

## OSCE Group of Friends of Georgia Urges Russia to Comply With International Commitments

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Within the framework of the 28<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Council of OSCE held in Stockholm, OSCE Group of Friends of Georgia has released a statement that underlines the support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and expresses concern over the occupation of Georgian territories by the Russian Federation.

The joint statement was delivered on behalf of Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America at the 28<sup>th</sup> OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting on December 3.

OSCE Group of Friends of Georgia stresses that they are deeply concerned over the continued occupation of parts of Georgian territory and underlines the need for the peaceful resolution of the conflict based on the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, and international law. The statement urges the Russian Federation to immediately fulfill its obligation under the ceasefire agreement, withdraw its forces to pre-conflict positions, allow unhindered access for the delivery of humanitarian assistance on the ground, and reverse the recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and the so-called South Ossetia regions.

The statement expresses concern over Russia's military presence in the occupied regions and condemns Russia's steps to unilaterally establish the Georgia-Russia state border on the segments of the occupied territories.

The statement also focuses on the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case concerning the armed conflict between Georgia and the Russian Federation in August 2008, according to which, Russia in violation of the Euro-



The joint statement of OSCE Group of Friends of Georgia expresses concern over Russia's military presence in the occupied Georgian regions.

pean Convention on Human Rights, tortured Georgian Prisoners of War, arbitrarily detained and killed Georgian civilians and was responsible for their inhuman and degrading treatment, prevented the return of ethnic Georgians to their homes, and failed to conduct investigations into killings of civilians.

"We call on Russia to fully comply with the judgment, including by allowing internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return to their homes in safety and dignity," the statement reads.

The group of friends is also concerned over the ethnic discrimination against Georgians residing in Georgia's Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions and condemns the decision to replace education in the Geor-

gian language with Russian in schools of the Gali district, which is inhabited by ethnic Georgians.

"We call on those in control to enable full and unhindered access by international human rights organizations to the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia," the statement reads.

They express concern over the installation of barbed wire fences and other artificial barriers along the occupation line and the closure of so-called crossing points for over 2 years. The statement also focuses on the ongoing unlawful detentions at the occupied territories and calls for the 'immediate and unconditional' release of Irakli Bebuia and all those under illegal detention. The group of friends

condemn the killings of Georgian citizens Archil Tatumashvili, Giga Otkhozoria, and Davit Basharuli, and urge the Russian Federation to remove any obstacles to bringing the perpetrators to justice.

They positively assess the reopening of the so-called crossing point at the Enguri bridge this year, as well as the establishment of a humanitarian corridor across the ABL in the Abkhazia region, "which has saved lives during the COVID-19 pandemic."

The Statement reaffirms their unwavering support for the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) and highlights that the EUMM must be allowed to implement its mandate in full, on both sides of the occupation line.

The statement reads that they welcome the decision of the government of Georgia to launch a multi-stakeholder process for developing a comprehensive State Strategy for de-occupation and peaceful conflict resolution, as well as for the Georgian government's peace initiative - A Step to a Better Future- aimed at improving the humanitarian and socio-economic conditions of people residing in Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions.

"We regret the closure of the OSCE mission to Georgia in 2009 and encourage the OSCE participating States to decide on the reopening of the OSCE cross-dimensional mission in Georgia, including a monitoring capacity able to operate unhindered across the ABLs," reads the statement, adding that the re-opening of the mission would considerably strengthen the OSCE's engagement in the Geneva International Discussions and the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism.

The Group of Friends of Georgia pledges to continue to raise awareness of the conflict and the developments on the ground, hold Russia accountable for its obligations and commitments, and facilitate the peaceful resolution of the conflict.



"Isolation and continuous restrictions on freedom of movement have destabilized the situation on the ground and severely impacted the security, safety, well-being, and humanitarian conditions of civilians on the ground," the statement reads.



# EU to Allocate Over €12 mln to Strengthen Defense in Georgia



The Georgian Defense Ministry called the cooperation between the EU and Georgia 'dynamic' as the EU allocates funds to strengthen defense in the country.

Georgia will receive €12.75 million over a period of 36 months.

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

The European Union will allocate funds for Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, and the Republic of Mali to strengthen the capacities of countries in military and defense fields and promote domestic resilience and peace. According to the European Council, for Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine, the EU also aims to enhance the capacity of local armed forces to contribute to Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) military missions and operations.

Georgia will receive €12.75 million over a period of 36 months to help strengthen the Georgian Defense Forces, including their ability to provide their services to civilians in crises or emergencies.

"In particular, it will provide non-lethal medical and engineering equipment and civilian-type mobility assets," the European Council said.

According to the statement, the assistance will comply with relevant international law, in particular international human rights and international humanitarian law, as well as with relevant legal

instruments and best practices based on international and EU rules. The assistance does not involve the supply of equipment designed to deliver lethal force.

The assistance was approved within the framework of the European Peace Facility (EPF). The EPF was established in March 2021 to finance EU external actions with military or defense implications, to prevent conflict, preserve peace, and strengthen international security and stability.

The European Union, together with the German Development Bank (KfW), and the Georgian Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, has launched

a project to support the Georgian Energy Sector as well.

The Technical Assistance Project is worth €8,44 million and aims to strengthen energy security, improve public and industrial energy infrastructure and promote the use of renewable energy. This 4-year project will help Georgia to attract additional investments and strengthen the Georgian energy sector's competitiveness. According to Deputy Minister of Economy Davit Tvalabeishvili, the project will help Georgia meet the commitments included in the Association Agreement signed with the EU.

## The News in Brief

### Saakashvili Terminates Treatment, Says Disciplinary Measures Were Taken Against Him

By THE MESSENGER STAFF

Former President Mikheil Saakashvili refuses treatment. His personal doctor, Nikoloz Kipshidze, read out Saakashvili's address, stating that the reason for the protest was to start disciplinary proceedings and restrict visitors.

"About six hours after [the decision of the State Inspector], two employees of the Eighteenth Institution entered my cell carelessly, in which I identified the



Nikoloz Kipshidze

participants of my torture. They informed me that because I had put my hand on a pressure apparatus to defend myself when they promised to perform medical manipulation against my will, the department decided to take disciplinary action against me.

Which means restricting meetings as well as seizing television. After that my mother, who had all the permits to enter and visit me, was stranded on the street for about four hours and taken back to the street. I was also not allowed to see my personal physician for about an hour until the hospital administration intervened.

This is their response to the findings of the State Inspector and they will not take degrading shots but will take revenge against me. That is why I will stop all medical treatment and will not stop protesting until the decisions of Toloraia's office are implemented and the disciplinary measures are lifted and the normal admission of visitors to me is resumed.

### Minister of Education Says Ivanishvili Must be Portrayed in History With Dignity

By THE MESSENGER STAFF

Minister of Education Mikheil Chkhenkeli says that Bidzina Ivanishvili is a person of historical significance and an extremely great philanthropist, therefore, in the history of modern Georgia "it must be presented with dignity and it will be so in the relevant textbooks."

He said it was "categorically unacceptable to spread false information from individuals who took part in the deliberate destruction of education and science during the previous government."

"I would like to remind the public that the textbook grievance process is fully transparent and during the grievance process everyone has the opportunity to see the models of the submitted textbooks and express their opinions.

I would especially like to mention the great role of Mr. Bidzina Ivanishvili in the development of our country. Of course, Mr. Bidzina Ivanishvili is a person of historical significance and an extremely great philanthropist.

Therefore, Mr. Bidzina Ivanishvili must be represented in the history of modern Georgia with dignity, and this will be the case in the relevant textbooks," Chkhenkeli said.

On December 5, Droa's leader Elene Khoshtaria posted a photo from one of the school textbooks on her Facebook page, in which she said she was praising Bidzina Ivanishvili.

## Weather

Wednesday, December 8

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 13°C

Night Mostly Cloudy

Low: 5°C

Thursday, December 9

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 14°C

Night Mostly Cloudy

Low: 4°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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