

103rd Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) Meeting Held in Ergneti

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

The group of Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) held a meeting yesterday in Ergneti village to discuss the incidents that had taken place for the last 2 months at the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL). The meeting was co-facilitated by the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

According to the statement of the OSCE, participants discussed the impact of the closure of crossing points and other restrictions affecting the lives of the conflict-affected population, focusing on the most recent security developments at the administrative boundary line (ABL), detention cases, the situation in the Chorchana-Tsnelisi area and the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Georgian side focused on the so-called illegal borderization and detentions, humanitarian crisis, and opening of the Akhlagori checkpoint. The release of Georgian citizen Gela Gochoshvili who was detained by the Russian occupation forces several months ago and the issue of Genadi Bestaev, who was illegally arrested in November 2019 and released recently after the deterioration of his health, also remained at the top of the agenda of the meeting.

Special Representative of the OSCE



► The meeting was co-facilitated by the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).



► The Next IPRM meeting will be held on January 20, 2022.

Chairperson-in-Office for the South Caucasus Ambassador Annika Soder praised the participants' commitment to engage in regular exchange in the IPRM format and called on them 'to apply a pragmatic and humanitarian approach during the upcoming holiday season.'

"The co-facilitators also stressed the importance of continued dialogue and called for mutually acceptable solutions that uphold humanitarian principles and human rights, and that respond positively to the needs of the conflict-affected population living on both sides

of the ABL," OSCE reports.

Kate Fearon, Deputy Head of the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia, encouraged the participants to continue using the IPRM meetings, as well as the EUMM-managed Hotline, to exchange information and noted their importance for confidence-building.

According to the statement, during the meeting, attention was drawn to the Women, Peace, and Security agenda and how this could further be integrated into the IPRM format.

The Next IPRM meeting will be held on January 20, 2022.

Kobakhidze Says 'Fake' Conclusion of the Medical Panel May Cause Legal Issues to Ombudsman

By NIKA GAMTSEMLIDZE

Recently, a group of specialists invited by the Public Defender of Georgia published a report on the results, monitoring the medical conditions of the former President of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili.

The document assesses Mikheil Saakashvili's condition as critical and states that it is immediately recommended to continue his treatment in a fully functioning hospital, in the intensive care unit.

Irakli Kobakhidze, the chairman of the Georgian Dream, called the conclusion of the council created by the Public Defender fake and said that it was false information. He also added that if the case continues, the issue of the responsibility of the Public Defender may be raised. He talked about it with reporters in the parliament. The Public Defender of Georgia responded to the statements made by Irakli Kobakhidze, saying that such rhetoric goes beyond the legal framework and represents an attempt to attack and intimidate an independent constitutional body and its experts.

The statement of the Public Defender also reads that such comments contract with national and international human rights obligations.

"We call on the United Nations, Coun-

KOBAKHIDZE MADE THIS COMMENT ABOUT THE MEDICAL PANEL INVITED BY THE PUBLIC DEFENDER



► Ombudsman said that the statement of Kobakhidze is an 'attempt to attack and intimidate' the office

cil of Europe, OSCE/ODIHR, diplomatic missions accredited in Georgia, and ombuds associations to study the above issue and assess it within their mandates. Contrary to the Paris and Venice Principles, the Public Defender of Georgia encounters obstacles in the implementation of her mandate, while experts may refuse to cooperate with the Public Defender in the future," reads the statement of the Georgian Public Defender.

According to Mamuka Mdinardze,



► The medical team gathered by the Public Defender said that Saakashvili should be transferred to a hospital

chairman of the Georgian Dream, the council could not answer the main question that could have been the purpose of gathering these doctors, i.e., whether there was any necessary medical care that Mikheil Saakashvili, who is being held in the 18th penitentiary, could not receive.

In addition, he accused the Public Defender of concealing important information while talking to journalists, and also spoke about the alleged political bias of doctors. According to the Public

Defender of Georgia, Nino Lomjaria, the main recommendation of the experts was that due to the critical situation of the ex-president's health, it is necessary to transfer him to a functionally sound and experienced hospital.

Saakashvili returned to Georgia from Ukraine in late September and was detained in Tbilisi on October 1. He spent over a month in Rustavi's 12th penitentiary and on November 8, he was transferred to Gldani prison.

EXCHANGE RATES: US DOLLAR - 3.1435 | EURO - 3.5562 | GBP - 4.2230 | 100 RUSSIAN RUBLE - 4.3184 | SWISS FRANC - 3.3779 |

Georgia at the Historic Crossroads

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

Commenting on the recent developments in Georgia, many people, both inside the country and in the West, come to the conclusion that Georgia is at a historic crossroads. Georgia will either be able to continue the course it has declared on the country's Western orientation, or it will turn into the typical authoritarian regimes that abound in the post-Soviet space and revolve around Putin's Russian orbit.

Such a choice is inevitable if the government is not even democratic, but tries to look like democracy.

It is very difficult to imitate democracy in the presence of a strong opposition, an opposition that is not run by the government. Such a regime is sometimes called "competitive authoritarianism".

In such a situation, the country will not be able to stay in power for long - either a change of government through elections, or a political force in power will refuse to relinquish power and embark on increasing electoral manipulation and repression, culminating in a 'solid' authoritarian regime.

In 2012, a democratic change of government took place in Georgia. The "National Movement" in power at that time did not want to relinquish power and did not expect that it would have to do so. Administrative resources as well, but succumbed to unfavorable election results. Saakashvili did it because his focus was on the West.

The Georgian Dream, which arrived in 2012, and its leader personally pledged to create a democracy in Georgia that would amaze the West as well. Making such a promise was probably easy when they felt the support of the majority of the people, and the people hoped for a better life soon.

A better life, unfortunately, did not come. Support for the ruling party has also plummeted. In the 2020 parliamentary elections, the Georgian Dream was unanimously accused by the opposition of rigging the election and usurping power. The European Union sought to defuse the political crisis, and at the request of Council of Europe President Charles Michel, a document was drafted to 'democratically reconstruct' Georgia's political system - first

to establish an independent judiciary and electoral reform, which restored opposition trust.

But the inevitable result would be a transfer of power into the hands of the opposition coalition. 100 days after the signing, the Georgian Dream canceled the document. The 2021 local government elections failed to ease the political crisis. The opposition continues to accuse the government of rigging the election. The election also drew criticism from Western observers. The self-government elections did not remove the demand for early parliamentary elections from the agenda. The arrival of Mikheil Saakashvili in Georgia added to the situation. Some, including in the West, thought that Saakashvili would come to Georgia to stage a revolution and disrupt the democratic process.

However, Mikheil Saakashvili entered the country before the self-government elections in such a way that the authorities could not hear about it for 4 days and were arrested only after Saakashvili himself published videos proving his presence in Georgia.

Since then, Saakashvili has

been on a hunger strike, and his imprisonment has become a major headache for the Georgian Dream government. The government's attitude towards the arrested Saakashvili, his transfer to a prison hospital with physical and moral abuse, making derogatory comments about the former president and denying the fact of the hunger strike itself, not only infuriates Saakashvili's supporters.

The topic of the elections seems to have shifted backwards and the first task for the opposition was to demand that Saakashvili be taken to a civilian hospital. The United National Movement (UNM) has vowed not to hold rallies near the hospital where Saakashvili will be taken.

Saakashvili was not taken not only to the civil clinic, but also to the court, where Saakashvili was ready to arrive on the 41st day of the hunger strike. The reason for this was the government's fear that Saakashvili, who was brought to court, would be kidnapped by his supporters. The court hearing was postponed to November 24, when the starving Saakashvili may not be able to physically go

to court. Another thing became visible. The arrest of Saakashvili caused great excitement in the Russian government channels. Russian presenters and politicians compete with each other in mocking Saakashvili and Georgia. For the opposition, Saakashvili is a prisoner of Putin-Ivanishvili and a victim of personal revenge.

At the same time, it is reported that the creator of the "Georgian Dream", Bidzina Ivanishvili, who disappeared from public space, left Georgia and went to the United States. This information is not confirmed by the government. Instead, it strengthens the use of force in relations with the opposition. The actions of the Georgian police remind the opposition of the actions of Lukashenko and Putin's law enforcement agencies.

However, it is difficult to say whether they will be able to defeat the 'radical opposition'. The opposition continues to protest. The government must either make reasonable concessions, which primarily mean changing its attitude towards Saakashvili, or continue the chosen course, which is dangerous for the country.

GRASS Deploys Mobile Vaccination Clinics in Dmanisi and Marneuli Municipalities with EU support

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

On November 18, Georgia's Reforms Associates (GRASS) deployed mobile vaccination clinics in the Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Georgian language-speaking settlements in Kvemo Kartli region, within the framework of the "COVID-19: Civil Society Resilience and Sustainability" project, funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by ERIM (formerly IREX Europe) as well as by Human Rights House Tbilisi (HRHT). The main goal of the project is to promote the resilience and sustainability of civil society in the Eastern Partnership countries, which will enable them to mitigate the direct and long-term impact of COVID-19.

Within the framework of the project, GRASS has trained 10 representatives of the local youth, informing them about the



► Georgian COVID certificates will be valid across the European Union, as Georgia was accepted in the EU Digital COVID Certificate system

COVID-19 vaccination process and the vaccine-related disinformation. Conducting door-to-door canvassing on November 15, 16, and 17, young volunteers delivered accurate information about the vaccination to the citizens living in the villages of Shaumiani (also, IDP settlement 'Garadok'), Akhkula and Khikhani in the Marneuli Municipality, and Amamlo and Bezaklo in the Dmanisi Municipality. In addition, the volunteers informed the locals that on November 18,

GRASS, the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health (NCDC), and the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Social Affairs of Georgia deployed mobile vaccination clinics in their villages.

Mobile vaccination sites were set up in the villages of Shaumiani and Amamlo, where locals had the opportunity to get vaccinated. Also, following the pandemic regulations, a mobile musical concert was held next to the vaccination sites.

Initiatives like this are of critical importance, given the reduced trend of vaccination over the last couple of months in the country. As of November 18, only 973,796 have been completely vaccinated in Georgia and 2,074,270 individuals have received at least one dose so far. The infection rate remains critically high - Georgia has reported 4,446 new cases of coronavirus, 5,320 recoveries, and 77 deaths in the past 24 hours. 51,662 remain infected with Covid-19.

According to the Ministry of Health, after the introduction of the government incentive program, the number of vaccinations has increased by 600%. The incentive program envisions a supplement of €200 for the people over 60 years who will be vaccinated by December 31st. The cash supplement is issued after the first vaccination. In general, the Health Ministry press release informed that the immunization process has intensified across the country. Retirees are particularly active in the regions. According to the agency, a total of 19,290

citizens have been vaccinated in Georgia since November 8, which is 332.41% more than in the previous month.

Recall that the Georgian Ministry of Health has launched a COVID pass smartphone application Georgia e-Health which displays an individual's COVID-19 vaccination records, as well as the latest PCR and antigen test results. Georgia e-Health is available both on App Store and Google Play. Following the installation, an individual needs to register in the system. After this, one's vaccination, testing, and recovery information will be displayed automatically. Individuals who do not use smartphones can receive their COVID passes at public service halls.

COVID passes will be required from December 1 to enter the following establishments: Food facilities (both open and closed spaces), cinemas, theatres, opera houses, museums, concert halls, entertainment centers, casinos, gambling facilities, spa centers, gyms, hotels, and mountain resorts.

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 19	
Day	Sunshine High: 12°C
Night	Partly cloudy Low: 4°C
SATURDAY NOVEMBER 20	
Day	Mostly sunny High: 14°C
Night	Partly cloudy Low: 6°C

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Ambassador of Japan to Georgia H.E. Imamura Akira makes the first visit to Racha

This week Ambassador of Japan to Georgia Mr. IMAMURA Akira visited Oni and Ambrolauri Municipalities. During the visit, the Ambassador opened two successfully implemented projects in the region, funded within the Grassroots Human Security Grant Program (GGP) of the Embassy of Japan.

With the support of the Embassy of Japan, Oni Municipality has purchased heavy equipment for disaster response

and disaster risk reduction. In Ambrolauri Municipality, the NGO "Abkhazinterkont" was provided with agricultural equipment for strengthening the economic opportunities of local farmers. The Grant Amount, totaling over 90,000 USD.

During the trip, Ambassador was accompanied with the Governor of Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti Region, Mr. Papuna Margvelidze; Mayors of Oni

and Ambrolauri Municipalities, Mr. Sergi Khidesheli and Mr. Davit Mkhaidze; Heads of Municipalities' Councils and other representatives of local government. Also, the head of NGO "Abkhazinterkont", Mr. Archil Elbakidze.

During the meetings the Ambassador underlined the importance of supporting the sustainable development of mountainous regions in Georgia and on behalf of the government of Japan, once again, ex-

pressed willingness for future cooperation.

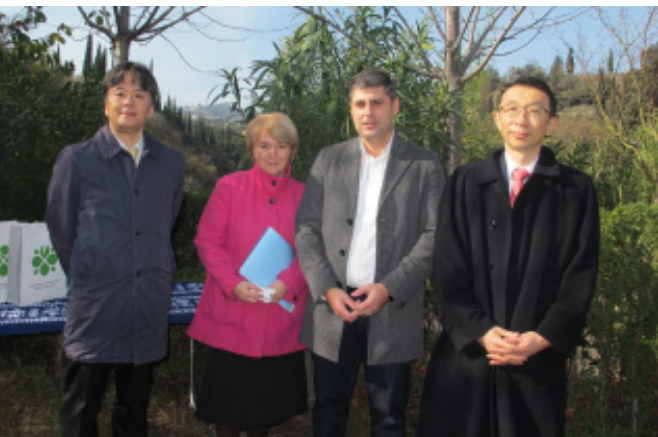
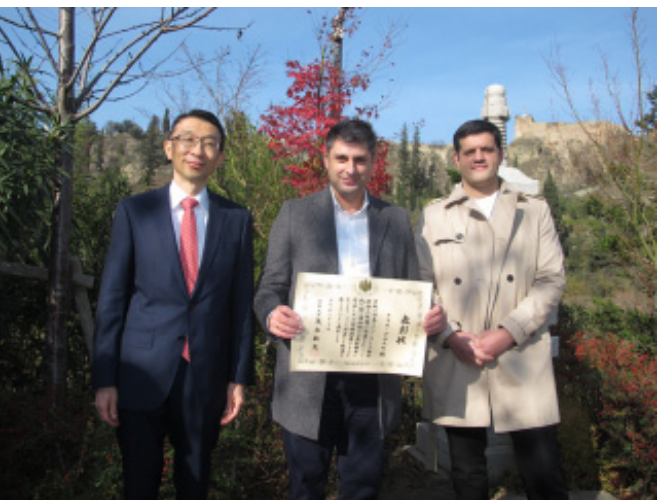
Since the independence of Georgia, within the GGP Grassroots Human Security Program, Japan has funded 200 projects, totaling over 20 million USD (in addition to other grant schemes). The GGP program aims to support human security in Georgia in the following priority fields: environment protection, agriculture, infrastructure, healthcare and education.



On November 18, Ambassador of Japan, H.E. Mr. Imamura Akira has awarded with the Commendations from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan to Mr. Tamaz Darchidze, former director of the Georgian National Botanical Garden.

The Foreign Minister's Commendations are awarded to individuals with outstanding achievements in international fields, in order to acknowledge their contributions to the promotion of friendship between Japan and other countries and areas.

Mr. Tamaz Darchidze has contributed to the developing of mutual relationship by making his utmost efforts in building Japanese Garden at the National Botanical Garden in 2016 and hosting cultural events. Mr. Tamaz Darchidze further contributed to the popularization of the Japanese culture in Georgia by supporting sakura trees planting at the National Botanical Garden in 2020.



დაქვის სერენადები
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ფესტივალის დამფუძნებელი ლიანა ისაკაძე
Founder of the Festival LIANA ISSAKADZE

სამხატვრო ხელმძღვანელი გიორგი ისაკაძე
Artistic Director GIORGI ISSAKADZE

თბილისი
TBILISI
21.11

20:00