peoples, Amen," read the letter.

Weather

Wednesday, July 21

Day Clear
High: 38°C
Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 24°C

Thursday, July 22

Day T-storm
High: 30°C
Night Showers
Low: 21°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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