

Georgian Parliamentary Delegation to Visit Ukraine



► The Speaker of Parliament of Georgia Shalva Papuashvili will leave for Ukraine at the end of this week.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

The Speaker of Parliament of Georgia, Shalva Papuashvili, and the Speaker of the Ukrainian Rada, Ruslan Stefanchuk have agreed on the visit of Papuashvili to Ukraine in an online meeting on Wednesday. During the meeting, the speakers discussed the Russian aggression against Ukraine and its tragic consequences. They also focused on the EU accession and cooperation of Georgia and Ukraine in this process.

Ukrainian Parliament Speaker thanked Georgia for the aid provided since the outbreak of the war, as well as for special care to the Ukrainians staying in Geor-



► As the Opposition reports, they will form a separate Parliamentary delegation to visit Ukraine. Kuleba at the NATO Ministerial.

gian and Ukrainian sides, stressing that "this visit will let the parliamentarians of Georgia see with their own eyes what is happening in Ukraine and will confirm our friendly relations!"

As Papuashvili stated after the meeting, the incomprehension and miscommunication between Ukrainian and Georgian authorities was the result of disinformation, which, according to him, is part of a hybrid war waged by 'enemies of the country internally and externally'. According to him, communication can fix many things, adding that during the online meeting with his Ukrainian colleague, many issues were clarified and the sides 'absolutely agreed with each other'

As it became known yesterday, two Georgian parliamentary delegations will depart for Ukraine, as no agreement could be reached on the formation of a joint delegation. Speaker Papuashvili will leave for Ukraine at the end of this week and the list of delegation members will be soon finalized. At the same time, the parliamentary opposition informs that they will form a separate delegation.

The disagreement between the Georgian and Ukrainian authorities sparked since the Russo-Ukraine war. Ukraine's Stefanchuk first invited Papuashvili to personally share the tragedies and the results of destruction caused by the Russian aggression on April 8, however, the Georgian Parliament speaker rebuffed to visit Ukraine.

Papuashvili assessed Stefanchuk's invitation as 'improper' against the background of obfuscation related to "unfounded accusations of smuggling, or blaming Georgia for taking advantage of Ukrainians' hardship". Stefanchuk responded to Papuashvili's statement, saying, "is it appropriate to call 'inappropriate' an invitation to come to a friendly country and see its plight, share its grief, and express words of support?" Stefanchuk added that 'a friend should do this without an invitation'.

NEWS IN BRIEF

PREPARED BY THE MESSENGER STAFF

German Government Agrees to Supply Ukraine with Heavy Weapons

The German ruling coalition has agreed to supply heavy weapons to Ukraine. This was announced by Marcus Faber, a member of the Bundestag and a member of the parliamentary group on security policy. Faber said the decision has not yet been made though it is likely there will be no setbacks as the coalition agrees on the issue.

"Dear friends, Germany will now quickly supply heavy equipment to Ukraine. I am pleased that the Federal Democratic Party and our coalition partners have agreed on this.

I have heard only positive statements from all ministers and coalition partners about the supply of heavy weapons to Ukraine. Of course, this still needs to be resolved and implemented, but when there is such a united will, there is always a way," Faber said. Earlier, German Foreign Minister Analena Berbock said that Europe no longer had a more honorable reason and that Kiev needed to supply heavy weapons. Berbock also said. That German defense is ready to hand over weapons to Ukraine.



EXCHANGE RATES: US DOLLAR - 3.0841 | EURO - 3.3518 | GBP - 4.0152 | 100 RUSSIAN RUBLE - 3.6885 | SWISS FRANC - 3.3056 |

US Report on Human Rights in Georgia 2021



► "There were indications that at times civilian authorities did not maintain effective control of domestic security forces."

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

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

On April 12, the US State Department released its annual report on the state of human rights in the world. It reviews the individual, civil, political and labor rights enshrined in the International Declaration of Human Rights and international agreements. The report reviews all countries receiving assistance from the United States and all UN member states - a total of 198 countries and territories, including Georgia.

Significant human rights issues in Georgia included credible reports of: serious problems with the independence of the judiciary along with arbitrary or selective detentions, investigations, and prosecutions widely considered to be politically motivated; unlawful interference with privacy; violence and threats of violence against journalists; limited respect for freedom of peaceful assembly and association; and crimes involving violence or threats targeting LGBTIQI persons and activists.

The U.S. report said there remained indications of interference in judicial independence and impartiality in Georgia.

"Judges were vulnerable to political pressure from within and outside the judiciary on

cases involving politically sensitive subjects or individuals. The long-standing practice of transferring judges from one court to another also remained a problem. Decisions regarding transfers were made by the High Council of Justice, and these decisions were unsubstantiated."

The report noted that most of the judges transferred to administrative chambers panels reportedly were affiliated with the 'clan,' and almost all of them were associated with high-profile cases.

The government's failure to credibly investigate and prosecute the organizers of violence on July 5-6 resulted in impunity for those abuses. Lack of accountability also continued for the inappropriate police use of force against journalists and protesters during June 2019 demonstrations and the 2017 abduction and rendition from Georgia of Azerbaijani journalist and activist Afgan Mukhtarli.

According to the report, while the constitution provides for freedom of expression, including for the media, the government did not adequately safeguard that freedom. The report highlighted that the police statements soon after the death of TV Pirveli cameraman Aleksandre Lashkarava, who died a few days after being assaulted during July 5 homophobic pogroms, 'appeared aimed at discrediting the journalist instead of determining the cause of

death'. The document also cited a significant number of journalists reporting that they were either prevented from covering public events or did not receive key public information when requested.

On a positive note, the report said the government did not restrict or disrupt access to the internet or censor online content. But concerns remain regarding unauthorized surveillance.

Credible reports of political violence continued, the report said. "Intimidation, pressure against voters and candidates, and abuse of administrative resources, further blurring the lines between the government and ruling party, persisted throughout the first and second rounds of the October municipal elections."

The human rights report said while the constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, the government's observance of these prohibitions was uneven. The document also discussed the issue of political prisoners in Georgia. Particular attention is paid to the February 17 verdict and arrest of Nika Melia, the leader of the United National Movement, which was considered politically motivated by independent lawyers. The report cites the ombudsman of Georgia as concluding that Melia's arrest was 'neither justified nor necessary'.

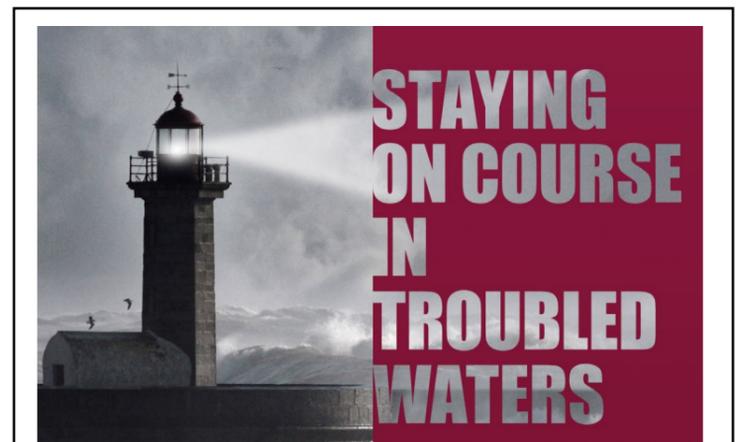
The report also emphasized that Russian-occupied regions of Abkhazia and Samachablo

region remained outside central government control, and de facto authorities were supported by Russian forces. The cessation of hostilities from 2008 remained in effect, but Russian guards restricted the movement of local populations. Significant human rights issues in the regions included credible reports of unlawful detentions; restrictions on movement, especially of ethnic Georgians; restrictions on voting or otherwise participating in the political process; and restrictions on the ability of ethnic Georgians to own property or register businesses.

De facto authorities did not allow most international organizations regular access to the Tskhinvali region to provide humanitarian assistance. Russian 'borderization' of the administrative boundary lines increased, further restricting movement and separating residents from their

communities and livelihoods. Russian and de facto authorities in both regions committed abuses with impunity.

Mikheil Sarjveladze, the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights noted the document appreciated the achievements in 'improving human rights standards' over the past year - the reduction of the number of pretrial detainees and the general number of prisoners, as well as their rehabilitation and resocialization, and in the subject of amnesty. Sarjveladze also said that violations of high public or political interest, which are criticized by their opponents, are not cited in the affirmative format and rely on other sources, such as ombudsman or opposition parties. He emphasized that the report does not say anything about which the public is not fully informed and which is not widely discussed - both the positive and critical parts of the trends.



Staying on course in troubled waters: new book by Josep Borrell

EU High Representative Josep Borrell has published his new book, 'Staying on course in troubled waters', that brings together blog posts, speeches and articles on key global developments in 2021.

The book highlights what has been achieved despite the pandemic and what remains to be done for the EU to speak the "language of power", says Borrell, "a task that is more urgent than ever in the context of the war against Ukraine."

"Russia's war against Ukraine is indeed a tectonic shift that requires us to take a strong stance in defending Ukrainian sovereignty and also of the wider international rules-based order. History is accelerating once again and we are confronted with multiple challenges. To respond effectively, it is necessary to analyse the major trends that were already reshaping the geopolitical environment and challenging European values in the last years," says Borrell in his blog introducing the book.

THURSDAY		APRIL 14	
Day		Sunny	High: 14°C
Night		Clear	Low: 4°C
FRIDAY		APRIL 15	
Day		Partly cloudy	High: 16°C
Night		Partly cloudy	Low: 5°C

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