

## Georgian FM Attends NATO Ministerial

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Newly appointed Georgian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ilia Darchiashvili is on an official visit to Brussels between Wednesday and Friday to hold a series of high-level meetings with EU and NATO officials.

Darchiashvili attended the NATO Ministerial yesterday, where he held face-to-face meetings with Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg and top diplomats of the Netherlands and Turkey. NATO Secretary-General has stressed the importance of NATO partner countries attending the forum, underscoring that their presence at the ministerial is a sign of unity in supporting Ukraine.

Darchiashvili and the Secretary-General of NATO discussed the NATO-Georgia cooperation and the security environment in the Black Sea region. As Darchiashvili noted, inviting Georgia to the NATO Ministerial is another expression of the alliance's support for Georgia.

According to the statement of the Georgian Foreign Ministry, the sides exchanged



► Georgian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ilia Darchiashvili and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg.



► Georgian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ilia Darchiashvili and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba at the NATO Ministerial.

views on the security environment in the region and reaffirmed their readiness to cooperate actively in the future. NATO's firm support toward Georgia and its Euro-Atlantic integration was also stressed.

NATO Secretary-General announced at the briefing after the end of the event

that NATO would step up its cybersecurity assistance to Ukraine, stressing that the Alliance would also provide equipment to help Ukraine protect against chemical and biological threats. According to him, the allies agreed to help other partner countries in strengthening their resili-

ence and shoring up their ability to defend themselves as well. As he noted, NATO could increase support for Georgia through the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package, including "in areas like situational awareness, secure communications and cyber."

Darchiashvili noted that he had an

opportunity to have a brief exchange with the Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba at the forum.

"We agreed to continue close communication and I reiterated Georgia's support to Ukraine," Georgian FM tweeted.

Within the framework of NATO Ministerial, Georgian FM also met with Turkish counterpart Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu. The sides focused on the crisis in Ukraine and the difficult security environment in the region. Turkish PM also emphasized the support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as for Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration. FM Darchiashvili met with Dutch counterpart Wopke Hoekstra as well and discussed Georgia's EU membership application and the situation in the Russian-occupied regions of Tskhinvali/South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

According to the statement published by the Foreign Ministry of Georgia, Wopke Hoekstra stressed the Netherlands' desire to strengthen cooperation with the Eastern Partnership countries, including Georgia, which was reflected in the Foreign and Security Policy of the Netherlands. Georgia's progress on both European and Euro-Atlantic integration was also pointed out.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

PREPARED BY THE MESSENGER STAFF

#### Ukrainian FM to Hungarian PM Orban: Being on the Right Side of History is Never Too Late

Ukraine has rebuked Hungary for its stance on Russian energy supplies, saying it was 'damaging' the EU's unity and undermining Western efforts to end the war.

"The refusal of the Hungarian leadership to acknowledge Russia's indisputable responsibility for the atrocities committed by the Russian army in Bucha, Irpen and Gostomel and other cities means a strengthening of Russia's sense of impunity and incitement to further atrocities against Ukrainians," the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry spokesman said on April 7.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine and did not veto EU sanctions on Russia, but said he did not agree with them. He

refrained from criticizing Putin and rejected the idea of restricting oil and gas imports, saying it would destroy the Hungarian economy.

Such a position helped him re-elect his party to the Hungarians and win a convincing victory in last week's election. On April 7, Hungary said it was receiving nuclear fuel for nuclear reactors from Russia by air because it was impossible to do so via Ukraine.

The spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Oleg Nikolenko, said that now that the election was over, Budapest was taking the next step in 'assisting Putin in continuing his aggression against Ukraine'.

He said that taking a different position from the EU and accepting Moscow's request for gas supplies in rubles was a sign that Budapest was undermining sanctions against Russia and raised the question of why Hungary wants to hold peace talks.

"If Hungary really wants to help end the war, here is what it must do: stop the disintegration of EU unity, support new sanctions against Russia, provide military assistance to Ukraine, and do not create additional sources of financial assistance for the Russian military machine," Nikolenko commented.

EXCHANGE RATES: US DOLLAR - 3.0839 | EURO - 3.3633 | GBP - 4.0350 | 100 RUSSIAN RUBLE - 3.6963 | SWISS FRANC - 3.3032 |

# Occupied Tskhinvali Prepares for 'Referendum' on Unification with Russia

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

On April 6, the initiative group of the occupied Tskhinvali region applied to the so-called Central Election Commission with a motion to hold a referendum reported to news agency Res.

According to the member of the so-called CEC, Igor Chochiev, the commission is starting to go through legal procedures.

"The CEC has received a petition for the registration of an initiative group seeking a referendum on the unification of South Ossetia into the Russian Federation. A commission meeting will be held and the issue of registration will be resolved. The initiative group includes 4 presidents: incumbent Anatoly Bibilov and former presidents Ludwig Chibirov, Eduard Kokoity, and Leonid Tibilov. Besides them, there are 26 other people from political and public groups," Chochiev said.

The question to be asked at the referendum by the initiative group is: "Are you in favor of the unification of the Republic of South Ossetia with the Russian



Federation?"

According to the so-called constitutional law of the de facto republic, within 15 days after receiving the application, the so-called CEC decides on the registration of the initiative group and issues a registration certificate. In case of refusal to register, the CEC will inform the initiative group of the reasoned decision.

Refusal to register can be appealed in the so-called Supreme Court. The only reason for refusing to register is a violation of the

Articles of the so-called Constitution and the Law on Referendum by the initiative group. From the moment of receiving the registration certificate, the initiative group has the right to voluntarily and independently start collecting signatures in support of the referendum within 3 months.

After collecting the signatures, the CEC checks all the documents within 15 days and sends the report to the de facto president. The de facto President shall, within 10 days of receipt of the documents, send the relevant request to the

Supreme Court of the de facto Republic. The so-called Supreme Court reviews compliance with the requirements of the Constitution and sends a decision to the 'president' within 14 days, which is subject to immediate publication. In case of a positive decision of the de facto Supreme Court, the so-called president is obliged to set a date for the referendum within 10 days. In case of a negative decision of the so-called Supreme Court, all procedures are terminated.

On March 30, the 'president' of the de facto republic of South Ossetia, Anatoly Bibilov, said that legal steps would be taken soon to make 'South Ossetia' part of Russia. According to him, unification with Russia is a strategic goal of the republic. Currently, the so-called president of the occupied Tskhinvali region is conducting a pre-election campaign. 'Elections' are scheduled for April 10. The current campaign is no different from the campaign of 5 years ago. Even then, Bibilov's main message was the unification of 'South and North Ossetia into one republic within the Russian Federation'.

Unlike occupied Abkhazia, the occupied Tskhinvali region has a small number of civil activists who do not support unification with Russia. Their idea is to create the independent Republic of Ossetia.

In August 2008, after the Russian army invaded Georgia and occupied the region, the Kremlin recognized the so-called de facto state independence of South Ossetia on August 26. After the recognition, the 4th occupation military base was deployed in the occupied region, where, in addition to the troops brought from Russia, the personnel of the local army was also deployed. Now part of this base, including the youth of Tskhinvali, is fighting against Ukraine on the Russian side.

In August 2008, the armed forces of Russia and the de facto republic burned and destroyed Georgian villages in the Liakhvi gorge, leaving up to 30,000 Georgian citizens displaced. Since then, the de facto government has repeatedly asked the Kremlin to join, although Russia has so far refrained from annexing the occupied territories.

## CULTURE & LIFESTYLE

**Royal District Theatre,  
Premiere: 10,12,13 April / 20:00**

**::: Medea s01e06 :::**

**Author and director: Paata Tsikolia**

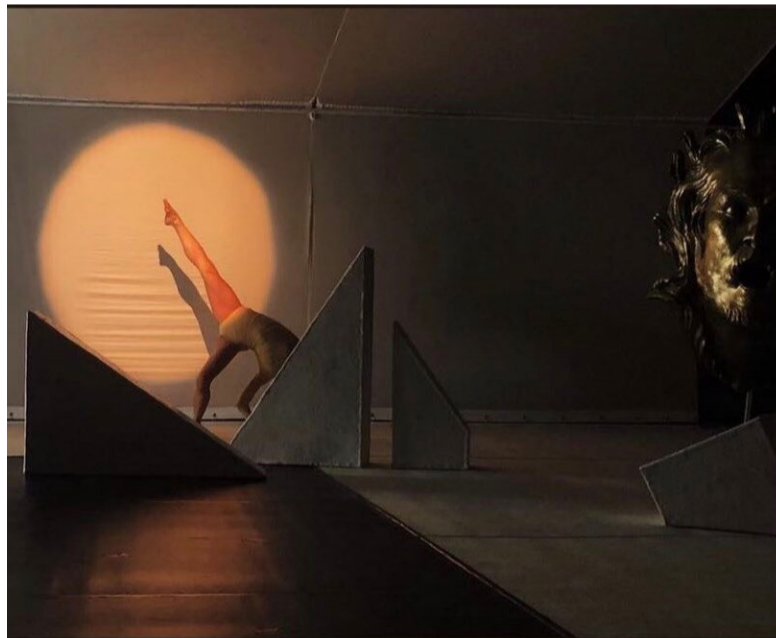
**About the play:**

Medea is not a virgin, blind with passion, and captured by Jason's love. Nor does she help the Greeks to steal the golden fleece out of love. Medea is the princess of Colchis, the heir to the throne of Colchis, opposing her father and brother, driven by a desire for revenge against the king, his family, and the kingdom of Colchis. Her plan is not to overthrow Jason, but to overthrow Colchis, his father's family, and the Colchian culture.

Paata Tsikolia's new take on the story offers an entirely unexpected interpretation of Medea's myth.

Medea is still in her homeland, and the blood-soaked coast of Colchis is the soil on which this mythical figure grew up.

In 2021, the play won the Saba Literary Award for Best Drama.



**Main Cast:** Gia Burjanadze, Eka Demetradze, Sandro Samkharadze

**Author and director:**

Paata Tsikolia /

**Artist:** Ira Shengelia /

**Choreographer:** Natia Chikvaidze /

**Composer:** Tamar Putkaradze /

**Animation:** Iva Kimeridze /

**Artist-decorator:** Zura Digmelashvili /

**Technical director:** Natia Shalikashvili /

**Dancers:** Nini Gogobiaishvili, Ksenia Semyonova,

Maria Shalagina, Natia Chikvaidze, Teona Tsitsakishvili /

**Photo:** Levan Chkonia /

**Poster:** Iva Kimeridze

**Photo:** Levan Chkonia /

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**Photo:** Levan Chkonia /

**Poster:** Iva Kimeridze

**Photo:** Levan Chkonia /

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**Poster:** Iva Kimeridze

*The play was supported by the Georgian Regional Theater Network and Tbilisi City Hall.*

**Tickets:**  
2996171 / Biletebi.ge

**FRIDAY APRIL 8**  
**Day** Partly cloudy High: 18°C  
**Night** Partly cloudy Low: 10°C  
**SATURDAY APRIL 9**  
**Day** Partly cloudy High: 17°C  
**Night** Clear skies Low: 7°C

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