

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Opposition Now Demands Mandates That They Canceled to Be Filled With Open Lists

The revoked mandates of Shalva Natelashvili and Badri Japaridze should be filled with the canceled proportional lists. The statement was made by the chairperson of the faction 'UNM - Power in Unity' Khatia Dekanoidze.

After the abolition of Badri Japaridze's mandate, which parliament voted for yesterday, there is a threat of establishing a commission of inquiry into Saakashvili's case in the parliament. It takes 50 votes to form a commission, without Badri Japaridze the issue has 49 supporters.

After the parliamentary elections, opposition parties called the election results illegitimate and boycotted parliament. Shortly afterward, two opposition MPs from the Citizens' Party took opposition seats in the legislature. The National Movement, Lelo, the Labor Party, Strategy Builder, and European Georgia appealed to the CEC to close the voter lists. The CEC chairman granted their request. After that, if the mandates of the deputies of these factions in the parliament are revoked, they will not be replaced by another member of the list. The mandated deputies also applied for early termination of their authority, but the parliamentary majority did not comply with their request.

After the signing of Charles Michel's document, Lelo, Strategy Builder, and Girchi entered the Parliament. The release of Nika Melia from prison was followed by the entry of the United National Movement in the parliament. At this time 100 days had passed since the April 19 agreement and Georgian Dream canceled the document claiming it 'served its mission and exhausted itself'.

Charles Michel's document was not signed by the Labor Party, European Georgia, the Law and Justice Party (although Tako Charkviani entered Parliament). Also, Elene Khoshtaria, member



Following the decision to enter parliament, the UNM again announced a boycott after Saakashvili's arrest, but on January 31 informed of ending the boycott again.

of the European Georgia electoral list and is currently the leader of Droa.

As the CEC has commented with the media, according to the law, it is impossible to restore the canceled list, nor is it possible to fill the parliamentary mandates in case the party has canceled the proportional electoral list.

Constitutionalist Vakhushthi Menabde explains that to develop a mechanism for restoring lists, transitional provisions must be written, which must be registered in parliament, pass committee hearings, approved in 3 plenary sessions, and

finally signed into force by the president.

The head of the organization 'Fair Elections ISFED', Nino Dolidze confirmed that CEC won't be able to do that according to the current legislation and this should be the subject of political consensus and agreement if the political will is shown and the relevant process commences, further legislative change will be required.

"The legal mechanisms can be found if there is the political will to do so, just as when the Charles Michel Document was signed, there were some political decisions that found a legal way." Dolidze

said, adding that it would be the right way for the ruling party to act, since 'each MP is a big loss for the country'.

NGOs stated on February 10 calling on parliament to suspend the process of revoking the mandates and to start discussing the possibility of restoring the so-called canceled lists, which, they say, will help avoid a political crisis.

Givi Mikanadze, First Deputy Chairman of the Georgian Dream faction, responded to the abolition of mandates for opposition MPs during his political speech at the plenary session.

"I would like to remind our colleagues from the opposition that you have canceled the lists, you missed the sittings, you wrote the resignations, so it is your responsibility from the beginning to the end that the opposition is represented in the parliament today with 64 deputies and after today's sitting 61."

He said that the speculation that the suspension of the mandates was related to the obstruction of the establishment of the commission of inquiry is unfounded, as there are 61 opposition members left in the parliament, and the establishment of the commission needs 50 votes. The formation of a commission of inquiry into Saakashvili's case is not supported by Citizens, European Socialists, and For Georgia.

Leader of European Georgia, Giga Bokeria commented that inconsistency in confronting an authoritarian regime ends in dire consequences. Not so long ago there was a situation when the Georgian Dream had such a serious problem because of the boycott that it did not interrupt the power of the opposition and this process was going on.

"Not entering the parliament of a significant part of the opposition was a serious problem for it in the international arena. Then a fundamental mistake was made by Lelo, a strategy by the builder and the National Movement, the problem was removed from the GD."



The termination of Badri Japaridze's mandate was supported by the members of the majority. In the case of Natelashvili and Khoshtaria, several opposition MPs also voted in favor of termination.

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 3.0276; Euro - 3.4348; GBP - 4.1030; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.9970; Swiss Franc - 3.2727

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

Who Will be There to Protect Georgia?

Many politicians and experts talk about Russia's aggression against Ukraine that will not leave Georgia aside. However, it may also be that if Putin has not achieved much in Ukraine, he may resort to aggression against Georgia, thus retaining the image of a 'powerful leader.'

Mikheil Saakashvili, the third President of Georgia in prison, is actively talking about Russia's aggressive plans against Georgia. According to Saakashvili, Russia will try to do what it had planned in 2009 — declare the occupied Tskhinvali region as part of the Russian Federation, which it actively 'borderizing', trying to occupy the Truso Valley and Anaklia Port, as well as Enguri hydroelectric station.

It is interesting how the current government of Georgia will act in this case, which for years pursues a policy of 'not irritating' Russia, does not vote for the expansion of the occupation zone in the Tskhinvali region, and recently did not dare to mention the role of the Russian aggressor in the resolution in support of Ukraine. It can be said with certainty that such an action by Russia will lead to anti-govern-

ment protests in Tbilisi.

The opposition has long considered the Georgian Dream government to be pursuing a Russian policy in Georgia. According to Saakashvili, Russia has prepared a plan to change the government in Georgia and establish an open pro-Russian government. To do this, use the agency embedded in the armed forces, security, church, alt-info, and other areas. One of the leading politicians of the 'Georgian Dream', who has close ties with the FSB, is becoming the leader of the openly 'Russian Georgia'.

What Saakashvili did not fully, named the TV channel Mtavari Arkhi, according to which, the leader of 'Russian Georgia' is the elected mayor of Tbilisi Kakhi Kaladze. The Georgian Dream did not pay attention to the statements of Saakashvili and the 'Main Channel' as absurd, but the steps taken by Russia indicate the reality of such or such a plan.

Despite the Georgian Dream's policy of not irritating the Georgian Dream, President Alexander Lukashenko of Belarus abruptly announced on February 7 that he did not rule out recognizing the independence

of occupied Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region. In 2009, Minsk was considering recognizing Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region, but ultimately did not take that step. Lukashenko then explained the decision by saying that Moscow refused to share the negative consequences, including the direction of sanctions that awaited Belarus from the West if it recognized the two regions.

Now, it seems, in exchange for Russia's help in suppressing opposition speeches, Lukashenko is ready to do whatever Moscow dictates. It is ready to get involved in the war against Ukraine and to recognize the occupied territories of Georgia as 'independent countries'.

The response from Moscow to Lukashenko's statement was not delayed. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the Belarusian president himself knew what to do with Abkhazia, the Tskhinvali region, and Crimea and did not need outside instructions.

The reaction of the Georgian Foreign Ministry to these statements was moderate. A spokesman for the ministry said that

given the bilateral relations between Belarus and Georgia, the 'Recognition of independence is not on the agenda.' Instead, the separatist regime in Sukhumi expressed hope that Lukashenko would recognize their independence.

As for the occupied Tskhinvali region, their ruler Anatoly Bibilov prefers independence to 'joining' directly with Russia. According to Anatoly Bibilov, in this way 'United Ossetia' will be formed within Russia. Bibilov declared "unification" with the Russian Federation in March 2020 as a strategic goal of the Tskhinvali region. On April 10 this year Bibilov has 'presidential elections', and Moscow supports his candidacy.

According to the statistics of the occupied region, as a result of the 'ethnic cleansing' of the Georgian population over the years, about 48,000 Ossetians live in the Tskhinvali region, although some experts consider this number to be exaggerated. There are about 7,000 Russian troops in the region.

What is the purpose of Lukashenko's statement regarding Georgia during the crisis in Ukraine? After all, official

Tbilisi is trying not to deserve Moscow's wrath. If Moscow declares the occupied region of Tskhinvali as part of itself, then the Georgian Dream will lose any argument for pursuing its chosen policy towards Moscow, and in the event of an open aggressive move, Moscow will probably not be limited to the Tskhinvali region alone.

The Kremlin aims to expand the occupation zone and establish an open pro-Russian government in Tbilisi. "We have to adapt and work with our Western partners to avoid 'worse,'" Saakashvili said in a letter referring to Russia's plan. It is clear that Saakashvili is not referring to the current Georgian government, he is referring to the Western-oriented opposition and Western friends.

The West's attention is focused on Ukraine. Putin knows that war in Ukraine will not be easy for Russia, nor does it guarantee an easy defeat for Ukraine, and the threat of harsh Western sanctions is real. However, it does not back down and the threat of war has not disappeared, which some experts expect in the second half of February.

Georgian FM Meets EU South Caucasus Representative



The meeting addressed the tense security situation in the region created by Russia and its moves targeted against the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia and Ukraine.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

On 15 February 2022, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, David Zalkaliani,

Weather

Wednesday, February 16

Day Cloudy
High: 8°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 1°C

Thursday, February 17

Day Mostly Cloudy
High: 9°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 1°C

met with European Union's Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia, Co-Chair of the Geneva International Talks, Toivo Klaar. As MFA noted, the meeting focused on the tense security environment in the region created as a result of Russia's policy and Russia's moves targeted against the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia and Ukraine.

The sides focused on the 'grave environment' in terms of security, humanitarian, and human rights situation in the occupied regions of Georgia. The illegal and provocative actions carried out by Russian Federation were especially stressed, including the de facto annexation of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali, increasing militarization, reinforcement of the occupation line



The meeting also focused on the importance of the Geneva international discussions and the lack of fulfillment of the August 12, 2008 ceasefire agreement by the Russian Federation.

with barbed wire, and artificial barriers, and human rights abuses in the occupied territories. Immediate and unconditional release of Georgian citizens illegally detained by the occupation forces, and matters of the restriction of the freedom of movement were also in focus.

The parties also touched upon the ongoing Geneva talks and stressed the need for Russia to fulfill its international obliga-

tions, including the August 12, 2008 ceasefire agreement.

The meeting focused on the Georgian government's efforts in the development of a state strategy for the peaceful settlement of the conflict. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia thanked the EU Special Representative for the EU's involvement and efforts to resolve the conflict peacefully and establish peace and stability in the region.

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The Messenger

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

Khatuna Gogichaishvili
Layout Designer, Photographer

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