

Georgia Ranks 100th in the World in Terms of Fuel Prices, PM Garibashvili Says

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

Inflation, as well as rising prices, is a challenge around the world and naturally, Georgia cannot be an exception, Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili announced in response to protests in Georgia over rising fuel costs. As he noted, fuel prices are higher in 99 countries compared to Georgia.

On Sunday, protesters gathered to demand the abolition of excise tax on fuel and the transfer of the VAT to a floating regime, which, according to them, would reduce the price of fuel by 80-90 tetri. The police detained 20 activists when they tried to block the road.

Garibashvili noted that the protesters 'behaved provocatively' and assessed the events as 'unacceptable'. According to him, the rally was orchestrated by the opposition party United National Movement, claiming that opponents of the Government are trying to mislead citizens regarding fuel prices and inflation.



According to Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili, fuel prices are higher in 99 countries compared to Georgia.



The main demands of the protesters were the abolishment of excise tax on fuel and the transfer of the VAT to a floating regime.

Davit Usupashvili, one of the leaders of Lelo, stated that PM's statement about the UNM being behind the rally is 'comical' and 'impossible to comment on'.

According to the Prime Minister, the ongoing war in Ukraine affects prices and the economy. He also added that due to the economic crisis caused by the Covid pandemic, the inflation rate in many countries not only exceeded the forecast but in most cases, reached a record level.

As he noted, Georgia could not be the exception as it is connected to the world market. Garibashvili stressed that gas prices have risen sharply in Europe, adding that the cheapest gas in Europe is in Georgia, after Azerbaijan.

The Minister of Economy of Georgia announced that a potential decrease is expected in fuel prices through the importation of the product purchased at cheaper rates. He also noted that they are not considering abolishing the fuel tax, as he believes it is an 'inadequate measure'.

Giorgi Vashadze, leader of the Strategy Aghmashenebeli party urged Prime Minister Gharibashvili to abolish the excise tax on fuel, stressing that Georgia could not be compared to the US or European countries like Germany.

"Abolishing excise tax is simple and the quickest way out of the current crisis," he said.

Kobakhidze: Government Remains Committed to its Policy of Peaceful De-Occupation

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The chairman of the ruling Georgian Dream party Irakli Kobakhidze announced that the top Ukrainian officials had begun to speak openly about opening a second front in Georgia and ending the ongoing war in Ukraine after the UNM's next visit to Ukraine.

At the briefing held at the party's office asserted that 'any war in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali will not only be a war between Georgians and Russian occupying forces, but also a war between Georgians and the Abkhaz, Georgians and Ossetians'.

According to him the Government remains committed to its policy of peaceful de-occupation and will 'stand against every provocation aimed at escalating a new military confrontation with our Abkhaz and Ossetian brothers and sisters'.

"A new fratricidal war will be the greatest, an unforgivable crime in the history of our country, which we will not allow again," he added.

In an apparent reference to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, MP Kobakhidze suggested that if the present difficult situation offers any windows of opportunity in this area, Georgia may assist occupied territory people in coping with worsened social concerns.

He stated that the United National Movement is attempting to lure Georgia into Ukraine's ongoing war conflict and create a second front in the nation.

"We have repeatedly shared information with the public that the main goal of all provocations organized by the United National Movement was to involve Georgia in the ongoing military conflict in Ukraine and to open a second front in Georgia," Kobakhidze said.

According to him, the direct or indirect talks of the 'war party' serve the purpose of escalating the military conflict in Georgia and calls for the restoration of territorial integrity through war.

Kobakhidze said that a UNM delegation's recent visit to Kyiv

confirmed this, claiming that 'high officials of the Ukrainian Government openly started discussing creating the second frontline in Georgia and the plausibility of transferring the conflict in Ukraine to Georgia.'

The comments of Oleksiy Danilov, Secretary of the Ukrainian National Security Council, he argued, was a prime example of this. On March 26, Ukrainian media quoted Danilov as suggesting that it would be beneficial for Ukraine if 'new combat fronts started to emerge for the Russian Federation, made feasible by its recent acts in the past.'

In particular, Danilov said that opening up additional fronts in Russia's sphere of interest would help Ukraine deal with the Russian invasion. "This will really help us, because Russia will have everything to do besides destroying our cities and villages, killing our children and women."

"The Georgian government is not going to deviate from its stated peace policy. It has been like this before and it will be like this in the future as well," Irakli Beraia, Chairman of the Defense and Security Committee of the Parliament of Georgia announced.

"We were talking about the fact that there are subjects, both in the country and abroad, who are interested, trying and doing everything to expand the geographical area of hostilities and to involve Georgia in the war. It



"A new fratricidal war will be the greatest, unforgivable crime in the history of our country that we will no longer allow," Kobakhidze said. Publika.ge

was also expected that they would not be able to hide their intentions and tasks for a long time. It is very unfortunate that this was voiced by the Secretary of the Security Council of Ukraine, which is unacceptable and shocking for us," Beraia wrote.

Nikoloz Samkharadze, Chairman of the Foreign Relations

Committee of the Georgian Parliament, also responded to Danilov's statement on Twitter:

"I hope this is a false story. Is the Secretary of the Security Council of Ukraine calling on Georgia (and others) to abandon the policy of peaceful restoration of territorial integrity by opening a second front to destroy our

towns and villages and kill Georgian women and children? Really?" Nikoloz Samkharadze wrote.

Mikheil Sarjveladze, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and Civil Integration, says that there can be no justification or reason for Georgia to call for a war now.

The News in Brief

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THE MESSENGER STAFF

Prosecutor Law Enforcement agencies to study Saakashvili's Call for 'Overthrowing the Government', Prosecutor Says

According to Jarji Tsiklauri, the prosecutor in the case of former President Mikheil Saakashvili, law enforcement authorities will investigate Saakashvili's demand for the "overthrow of the government".

Tsiklauri notes that following that, they would decide on the

legal reaction to the former President's comments.

Saakashvili is accused of organizing violence, including during the November 7 protests.

The defendant's lawyers say he is innocent, though he himself still makes similar statements calling for violence," Tsiklauri said.

"If we do not overthrow this Government, this generation will forever remain disgraceful in the history of Ukraine — if we do not mobilize the people and take to the streets, Georgia will be doomed," former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili said at the trial on the November 7 case today.

Irakli Kobakhidze: The longer Mikheil Saakashvili is in prison, the less he will harm both Georgia and Ukraine

According to Irakli Kobakhidze, former President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili is serving his sentence and the issue of his release or departure for Ukraine will not be considered.

"Saakashvili should not be released, he should not go to Ukraine, taking into account the interests of our Ukrainian people. You remember how he

aggravated the situation in Georgia, especially in 2008.

He can make the already difficult situation even worse for the Ukrainian people. Therefore, in the first place, taking into account the interests of the Ukrainian people, of course, it is not expedient to release him.

He has to serve his sentence. He must stop harming his own country, Georgia, and harming the country of his citizenship, Ukraine. The longer he is in prison, the less he will harm both Georgia and Ukraine. It is better for both countries," Kobakhidze said.

Weather

Tuesday, March 29

Day Clear
High: 9°C
Night Partly Cloudy
Low: -1°C

Wednesday, March 30

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 14°C
Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 2°C

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