

By THE MESSENGER STAFF

## Margvelashvili to Meet Saakashvili in Gori Hospital Today

The fourth President of Georgia Giorgi Margvelashvili will meet with the third President Mikheil Saakashvili today, December 27. Margvelashvili plans to arrive at Gori Military Hospital at 12:00.

The main topic of the meeting will be the process of national consent initiated by President Salome Zurbashvili.

On December 20, Giorgi Margvelashvili announced that he had met with Zurbashvili as part of a national consensus process. According to him, he is going to meet with Saakashvili, at whose request he applied to the Penitentiary Service. This request was granted to him.

Salome Zurbashvili represented Georgia at the Democracy Summit organized by US President Joe Biden and said that overcoming polarization and hatred is necessary and as the President of Georgia, she will start a nationwide dialogue to achieve a common understanding of history.

Zurbashvili then shared his vision for achieving national consensus with the parties at the pre-New Year reception, and now holds individual meetings with politicians.



## NGOs: We Are Concerned Over Planned Attack on Inspector's Office



dealt with the facts of possible inhuman treatment of the third president of Georgia, which is still being investigated by the agency," the statement reads.

They said that in the process of setting up the State Inspector's Office, the non-governmental sector felt that the transfer of control functions over the legality of the investigation and information processing to one agency might not have been effective.

However, according to them, the observation of the institute clearly showed that no shortcomings were found in practice in terms of compatibility of personal data protection and investigative functions.

The organizations call on the authorities to stop the attacks on independent institutions and to create all conditions for the smooth operation of the State Inspector's Office.

By THE MESSENGER STAFF

NGOs have expressed grave concern over the Georgian Dream's planned attack on the State Inspector's Office, calling for "independence of the institution and breach of trust."

"Two years after the launch of the Inspector's Service, the independence and impartiality of the Service has been positively assessed by both the non-governmental sector and international partners.

"The service quickly and effectively



### STATE INSPECTOR'S SERVICE

# Conversations About National Reconciliation Against the Backdrop of Political Polarization

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

The political polarization in Georgia and the need to reduce it have long been talked about both inside and outside the country. The opposition initiated the talk of national reconciliation, but the vision of the issue of reconciliation was polarized too.

President Zurabishvili also took the initiative to reach a national consensus, met with the Patriarch on the issue and received a blessing from him. However, the future will show whether even a partial agreement can be reached or not.

At a virtual summit organized by US President Joe Biden on December 10, Georgian President Salome Zurabishvili vowed to engage the public to launch a process to achieve a "common understanding of recent history." These words were interpreted as the pursuit of consensus in society and, consequently, the reduction of polarization.

US Ambassador to Georgia Kelly Degnan immediately responded to President Zurabishvili's initiative, noting

that the United States would be happy to support any initiative that would help reduce polarization and resolve deep divisions in the country. At the same time, according to Degnan, it is important to work in the Parliament of Georgia to reduce polarization.

Clearly, steps to reduce polarization are expected primarily from the government. On December 15, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg directly called on Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili to work with the ruling party to "resolve political differences and reduce polarization rhetoric and activities." He also noted that Georgia is expected to adhere to democratic standards.

Stoltenberg did not receive an answer from Gharibashvili, but he was soon answered by Irakli Kobakhidze, the chairman of the Georgian Dream from Tbilisi. He told reporters that the ruling party would "do everything" to reduce polarization, but "within a rational framework." Unfortunately, the government and the opposition have radically different views on what is 'rational'.

The opposition considers it impossible to reach an agreement in the context of political repression, when lawsuits against political leaders and media managers continue, with a view to their possible arrest. The release of Mikheil Saakashvili, the announcement of a general political amnesty and the appointment of early parliamentary elections are considered to be an important step towards reconciliation by the opposition.

The response of the Georgian Dream to the initiative of national reconciliation by the opposition is already known. According to Irakli Kobakhidze, this requires Mikheil Saakashvili and his government officials to repent of the crimes committed during their rule, to answer for them, and after that the 'National Movement' must leave politics altogether.

In other words, the main opposition party, which could not 'finish' anything through elections, should disappear from Georgian politics.

In the face of such differing views of the government and the

opposition, it is difficult to say what President Zurabishvili can actually do to reach an agreement, even with the blessing of the patriarch.

It is more likely that an agreement will be reached on some of the issues covered by the famous Charles Michel Agreement, the implementation of which was made problematic by the Georgian Dream when the agreement was annulled. For example, a constitutional amendment to reduce the electoral threshold to 2% is relevant today.

The amendment was adopted in the first reading, but the Georgian Dream sets a new condition and agrees to further consideration only if the opposition stops talking about early elections and reconciles with the fact that no elections will be held in Georgia until 2024.

This was discussed during the December 15 meeting of the opposition with Irakli Kobakhidze, however, judging by the statements made publicly, this request is unacceptable for the opposition participating in the meeting.

In the current situation, a significant part of the opposition is skeptical about the possibility of reaching a national consensus, because the government does not want a real step in this direction, and as Giga Bokeria notes, the process of universal reconciliation "will turn into a simulation and decoration."

The opposition is not going to remove the demand for early elections from the agenda, nor will it abandon the issue of Saakashvili's release from prison. Will continue protests in this direction.

The government does not attach much importance to the opposition-organized protest rallies, especially in the period before the New Year. The constitutional amendments will be returned to parliament in February.

By this time, there is likely to be some sort of crisis in Ukraine, and if the West is able to defend Ukraine and oust Putin, the Georgian government will heed the advice of its Western friends on democratic reforms.

## Politics / Economics

### Turkey-Georgia Free Trade Agreement Committee holds annual meeting

The 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Turkey-Georgia Joint Free Trade Agreement Committee was held in Tbilisi on December 23, chaired by Deputy Minister of Trade Mustafa Tuzcu and Deputy Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia Gennady Arveladze. After the official meetings, Mr. Tuzcu visited the Embassy, where he met with the Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey, H.E. Ms. Fatma Ceren Yazgan as well as the representatives of the business circles of the two countries, who have made a great contribution to the development of trade relations between Turkey and Georgia. The largest importers from Turkey to Georgia were awarded certificates of appreciation from Turkey.



#### Weather

Monday, December 27

Day Clear  
High: 10°C  
Night Clear  
Low: 0°C

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