

Georgian Government's Actions Eroded Democratic Process, Says US Deputy Assistant-Sec Olson



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BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Erika Olson, who is overseeing policy for Southern Europe and the Caucasus, said on December 8 that the Georgian Dream government has committed to judicial and electoral reforms, and the US would like to see it follow through on those commitments.

"We continue to strongly support Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations and as a partner, we want to help them in the judiciary and electoral reforms they have decided are important for the future of the country," she underlined.

While addressing the Foreign Policy's virtual dialogue "Great Power Plays in the South Caucasus," Olson positively assessed Georgia's efforts to ensure regional peace and its commitment to democratic reforms but added that the Georgian government's actions have 'eroded some of that democratic process.

She noted that the US will continue to engage very strongly in Georgia's democratic processes, adding that "I have delivered tough messages when it is necessary, I think that is an important part of friendships."

Olson pointed out that her recent trip



► US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Erika Olson

to Georgia reminded her of the strong and enduring partnership between Georgia and the United States and stressed the importance of continued work for democratic development.

Olson's remarks come after the US Ambassador Kelly Degnan called the appointment of four Supreme Court judges 'disappointing'. The ambassador also noted that if the ruling Georgian Dream party rejects an electoral bill that would establish a two percent election threshold for the next two parliamentary elections, there might be a risk of establishing 'the tyranny of the majority.' The US Embassy to Georgia has called on the Georgian parliament numerous times before to halt the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court until large-scale judicial reforms are implemented in the country.

Olson's statement was followed by criticism from the ruling party. According to the Head of Parliament's Legal Affairs Committee, Anri Okhanashvili, he would like to hear a concrete example of an international best practice that contradicts the Georgian government's efforts to reform the country's electoral and judiciary systems, stating that "criticism should be based on a specific fact and argument."

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Health Minister Tikaradze Resigns

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Georgian Minister of Health Ekaterine Tikaradze announced her resignation at a briefing yesterday. According to her, she will continue her activities on the political board of the Georgian Dream. She had been

in the post of Georgian health minister since June 2019.

Tikaradze briefed the activities carried out during her ministry and thanked the medical community for their cooperation. According to her, even though the epidemiological situation has been very difficult and the

main focus was the fight against the pandemic, the Ministry has implemented a number of important projects.

“Being a health minister is a huge responsibility for me. All our activities and decisions were targeted at reaching the best solutions for our country



► According to Tikaradze, she will join the GD Political board and continue her work from there.



► Ekaterine Tikaradze was appointed Georgian Minister of IDPs, Labor, Health, and Social Affairs on June 18, 2019.

and the health of our citizens,” she noted.

Tikaradze stressed that after three years of intensive work and after consultations with the Prime Minister and the ruling party chair she has decided to continue her work in the politi-

cal board of the Georgian Dream party.

“We believe that the projects that have been launched and implemented have already closed a certain stage of development, and now we are moving to another stage,” stated Tikaradze.

TV Pirveli Director Expects the Arrest of the Accused in Khazaradze-Japaridze-Tsereteli Case

BY THE MESSENGER STAFF

Vato Tsereteli, the director of TV Pirveli, says that he expects the arrest of the accused in the Khazaradze-Japaridze-Tsereteli case. Speaking on Formula One, he also mentioned that this is Bidzina Ivanishvili's revenge on his family:

“I expect that both my father and Mamuka Khazaradze will be arrested. Such information is there anyway. Innocent people are being turned into political prisoners. The Georgian Dream will not be asked not to do such a thing. It is Bidzina Ivanishvili's direct revenge on me. I will prove it,” stated Tsereteli.

Today, on December 9, Khazaradze-Japaridze-Tsereteli court session, where Badri Japaridze was interrogated, was left by the defendants in protest. According to Mamuka Khazaradze, the prosecutor's office is not inter-



ested in their arguments and has written an indictment in advance. He also told reporters that he expects to be caught.

“The report was written a long time ago. They were not interested in either the clarifier or the information that I went through in detail.

Suddenly we saw that the 30-page report was ready. The prosecutor's office does not care at all what happened, the verdict has been issued in advance. The Soviet prosecutor's office is leading this country, we are not even deep in the depot. I left the session in protest, this process has nothing to do with Law.”

Mamuka Khazaradze, Badri Japaridze and Avtandil Tsereteli were charged in a group on July 24, 2019 with money laundering of up to \$ 2 million, which was accompanied by a particularly large amount of income.

FRIDAY DECEMBER 10
 Day Sunny High: 14°C
 Night Clear Low: 2°C
SATURDAY DECEMBER 11
 Day Sunny High: 13°C
 Night Clear Low: 2°C

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