

## Occupation Forces Detain Georgian Citizen in Gori Municipality

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

Russian occupation forces illegally detained Georgian citizen Mamuka Chkhikvadze near the village of Zemo Nikozi in Gori Municipality on December 12. As the State Security Service (SSS) reports, the information has been provided to the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) and co-chairs of the Geneva International Discussions.

"The central government of Georgia is using all available mechanisms for the immediate release of Georgian citizens illegally arrested by Russian occu-

pation forces," SSS said.

According to the agency, the destructive actions carried out by Russian occupying forces in the occupied regions and along the occupation line, such as arbitrary detentions, damages the security environment in the region and affect the everyday life of locals.

US Ambassador to Georgia Kelly Degan has responded to the fact, calling it 'unacceptable'. As she noted, the pressure and harassment on the Georgian citizens will stop if Russia complies with its obligations under the 2008 agreement to withdraw its forces.

"We are always very con-



Georgian citizen detained by occupation forces is a former law enforcement officer, Mamuka Chkhikvadze.



According to the State Security Service, they have activated a hotline on this issue operating through the European Union Monitoring Mission.

cerned when we hear about Georgian citizens being detained or harassed along the ABL... It is a very simple step that Russia needs to take [withdraw its forces] and that is what everyone is waiting to see in terms of ending this kind of harassment,

continued harassment of Georgian citizens, and promoting any kind of better atmosphere for discussions," the US ambassadors noted.

The illegal detention of Georgian citizens is a common issue near the occupation line. On De-

ember 10, two other Georgian citizens were detained near de-facto Tskhinvali. Relatives of Chkhikvadze state that the government must use all levers at its disposal to release the Georgian citizen, otherwise they will announce protest rallies.

By MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

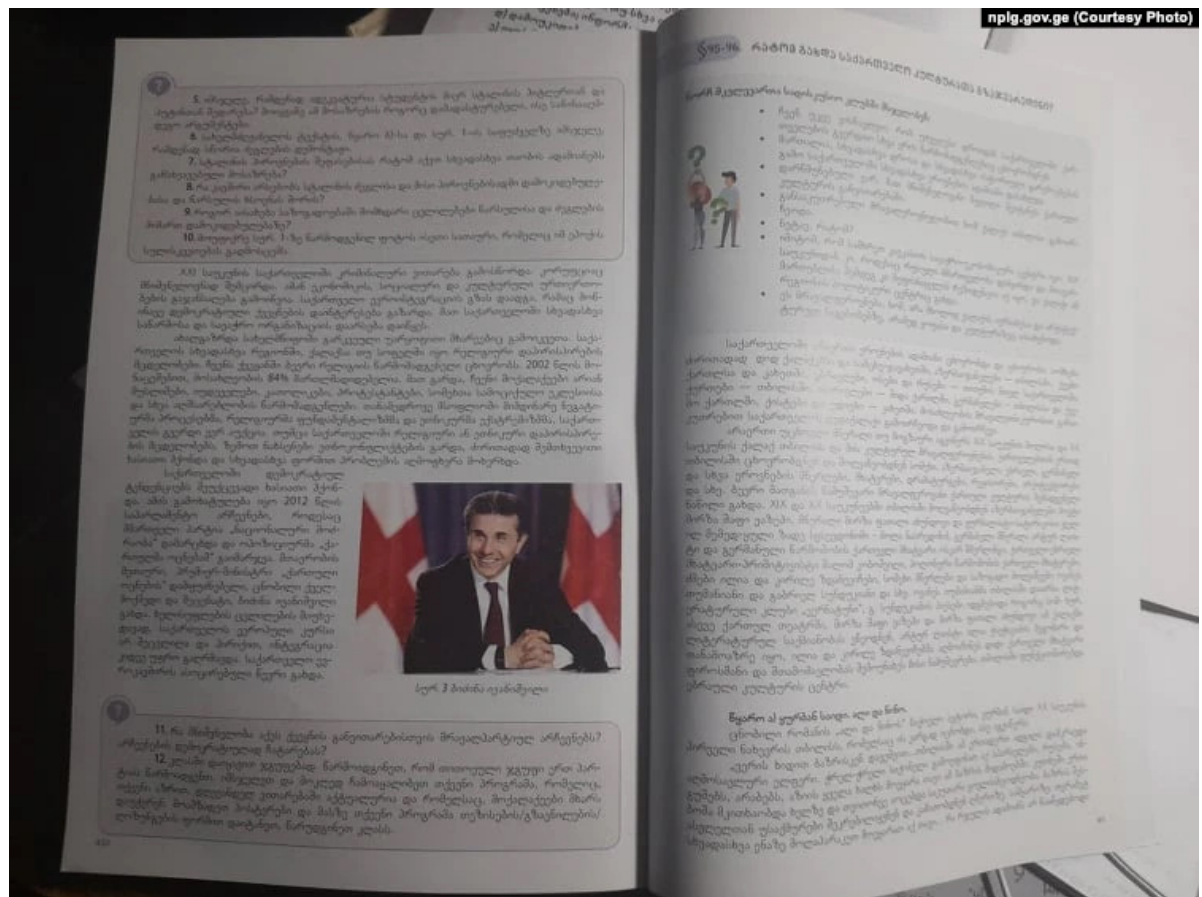
Last week, another topic of controversy arose in Georgian politics - it was unacceptable for a part of the society to present the main issues of the history of Georgia from 2003-2012 in two 9th grade history textbooks, which are approved by the Ministry of Education in 2021. Opposition Sees Government Propaganda, Ministry of Education and Georgian Dream leaders defend their position.

The two history textbooks that have caused a great deal of controversy in recent days, were approved in June 2021, and are being taught in schools. That is why one of the topics of outrage was this - why did not the education experts and school history teachers who knew the contents of this book say anything right away.

In this, too, some saw pressure on teachers by the authorities to be cautious in expressing their opinions. The cause of the political controversy was the last two sections of the textbooks, which tell the story of the post-Rose Revolution period, 2003-2012.

According to critics of the government, these paragraphs are tendentiously written, on the one hand, diminishing the achievements of Saakashvili's govern-

## Dispute Over History Textbooks



ment after the Rose Revolution, and on the other hand, trying to show the merits of the "Georgian Dream" and Bidzina Ivanishvili. These paragraphs saw an at-

tempt to rewrite recent history in line with the interests of the Georgian Dream and the Russian authorities.

Critics say the textbooks talk

about the mistakes made by Saakashvili's government but say little or nothing about the impressive achievements of post-Rose Revolution reforms in curb-

ing corruption, building state institutions, and accelerating economic growth.

Representatives of the Georgian Dream do not accept this criticism and some demand that the 'previous government' be portrayed more negatively in the textbooks.

According to Irakli Kobakhidze, the textbook should mention that "under Saakashvili's regime, for 9 years, the most authoritarian regime was established in Georgia, the result of which was a systemic violation of human rights."

The narrative of the August 2008 war, according to critics, follows the Russian version, as if only 'Ossetian formations' were bombing Georgian villages, and Saakashvili's order to open fire was followed by the invasion of Russian troops in Georgia.

The topic of "Georgia's relations with the world community" proposed by the authors of one of the textbooks as a 'discussion' issue for the students was considered to be obvious pro-Russian propaganda. Georgia is trying to make friends with Western countries, but "none of us are our neighbors!" so "first of all, we should make friends with neighboring countries, and whoever

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 3.0978; Euro - 3.5052; GBP - 4.0999; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.2234; Swiss Franc - 3.3534

# Dispute Over History Textbooks

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does not make friends, we should still have peaceful relations.”

Such a judgment, led by a teacher, is likely to end with a rejection of Western orientation.

A particular criticism of the opposition was followed by the inclusion of Bidzina Ivanishvili's picture and biography in the textbook. According to their statements, it is unacceptable to allow the praise of Bidzina Ivanishvili, who is behind the current government, in school textbooks. According to Zaal

Udumashvili, a representative of the United National Movement, “if we were told about Lenin's biography in the Soviet Union, students would be forced to write down Bidzina Ivanishvili's biography in the same way.”

According to Lasha Dameraia, the representative of European Georgia, the “Georgian Dream” has diverted the country from the path of democratic development and “does everything to show, like the Soviet Union, the cult of the ordinary person, as well as Ivanishvili's merits be-

fore Georgia.” Elene Khoshtaria, the leader of the Droa party, believes that the protest should start in the history textbook “for the glorification of Beladi Bidzina”.

The demand to remove Ivanishvili from the textbook made the authorities very angry and they said even more about Bidzina Ivanishvili's merits than what was written in the textbooks. “It is not strange for anyone that Bidzina Ivanishvili has a special role in modern Georgian history.

“He was able to unite the po-

litical spectrum and in 2012 he made a significant change in the state and our society,” said, for example, Irakli Chikovani, a member of the majority. The position of the Minister of Education Mikheil Chkhenkeli was similar, who said that “Mr. Bidzina Ivanishvili must be presented with dignity in the history of modern Georgia” and will be so in the future.

We should think that in the new history textbooks, the narrative will continue after 2012 and will narrate the successive victories of the “Georgian Dream” in all elections and the destructive opposition, which questions these victories.

The opposition is demanding

the removal of these history textbooks from schools, although it is already clear that the Georgian Dream will not only remove these textbooks but also seem to reinforce the passages criticized by the opposition. The nature of coverage of events after 2003 in school textbooks is likely to change in the event of a change of government.

In this regard, some people remembered the history textbook published during Shevardnadze's rule, which wrote about the wise policy of the then leader of Adjara, Aslan Abashidze, to make his ruling region prosperous. However, nothing like this is written today ...

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The Georgian government is raising the minimum age for gambling in the country to 25, as well as banning public officials and the socially vulnerable from gambling. Also, a list of addicts and prohibited persons will be created. The draft law stipulates that a person requests the entry of his/her data in the list of dependents on the basis of his/her application, and his/her family member will be entitled to request the entry of the person's data in the court. The circle of prohibited persons will be defined and participation in gambling and winning games will be prohibited for persons employed in state budget organizations, persons employed in regulatory bodies and also family members registered in a single database of socially vulnerable.

Changes prohibit transfer of money by a player to another player's gaming accounts. In this direction, the gambling organizers shall be binding, players should undergo every year the re-verification exercise to determine the organizer and gambling arrangement in place for recording information on admitted individuals.

In total, this restriction applies to up to 1 million citizens. The tax base for online gaming operators is completely changing - expanding by 65% -70% compared to the existing one.

The draft law will be discussed not by a normal, but by an accelerated process, and it should enter into force in January 2022. The initiators of the changes are the majority MPs Davit

# Gambling Related Legislative Changes Spark Discussion at Committee Hearing



By the decision of the Bureau the legislative package of these changes will be discussed - not in the usual, but in an expedited manner, and it should enter into force in January 2022.

Songhulashvili, Levan Mgaloblishvili, Gela Samkharauli, Gocha Enukidze, Bezhan Tsakadze, Elguja Gotsiridze and Dachi Beraia. According to them, the agenda includes the introduction of the necessary regulations by the state and the implementation of measures to ensure the protection of public interests and improve the social background.

The explanatory card's economic calculations indicate that after 1 million citizens are banned from gambling, tax revenues from gambling operators will be reduced by about ₾ 50 million, which in turn will be compensated by an increase in tax burden due to changes in the tax code - according to Revenue Service, if the current legislation is maintained, the estimated revenue of the 2022 budget in the system of electronic gambling system is ₾ 175 million in profit tax.

In case of adoption of the bill, the estimated budget revenues

for 2022 from the system-electronic form of gambling will be ₾ 127 million in profit tax, and ₾ 98 million in withdrawal tax. Accordingly, if the proposed changes are implemented, the estimated budget revenue for the 2022 budget from this area will total ₾ 225 million, which will be reduced by about ₾ 50 million, taking into account the restrictions in the law.

Based on the above, the estimated budget revenues for 2022 in the system-electronic form of gambling are estimated at about ₾ 175 million. For comparison, the total amount paid in budget in previous years were: 2018 - ₾ 393 million, in 2019 - ₾ 420 million, in 2020 - ₾ 241 million.

Giorgi Katamadze, Gambling Association board member said at the committee hearing that the regulation would lead to an outflow of users to foreign unregulated websites, resulting in \$ 200 million annually leaving the Georgian economy. He remarked that according to the



საიხივო საკანონმდებლო საბუღალტრო ბიზნესის ასოციაცია  
NNLE Georgian Gambling Association

The gambling business announces the abolition of sponsorship of Georgian sports

NBG, ₾ 120 million is already going to these 33 websites available from Georgia today, none of them are registered in the country.

The Ministry of Finance has a plan to ban Georgian commercial banks and transfer operators from transferring funds to accounts that are affiliated with foreign gambling systems in order to prevent the transfer of games to foreign sites. However, gambling operators believe that this regulation will not stop the outflow of users to foreign systems.

These regulations also provide for a complete ban on advertising (other than sponsorships). Gambling Business Association announced the abolition of sponsorship of Georgian sports. According to the statement, the bill, which has already been initiated in the parliament, will put severe pressure on companies employed in the gambling business sector, which will automatically lead to the need for

cost optimization and make it impossible to invest in the development of Georgian sports.

At a parliamentary committee hearing, TV executives also made critical remarks about the legislative package, saying it would lead to a complete decline in the TV industry. Representatives of opposition minded channels Mtavair Arkhi, TV Pirveli and Kavkasia TV argued that this law will lead to reduced funds in televisions, since betting companies are biggest sponsors. Gvaramia of Mtavair Arkhi suggested taking a 1-year transitional measure and enacting it in September, otherwise this regulation would withdraw 20% of his channel's budget. According to the explanatory card of the legislative package, the advertising sector has already generated ₾ 29.5 million from gambling this year. Consequently, these funds will be reduced, including the televisions.

## Weather

Wednesday, December 15

Day ☁ Cloudy  
High: 10°C  
Night 🌙 Clear  
Low: 3°C

Thursday, December 16

Day ☀ Clear  
High: 15°C  
Night 🌧 Partly Cloudy  
Low: 4°C

published by  
**The Messenger**

43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi,  
0108, Georgia  
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