

## After 4 months of refusal UNM signs EU-brokered deal



► "Despite some controversial clauses in the agreement that prevented us from signing the document, today, considering the risks looming over our statehood, it is our obligation to stand above our opinions and controversies, and sign it".

also late to sign the EU-mediated agreement. According to them, UNM's signature on the document 'makes no sense as the agreement does not exist.' Ruling party also emphasizes that it is the GD which 'has made the country's Euro-Atlantic course irreversible.' EU Ambassador Carl Hartzel does not consider it too late for the UNM to sign the agreement.

"In my opinion, it is never too late to sign what is first and foremost an important guide to democratic reform, and perhaps it is not too late to return to that guide," Hartzel announced. He strongly believes that these reforms will benefit all citizens of Georgia:

"We remain committed to working with all those who are committed to these reforms." Hartzel notes that 147 out of 150 elected members of parliament supported the agreement and its content at different stages and at different times.

US Ambassador to Georgia Kelly Degnan, who was also one of the mediators of the Agreement, has welcomed the largest opposition party's decision and stated that 'it is a good sign for strengthening Georgia's path forward.'

"We have been encouraging the UNM to sign the agreement for quite some time, so it is a good sign because this represents a roadmap of the important reforms that the country is to make," Degnan stated, adding that These reforms are going to allow for a stronger economy, for a better electoral process, 'these are the reforms that touch the lives of every Georgian and so it is a very good sign that UNM has decided to sign on'.

Cornell Kakachia, director of the Georgian Policy Institute, said that the signing of the April 19 agreement by the UNM was too late and did not indicate the party's strategic vision.

"It is just more aimed at the international community and its partisan interests, and unfortunately in this case it will not help to create a consensus-oriented democratic model in Georgia," Cornell Kakachia commented.

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

About 4 months after the signing of the Agreement initiated by the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, the United National Movement decided to sign it. Representatives of the UNM, signed the agreement at the EU Office on 2nd of September, which was previously signed by some parliamentary opposition forces and the Georgian Dream in April following lengthy mediation efforts by the EU and Charles Michel in particular. The Agreement aimed to overcome the 6-month political standoff in Georgia following the 2020 parliamentary elections.

The UNM refused to sign the document despite ending the parliamentary boycott, pointing at controversial clauses in the document, particularly the one allowing amnesty for all violations and convictions stemming from the 19-21 June 2019 protest, sparked by the presence of Russian legislators in the Georgian parliament.

By the end of July 2021, the Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia party left the agreement, explaining that the main purpose of the agreement was to reduce polarization and radicalization, which failed. The Georgian Dream also cited the fact that the main opposition party, the National Movement, did not join the agreement. Following the withdrawal from the deal, the leaders of the ruling party have repeatedly said that the parliamentary elections will be held in 2024 on time.

The UNM's decision comes after PM Gharibashvili's announcement of August 31 that stated that Georgia is refusing to receive EU macroeconomic financial assistance because the country has begun to reduce its foreign debt and is no longer planning to take out new loans. The EU, on its behalf, is considering the decision of the Georgian government to refuse macro-

financial assistance, which means that Georgia can no longer receive 75 million euros. Recall that the EU has repeatedly warned about withholding the aid should the GD fail the court reform condition foreseen by the April 19 EU-brokered deal.

"The GD's refusal of the EU assistance was an open statement about the change of the foreign policy course and abandonment of the European way by the ruling party," the party chairman and Tbilisi mayoral candidate Nika Melia said, explaining what has led the opposition party to take this step, despite certain 'unacceptable' provisions in the document. Now the UNM says that they stand above the stipulation' because the country's European course is at a serious risk under GD leadership. Ac-

cording to the party leader, the UNM joins the agreement so that 'western partners do not distance themselves from Georgian people due to the unreliable government.'

As Melia said, with the signature the party expresses readiness and emphasizes the belief that they will win along with other pro-Western opposition forces in the October 2 Local self-government elections, that UNM prefers to refer to as a referendum. This perception is based on the Michelle Agreement reservation that calls for early parliamentary elections in 2022 if the Georgian Dream receives less than 43% of the vote.

The GD has called the UNM's decision 'funny and not serious' recalling that UNM was late to enter the parliament and was



► The political crisis between the ruling and opposition parties was resolved by the involvement of the European Council President who proposed an agreement.



EXCHANGE RATES: US DOLLAR - 3.1183 | EURO - 3.6952 | GBP - 4.2998 | 100 RUSSIAN RUBLE - 4.2840 | SWISS FRANC - 3.4046 |

# Gakharia to be Mayoral candidate of political party For Georgia

AN ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE ON SEPTEMBER 1.



► Gakharia also presented other candidates of his political party for the upcoming elections



► Kaladze confirmed that Gakharia visited his office

BY NIKA GAMTSEMLIDZE

Giorgi Gakharia will be the Tbilisi mayoral candidate for the party For Georgia. Giorgi Gakharia talked about it while nominating the party's mayoral candidates, Tbilisi majoritarian candidates, and party-list members in the Tbilisi Sakrebulo for the local self-government elections.

According to him, he is taking this step as a sign of solidarity with other party mayoral candidates, "who have to protect the interests of Georgian citizens in the most difficult conditions".

During the presentation, Former Prime Minister Gakharia talked about the establishment of his party and the 'country's difficult situation'. According to him, his party is not fighting against anyone, as the fight is not their main goal. He also said that the rating of his political party is increasing very fast, which shows how interested people are in the future of his political party.

The mayoral candidate of part of the opposition, Nika Melia, said that Gakharia's nomination does not change anything in terms of elections. He said that Gakharia's decision to participate in the elections has made the Georgian Dream's situation worse. "I do not rule out that there will be a second round in

Tbilisi. However, I believe that I win the first round. Who will end up in second or third place - it will be determined between Gakharia and Kaladze," said Melia.

MP Rakviashvili, a member of Girchi, said that Gakharia's decision increased the chances for the second round. "Of course, it is in the best interest of UNM for the second round to be held, and Gakharia's involvement in the elections has somehow

helped UNM as well," said Rakviashvili.

In addition, it was also reported that before the announcement, Gakharia visited Kaladze's office. Kaladze was asked about the visit by reporters, and he said that he still had no idea why Gakharia met him.

At the same time, as Kaladze told reporters, Gakharia himself called and said that he wanted

to meet. According to him, he did not have any communication with Gakharia before the mentioned meeting.

"To tell you the truth, I did not understand anything, the purpose of the meeting, the reason ... The only thing that was said at the meeting was that he was running for office and he did not want me to hear about it on TV. He himself decided to tell me all this. The rest, to be honest,

I could not understand," said Kaladze.

Elections of local self-government bodies of Georgia should be held on October 2, 2021. Some of the Mayoral candidates include Giorgi Gakharia – For Georgia; Kakha Kaladze – Georgian Dream; Nika Melia – UNM and part of the opposition; Ana Dolidze – For People; Ana Bibilashvili – Lelo, and many others.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

PREPARED BY THE MESSENGER STAFF

### UNM signs Michel document, GD comments

"The United National Movement should at least apologize to every politician who signed the Charles Michel document and then they may talk," Georgian Parliament Speaker Kakha Kuchava told reporters. As he noted, if the members of the National Movement had signed the agreement from the very beginning, reality would have been completely different today.

"I remember well, when first the Georgian Dream and then other parties signed this document, how the National Movement was swearing, being mad that other opposition parties dared to sign this Document. The National Movement should at least apologize to every politician who signed the Charles Michel document and then talk. They respond to political events according to their partisan interests! If they had signed from the very beginning, we would be facing a completely different reality today," Kakha Kuchava said.

### PM Says Georgian Dream won't return to Michel Document

According to the PM, it is impossible for the Georgian Dream to return to the April 19 agreement. As he told reporters, the signing of the document by the National Movement is a farce and a lie.

"This is a farce and a forgery. Their signing would have had a weight if they had signed it when we all, together with the direct mediation of our great friends, Charles Michel and the US Ambassador, completed the work on this document. Then we all signed the document, taking into account all the factors that existed at that particular moment. They offended the entire international community, our partners. Imagine, we took such compromise steps for our state, we did everything to calm down the situation, to reach a political agreement. You probably remember that they did not enter the parliament until the last moment, they were trading with our American and European friends like they were in the market. Nevertheless, we signed the document and carried out all the reforms that we had started. We had been waiting for 100 days. Despite calls and requests of European and American friends, they ignored our partners and did not sign the document. It is not a kindergarten, it is politics and, first of all, it is the interests of the country, the state and the population. Therefore, after waiting enough, we withdrew from the agreement, because the agreement would have been legitimate only if both parties had signed it.

After we said that the topic was closed and that all the reforms would continue, it is excluded for the Georgian Dream to return to this agreement! The signing of the document by the National Movement is a farce and a lie. It is an insult to our partners and the society," Gharibashvili stated.

**FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 3**

**Day** ☁️ A few clouds  
High: **25°C**

**Night** 🌙 Clear  
Low: **14°C**

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**SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 4**

**Day** ☀️ Sunny sky  
High: **27°C**

**Night** ☁️ Partly cloudy  
Low: **17°C**

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