

The US does not Recognize the So-Called Elections in Breakaway South Ossetia, Urges Russia to Stop war Crimes in Ukraine

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The United States does not recognize the so-called presidential elections in occupied Tskhinvali.

The US Embassy states that the regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali are an integral part of Georgia and that neither the so-called elections nor the so-called

referendum can change that.

The United States supports Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

"The United States does not recognize the legitimacy of the so-called presidential elections held in Georgia's South Ossetia region on April 10 and will not acknowledge their outcome. Our position on Abkhazia and South Ossetia remains

clear: these regions are integral parts of Georgia.

No "elections" or an a priori illegitimate 'referendum' calling for the incorporation of South Ossetia into Russia can change this. Accordingly, we reiterate our strong support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders."

The United States is urging Russia to end the war in Ukraine, withdraw its forces from the occupied territories of Georgia, and withdraw its recognition of the independence of the occupied republics of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali.

"Russia's brutal, unprovoked, and unjustified war deliberately attacking Ukrainian civilians and cities makes it even more important to stand up for these fundamental principles that are the foundation of the international security architecture.

We, therefore, call upon Russia to immediately stop its war in Ukraine and its occupation of Georgia, and fulfill all of its obligations under the 2008 ceasefire agreement, including withdrawal of its forces to pre-conflict positions, reversal of its recognition of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states, and provision of free access for humanitarian assistance to these regions."

5 candidates ran in the so-called elections on April 10. Among them is the



Georgia



current de facto leader of the occupation regime, Anatoly Bibilov. Bibilov promises to hold two so-called referendums the first on joining Russia and the second on unification with North Ossetia.

In addition to Bibilov, the so-called presidential candidates also include Alan Gagloev, the leader of the Nikhas party, Dmitry Tasoev, the so-called former member of parliament, Gary Muldarov, the current member of parliament, and Alexander Liev, the so-called deputy speaker of parliament.

Apart from the occupied Tskhinvali region, so-called polling stations were opened in Moscow and occupied Sokhumi.

32 thousand 'voters' were registered for the 'elections'.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia Denounces so-called Elections in Tskhinvali Region

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia released a statement condemning the so-called presidential elections taking place in the occupied Tskhinvali region with 5 candidates participating in it. Ac-

cording to the ministry, this is another illegal act of the Russian Federation against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia.

"It is completely against to the norms and principles of international law. Such provocative actions are aimed at legitimizing the illegal occupation of Georgian regions and ethnic cleansing of Georgians," the statement said.

According to them, in the conditions of illegal occupation of two inseparable regions of Georgia, the so-called elections

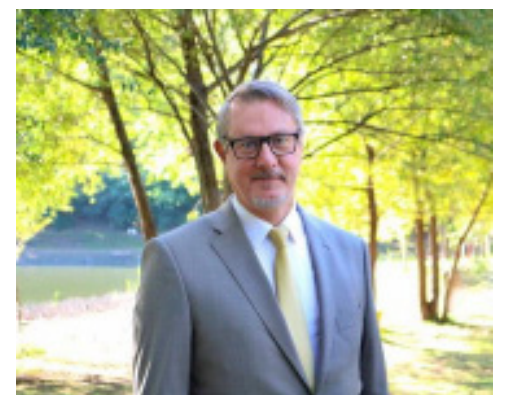
will not have any legal effect. Also, the so-called referendum announced in occupied Tskhinvali will not have a legal effect.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs calls on the Russian Federation to respect Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, to fulfill its international obligations, including the EU-brokered ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008, and to reverse the illegal decision to recognize the so-called independence of the occupied territories.

"We call on the international community to properly assess and respond effectively to the Russian Federation's illegal move to undermine Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity," the statement said.

EU Ambassador Carl Hartzell releases statement condemning so-called elections in Tskhinvali

EU Ambassador to Georgia, H.E. Carl Hartzell said in a statement released that the EU does not recognize the so-called elections in occupied Tskhinvali and continues to support Georgia's territorial integrity.



"The European Union does not recognise the constitutional and legal framework in which the so-called presidential elections are taking place in the Georgian breakaway region of South Ossetia today.

The European Union does not recognise the constitutional and legal framework in which the so-called presidential elections are taking place in the Georgian breakaway region of South Ossetia today.

We continue to support Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and to pursue our policy of non-recognition and engagement, including through the EU Special Representative and the EU Monitoring Mission," reads the statement.



Why Bibilov Started Talking About Referendum on Joining Russia

By MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

Occupied Tskhinvali's de-facto president Alexander Bibilov held 'elections' on April 10. This was preceded by him actively talking about holding a referendum on 'joining Russia.'

Without consulting Moscow and obtaining permission from it, it is doubtful that Bibilov will be the subject of active discussion. Now local experts are voicing different versions of what exactly Russia wants to achieve.

It is well known that the 'independent' rulers of Tskhinvali are not very careful about this supposedly 'recognized' independence by Moscow. They have already held such a 'referendum' twice - during the previous 'presidents' Eduard Kokoity and Leonid Tibilov.

In these referendums, where the Ossetian population remaining in the region had to take part in a mandatory Lama rule, there was certainly a desire to unite with Russia. Bibilov, the current ruler of Tskhinvali, has been actively talking about joining Russia for years and has even announced a new referendum.

The situation in the Russian-

occupied Tskhinvali region today is such that the real population is 30-40 thousand, and there are about 7 thousand military servicemen at the Russian bases located there. 'Independent' Tskhinvali does not have its own 'army' and the Ossetians there serve directly in the Russian army. Some of them have been sent to Ukraine for war, but it's difficult to assume how many exactly. According to Bibilov, 1000. Some in Tskhinvali expressed dissatisfaction - "Ossetian gene is being destroyed."

It can be said that not so many were sent to Ukraine and not all Ossetians will be sent.

He is already talking about two referendums at the same time - one for 'unification' with Russia, and the other for unification with 'Ossetia-Alania', which is part of the Russian Federation. "We are late, when Crimea returned to the 'motherland' in 2014, we should have joined Russia," Bibilov noted. Well, in 2014, Putin's Russia was doing better than in 2022. The question now is why Putin's Russia needed to raise this issue today. Local experts name two

possible versions.

According to one version, against the background of failures in Ukraine, Putin needs to win somewhere easy to maintain his face, and this is the easiest thing to do for today's Georgia. The government of the 'Georgian Dream' is becoming an example for Moscow with its "non-irritation" Kremlin policy.

"This is the will of the people of South Ossetia and we respect it," Kremlin spokesman Peskov told reporters about the referendum on Bibilov. Several deputies of the Russian Duma also welcomed Bibilov's intention.

Andrei Klimov, a spokesman for Russia's ruling United Russia party, said there would be no 'legal obstacles' to the Tskhinvali region joining Russia after the referendum.

So to cover up the failure in Ukraine, Moscow may consider another victory over Georgia. But in this case, what will be the argument of the Georgian Dream? Statements like "Saakashvili lost the Tskhinvali region" and how is that our fault, or shall we start a war" will not be enough.

The Georgian policy of not 'ir-

ritating Moscow' is also failing, and it's not certain whether Russia's attempt to avoid Western sanctions through Georgia will work. Official Tbilisi responded to Bibilov by saying that "it is unacceptable to talk about a referendum against the background of the fact that the territory of Georgia is occupied."

There is another version among Georgian experts - Bibilov's talk about another referendum on unification with Russia serves to intimidate the Georgian society and, in fact, is even a help to the 'Georgian Dream'.

The opposition criticizes the Georgian Dream for not joining Western sanctions on Russia and has a rather strained relationship with the Russian government under 'aggression' with the Russian-occupied Ukrainian government, which has been accused of waging a 'hybrid war' against Georgia.

In such conditions, naturally, a simple question may arise in the Georgian society, including the supporters of the 'Dream' - what does Georgia receive from Russia in exchange for Moscow's 'no-irritation' policy?

Everybody sees the reality, - the occupation continues, so-called 'borderization', an expansion of the occupied territory continues, Russian troops cross the occupation line, kidnap Georgian citizens and torture them in prison for "border violation."

Russia's list of anti-Georgian actions is large. There is a new argument that if "we're not smart about it", that is, if we're not docile enough, Russia will do worse, and declare the Tskhinvali region part of the Russian Federation.

However, Bibilov in his idea of a referendum is already overshadowed by other topics in the Georgian media. Russia's attack on Ukraine and inhumane cruelty have made everything black and white.

There are only two choices: Being on Ukraine's side and united with the West to defend it, or becoming a Russian satellite and moving away from the West. The sympathies of the Georgian society are on the side of Ukraine and have long demanded that the government take concrete steps in this direction.

Global and regional challenges top the agenda of the UNDP Regional Director's visit to Georgia

UNDP reaffirms support for Georgia's sustainable, inclusive and climate-resilient development

Tbilisi, 10 April 2022 – UNDP reaffirms its assistance to Georgia at a time of global challenges brought on by the pandemic, climate challenge and, most recently, the war in Ukraine. **Mirjana Spoljarc Egger**, UN Assistant Secretary-General (ASG), UNDP Assistant Administrator, and Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, wrapped up her three-day visit to Georgia with a strong message of support and cooperation.

"This is a decisive time for the entire region. My message to

Georgia's leadership and people is that the United Nations Development Programme is committed to supporting their country in key areas of national development," Spoljarc Egger said.

On 7 and 8 April, ASG Spoljarc Egger met with Prime Minister **Irakli Gharibashvili** and President **Salome Zourabichvili**. During her visit, Spoljarc Egger also met with Members of Parliament, ministers, civil society representatives, women entrepreneurs and representatives of embassies and international organizations.

While in the country, Spoljarc Egger checked on the progress of some of UNDP's flagship initiatives in Georgia, including complex support for programmes to strengthen parliamentary democracy, achieve gender equality and build a cli-

mate-resilient society.

At the Parliament, together with Deputy Chairperson **David Sergeenko** ASG Spoljarc Egger joined over 100 schoolchildren from 50 public schools at a 'My Parliamentary Adventure' event. In partnership with the Parliament of Georgia and the European Union, UNDP assists schoolchildren to participate in a new educational initiative that provides an enjoyable way to learn about the roles, functions and history of the Georgian Parliament. The initiative also introduces tools and mechanisms that citizens can use to engage in parliamentary work.

Spoljarc Egger also visited Women Entrepreneurs' Programme participants to discuss gender equality and business development. Drawing on the partnership between UNDP,

the Government of Sweden and the Bank of Georgia, this initiative helps women build on proven business development models to identify their best prospects and devise effective strategies to realise their business goals.

Georgia's efforts to achieve climate resilience and green development were a significant focus of the Regional Director's visit. Together with Ambassador of Japan to Georgia **Imamura Akira** and Georgia's Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture **Nino Tandilashvili**, Spoljarc Egger launched a new initiative that will help Georgia sustainably manage its forests and promote green livelihoods. The programme is part of the UNDP Climate Promise initiative, which scales up UNDP support

to turn national climate pledges into concrete action in at least 100 countries.

"Georgia's ambitious climate agenda will lead the country to better protect its rich nature and unique biodiversity, create sustainable livelihoods, explore advanced solutions for green growth and reduce the risks associated with climate-related disasters," Spoljarc Egger said. "UNDP fully supports this transformation and will assist Georgia's strive for a climate-smart future."

On 9 April, Spoljarc Egger travelled to the Kakheti region where UNDP, with funds from the Green Climate Fund and the governments of Georgia, Sweden and Switzerland, helps protect people and the economy from floods and other climate-induced disasters.

Weather

Monday, April 11

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 24°C
Night Clear
Low: 11°C

Tuesday, April 12

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 20°C
Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 5°C

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