

Georgia marks 28 years since the fall of Sokhumi

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

It has been 28 years since the defeat of the Georgian Armed Forces and the fall of Sokhumi on September 27, 1993, following the military confrontation in Abkhazia that lasted 13 months and 13 days. Georgian officials, opposition leaders, Ambassadors and ordinary citizens gathered at the Heroes' Memorial yesterday and honoured the memory of those who died in the fight for the unity of the country. The national flags were lowered at government buildings in honour of the victims of the conflict.

Irakli Garibashvili, Prime Minister of Georgia and his cabinet members - Grigol Liluashvili, Head of State Security Service of Georgia and Ruslan Abashidze, Chairman of the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia laid a wreath at the Memorial and paid tribute to the memory of victims.

According to Georgian Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani, "September 27 is one of the most painful days in the history of independent Georgia, reminding us of the devastating power of war and associated with the greatest pain and loss". Zalkaliani also noted that it is the key priority of the government to "reunify Georgian people and build a peaceful, strong European country without the dividing lines."

Georgian State Minister for Reconciliation and Civil Equality Tea Akhvlediani stressed that the day exemplifies the 'immeasurable' pain and grief of hundreds of thousands of people forced to flee their homes.

"We should continue the peace process together in the selfless spirit of our fallen heroes, to unite our people and achieve the common well-being of Abkhaz and Georgian people in a common, strong, European state," she said.

Parliament Speaker Kakha Kuchava underscored that September 27, 1993, is



Reportedly, more than 12,000 people died during the armed conflict and around 300,000 remain displaced.

a very tragic day in the history of Georgia's independence that needs to be properly delivered, especially, to the younger generations. "I am certain that our peace policy, which has great support from international partners, will show results soon and we will unite the country," said Kuchava.

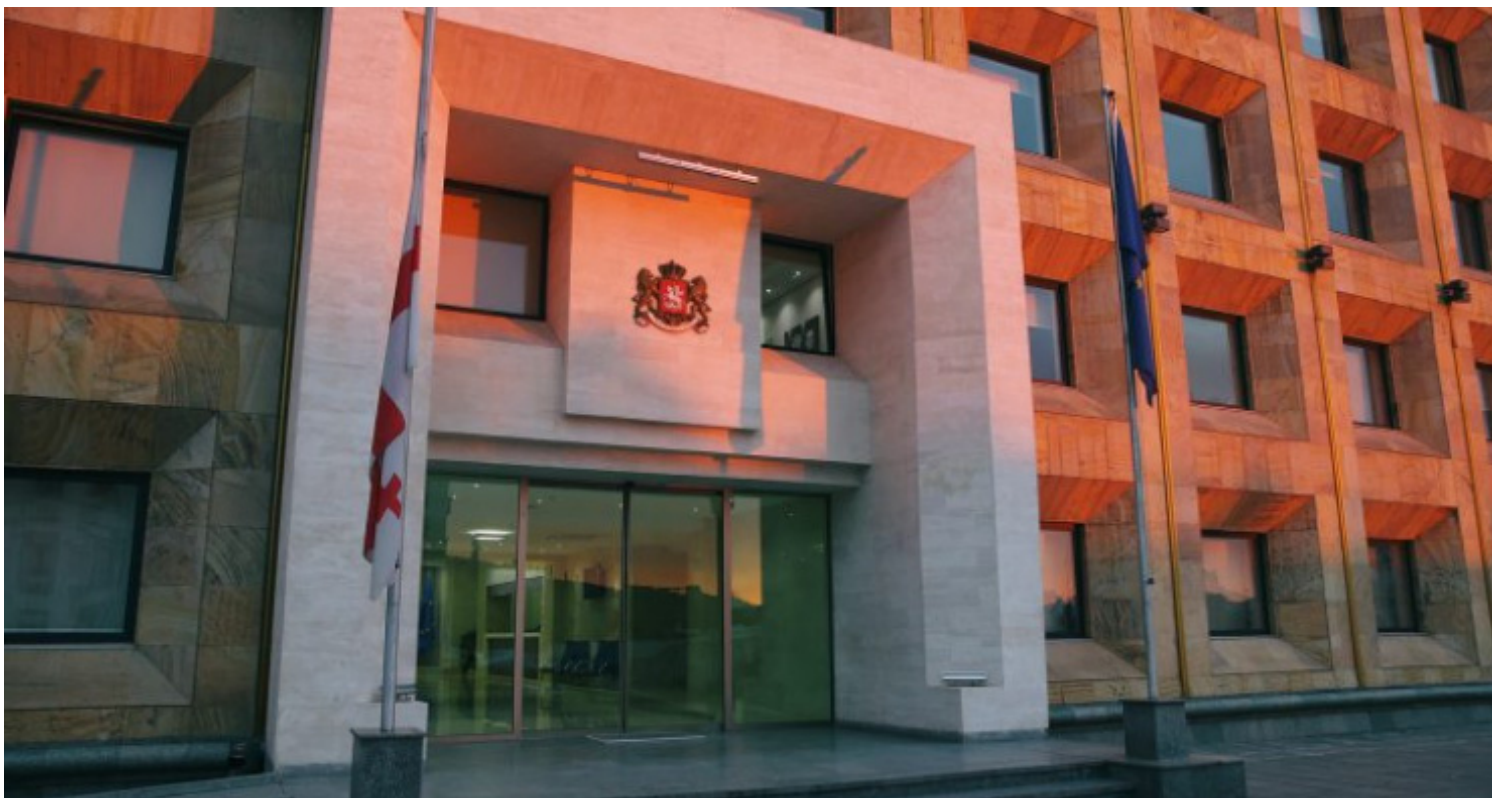
US Ambassador Kelly C. Degnan, Senior Defense Official COL Stephanie Bagley, and members of Walter Reed

Army Institute of Research in Georgia laid wreaths at Heroes Square as well.

"We remember this day with sorrow and with the hope that remains in the hearts of so many internally displaced people," reads the statement published by the US Embassy.

The armed conflict began on August 14, 1992, when Georgia's Armed Forces aimed to defend the Sochi-Enguri section of the railway was confronted by Abkhaz

Gvardia, resulting in hostilities in Abkhazia. On September 16, 1993, the Abkhaz side violated the July 27 Sochi Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces and attacked Sokhumi. The battle for Sokhumi lasted for 11 days. According to the collected data, between 13,000 to 20,000 Georgians died in Abkhazia, while 300,000 people became internally displaced.



State flags have been lowered at government buildings to honour the memory of those killed in the Abkhaz war.

Politics

President Zurabishvili visits Paris, marks 100th anniversary of French recognition of Democratic Republic of Georgia



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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 3.1172; Euro - 3.6481; GBP - 4.2690; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.2919; Swiss Franc - 3.3652

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“Despite being on the geographical border of Europe, Georgia has always felt European and this is a necessary diplomatic choice with no alternative.”

Zurbishvili participated in a ceremony dedicated to the memory of Georgian Vice-Colonel Dimitri Amilakhvari on September 26.

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The President of Georgia Salome Zurbishvili paid a working visit to France, taking part in the events dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the recognition of the Democratic Republic of Georgia by France in Paris.

Zurbishvili participated in a ceremony dedicated to the memory of Georgian Vice-Colonel Dimitri Amilakhvari on September 26 and posthumously awarded him, a hero of the French Resistance, the Order of National Hero, presenting the state award to the descendants of Amilakhvari.

The Georgian diaspora gifted the bust of Amilakhvari to the French museums of the Foreign Legion 13th Brigade and the Military Academy of Saint-Cyr, while a third bust was sent to Georgia.

Amilakhvari was posthumously awarded the title of National Hero for his dignified portrayal of Georgia on the international stage, for his invaluable contribution to the creation of a particularly positive attitude towards Georgia, and for his self-sacrifice for universal values.

According to the press service of the Presidential Administration, Zurbishvili also awarded the Order of Excellence distinguished representatives of Georgian emigration in Paris, among them Father Elia Melia who led

the Georgian Parish of Saint Nino in Paris for nearly 40 years and Konstantine Andronikov (Andronikashvili) diplomat, theologian and an interpreter who worked with some of France’s greatest political leaders.

At the ceremony, the President delivered a speech in which she said that despite being on the geographical border of Europe, Georgia has always felt European and this is a necessary diplomatic choice with no alternative.

“A century has passed since 1921, which unites the hope and tragedy of the Georgian people. A century has passed since the President of the Council, Aristide Briand, recognized the Young Democratic Republic of Georgia on January 27, 1921. It’s been a century since, in March 1921, the Red Army shattered this dream of independence and democracy by bringing Georgia under Soviet rule by force of arms.”

In 1921, for several months, Georgia lost what the fall of the Russian Empire in 1917 and the end of World War I in 1918 left it with hints. 1922 Georgia loses: independence and sovereignty gained after centuries of occupation by Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and the Persian Empire; A democratic regime based on one of the most progressive constitutions of the era; Integration into the unity of European nations. Independence, Democracy, Europe: Such aspirations existed a century ago. They have not changed and today, as never before, the vast majority of the Georgian people are following the path of these

aspirations.

According to the Georgian President’s speech, in this aspiration, France occupies both a special and a unique place. Indeed, in modern times, no other country in the world has made such a contribution to maintaining Georgia’s independence. “And in the blink of an eye, the story is a mystery - the son of a political emigrant in 1921, who by the first coincidence in history was appointed by President Chirac as Ambassador of France to Georgia, and who will address you today as President of Georgia.”

This French-Georgian relationship is imprinted in three moments that are different in nature, but essentially interrelated: international recognition in 1921. In January of this year, and for the first time since the annexation of Georgia by Tsarist Russia in 1801, Georgia regained its place among the nations thanks to the de jure recognition of independence by France and Great Britain. France was the first country to recognize Georgia, and it remained committed to this commitment despite the Soviet invasion of Georgia, as France (and little is known about this issue) did not include occupied Georgia in the 1922 Soviet Recognition Act. France receives the government of Georgia in exile. Paris becomes the capital of the young Georgian democracy in exile, as well as London of free France. Thus, the independence of Georgia, its legacy for France, will last not 3 but 15 years.

It was only in 1933, when tensions with Germany intensified, that the Daladier government

had no choice but to comply with Stalin’s insistence and refuse this symbolic support. At the same time, France became the second homeland of the Georgian political elite, the homeland of a free Georgia, which has chosen to fight the Soviet occupation from the outside, and in this struggle it has instilled a firm belief that Georgia would one day regain its sovereignty, freedom and place in Europe.

President also recalled the return of Georgian national treasure in 1944 back to the country - Georgian National Museum, which happened thanks to General de Gaulle. “With this gesture, France returned to us the most important part of the history and culture of Georgia.”

The third wing of this triptych, as stated in the speech, was the 2008 war, when, after Tsarist Russia annexation in 1801 and Bolshevik annexation in 1921, Georgia’s borders were violated and its territory invaded, when

Vladimir Putin’s Russia sent its tanks and planes. France joined in the form of its president, Nicolas Sarkozy, and on behalf of the EU presidency, and the resulting ceasefire agreement really halted the occupation forces and saved Georgia from an even more tragic fate.

The president emphasized that no other country has played such a specific role in these crucial moments as France.

“It is no coincidence that in 2018, after being elected President of the country, my first bilateral visit to Paris took place. Together with President Macron, we seal the strengthening of the dialogue of Dimitri Amilakhvari, the Georgian prince whose life and sacrifice for France we remember and celebrate today. For France, for which, like so many Georgian emigrants, he was a foreigner, but nonetheless, he was so deeply rooted.”



Together with members of Georgian delegation and cadets of David Agmashenebeli Georgian National Defense Academy, President took part in the ceremony of lighting the fire at the Triumphal Arch together in honour of the memory of the soldiers fallen for France.

Weather

Tuesday, September 28

Day ☀️ Clear
High: 23°C

Night 🌙 Clear
Low: 11°C

Wednesday, September 29

Day ☁️ Partly Cloudy
High: 22°C

Night ☁️ Partly Cloudy
Low: 14°C

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