

## International sanctions should be imposed against oligarch Bidzina Ivanishvili, says MEP Anna Fotyga

By Liza Mchedlidze

Member of European Parliament Anna Fotyga stated that oligarch Bidzina Ivanishvili should be sanctioned as well for 'having ties with Putin regime', while discussing the leaked phone call audio recording allegedly between Bidzina Ivanishvili and Vladimir Evtushenkov, a sanctioned Russian oligarch.

"The influence of one oligarch on a country like Georgia is extremely difficult for me to understand. My political and economic knowledge shows that this influence is extremely harmful. Of course, we know examples of such influences and their effects. The position was similar and greatly worsened the country's function and positioning. The elimination of monopoly oligarchy was the basis for the development of pluralism. I think the same problem should be solved in Georgia."

According to MEP Anna Fotyga, she introduced the proposal addressed to Vice president Joseph Borrell regarding the sanctioning of Ivanishvili. Fotyga assessed the audio recording as 'important', adding that it is one of many other cases proving Bidzina Ivanishvili's involvement with Kremlin:

"I made a request proposal to Vice President Joseph Borrell, which indicates a similar problem, which is also shared by part of the Ukrainian elite, that international sanctions should be imposed on Ivanishvili, and this record easily reveals these problems and indicates Ivanishvili's ties with the Putin regime. Although it is very important and presents my full picture of Ivanishvili's role,



I do not focus on just this one case.

"I think there are many cases other

than this case, but I can say that yes, this case shows exactly how much

Ivanishvili is involved in the Kremlin regime's operations," said Fotyga.

### The News in Brief

PREPARED BY  
THE MESSENGER STAFF

#### Russia Allegedly Negotiates with Georgia to Circumvent Sanctions, Ukraine's Defense Intelligence Says

Defense Intelligence of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine says Russia is trying to circumvent sanctions with the help of other countries such as Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan for re-export of Russian products to international markets.

It is allegedly planned to produce Russian products under the auspices of Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijani products and export them to third countries. Intelligence says that more than 200 companies have already been established for this purpose in these countries.

Ukraine's Defense Intelligence writes that Moscow plans to organize the production of Russian military and dual-use products in ODCB countries (Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan), which also requires the use of foreign components. This action will

strengthen the dependence of ODC member states on Russia, which is in the interests of the Kremlin.

#### Doctors Demand Saakashvili to be Hospitalized

Former president Mikheil Saakashvili's doctors are demanding the third president to be transferred to a medical facility immediately. According to doctors, Saakashvili has muscle atrophy and anorexia and requires immediate medical interference.

The trial of Mikheil Saakashvili's November 7 case will be held on May 2 and due to his health condition, it is unknown whether he will attend his trial for November 7.

#### We Must Stand up for Humanity and Next to Our Allies, Kingizer Says

Republican Congressman Adam Kingizer will introduce a resolution authorizing the use of U.S. military force to protect Ukraine's territorial integrity

if President Vladimir Putin intensifies his unjust war against the country's democratic allies.

The 2022 Permit to Use Military Force to Protect US Allies (AUMF) will allow the U.S. president to use force if the Russian Federation uses chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons against Ukraine.

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"Words matter, but so do actions. I will present this AUMF as a clear red line so that the US President can take appropriate action if Russia uses chemical, biological and/or nuclear weapons. We must stand up for humanity and next to our allies," Kingizer said on his Twitter account.

#### Germany to End Dependence on Russian Oil by End of Summer

According to the latest report of the German Ministry of Economy on energy

security, Germany can end its dependence on Russian oil by the end of the summer.

"Consequently, the oil embargo will be manageable during a satisfactory transition period," the report said. According to Bloomberg, Germany is ready to support a gradual ban on Russian oil by the European Union.

The country's government has already agreed to an EU embargo on Russian coal, and plans to release it from dependence on Russian gas by mid-2024. According to the report of the Ministry, in order to get rid of its dependence on Russian gas.

According to Bloomberg, Germany is ready to support a gradual ban on Russian oil by the European Union. The country's government has already agreed to an EU embargo on Russian coal, and plans to release it from dependence on Russian gas by mid-2024.

The federal government is working closely with the United States to commission several floating LNG terminals over the next two years.

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 3.0591; Euro - 3.2157; GBP - 3.8471; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.2909; Swiss Franc - 3.1544

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

# Georgia's Democracy Level Not Improving, International Rankings Show

Georgia's democracy level, according to international rankings, is not improving. However, Georgia has already applied for EU membership, has already received a completed membership questionnaire, which pays significant attention to the state of democracy in the country. Unfortunately, Georgia's democratic performance in the rankings made by a number of international organizations is deteriorating from year to year, which does not create a good background for Georgia's accession to the European Union.

A few days ago, the annual report of *Freedom House* was published, which reviews the state of nations in transition, saying Georgia's democracy has deteriorated again. The reason for this is the breaking of the agreement of April 19, 2021, the polarization of the political spectrum of the country and the aggravation of the political crisis. According to international observers, the local elections were marred by irregularities. The ruling party also enjoys significant financial and operational advantages, which hinders electoral competition and transparency. The rating of the independence of the judiciary has also deteriorated.

According to a report published

by *The Economist Intelligence Unit* on February 10, Georgia's score in the Democracy Index is deteriorating for the fourth year in a row and dropped from 10 points to 5.12 points in 2021. Georgia 2021 is the lowest in the last decade.

The downward trend of Georgia's democratic index started in 2017. Since the creation of the index in 2006, Georgia's best indicator in the Democracy Index - 5.95 points - was recorded in 2013, and the lowest - 4.59 points - in 2010. Georgia had the highest score in the Democracy Index - 5.95 - in 2013 and was ranked 78th. In 2014-2015 its score decreased slightly, but in 2016-2017 it increased to 5.93. In 2018, Georgia's score dropped sharply, dropping by 0.43 and 10 steps, from 79th to 89th place. The reason for such a sharp drop in the level of democracy was the great influence of former Georgian Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili on government policy, as well as Ivanishvili's influence in the second round of the presidential election, when 600,000 citizens were promised to write off their debts.

Currently, Georgia is one of

four 'hybrid regimes' in Eastern Europe, and it shares this category with Armenia and Ukraine - although both countries are still ahead of Georgia in the 2021 global rankings, ranking 89th and 86th, respectively, while Georgia ranks 91st. It should be noted that Moldova, who aspires to join the European Union together with Ukraine and Georgia, has significantly improved its performance. After taking the 80th place in 2020, in 2021 Moldova ranked 69th and moved from the category of 'hybrid regime' to the category of 'incomplete democracy'.

The *Economist Intelligence Unit* describes the hybrid regime as follows: Elections are conducted with shortcomings, which impedes the freedom and fairness of elections. There is pressure from the government on the opposition. There are serious weaknesses in the political culture and the work of the government. Corruption is rampant and the rule of law is weak. Civil society is weak. Journalists are harassed and the judiciary is not independent. The human rights situation in Georgia has been significantly criticized in the

2021 Annual Report on the State of the World, published by the US Department of State.

Citizens of the country also feel the deterioration of democracy in Georgia. In January 2022, a new study by NDI was published. Every second citizen surveyed says that there is no democracy in Georgia. According to the survey, the majority of the population - 59% - say that democracy is very important. However, at the same time, 50% think that the country is not democratic. At the same time, more than a third of the population surveyed (34%) believe that Georgia used to be a good example of democracy for its neighbors, but now it is no more.

In the spring of 2022, the main opposition force, the National Movement, again plans to intensify and protest against the call for early parliamentary elections. Civic activists are joining the demand, but part of the parliamentary opposition has already distanced itself from the protests. Citizens's MP Levan Ioseliani does not see the need for early elections in the country, as there is no political crisis in the country. Paata Manjgaladze, one of the leaders

of 'Strategy Builder', is of the same opinion, who does not agree with the demand for early elections. According to him, being in a constant revolutionary cycle is in the interests of the 'Georgian Dream' and the result can not be achieved by radicalizing the processes.

The polarized environment in Georgia has long been the subject of criticism from our Western friends. The same was stated by the Deputy Assistant Secretary General of NATO James Appathurai, who is visiting Georgia. NATO governments also want to see continued reforms and a less polarized political environment here; They want to see the government and the opposition work together and see that decisions are made beyond political divisions.

"There is a very polarized political environment here and I think the alliance governments are watching it closely," Appathurai said.

It is clear what needs to be done to increase the degree of democracy in Georgia, but at this stage the chances of seeing all this in Georgia anytime soon are very low.

On April 27-28, Ambassador of Japan to Georgia IMAMURA Akira visited Akhalkalaki Municipality. During the visit, the Ambassador opened the "Project for Provision of Garbage Collection Truck in Akhalkalaki Municipality", funded within the Grassroots Human Security Grant Program (GGP) of the Embassy of Japan. Within this project, 56,000 USD worth of waste collection truck has been purchased which will ensure the timely collection of waste in 9 villages to protect the environment and public health.

During the trip, the Ambassador Imamura met with civil society representatives from Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda Municipalities, discussed organizations' activities and existing challenges at the local level.

Ambassador also visited Georgian and Armenian Churches and met church leaders. As a final activity of the trip, together with the Mayor of Akhalkalaki and deputy mayors, Ambassador visited the local museum which boasts ethnographical materials discovered in Akhalkalaki.

## Ambassador of Japan to Georgia Imamura Akira visits to Akhalkalaki Municipality



### Weather

Monday, May 2

Day Light Rain  
High: 15°C  
Night Partly Cloudy  
Low: 8°C

Tuesday, May 3

Day Partly Cloudy  
High: 22°C  
Night Rain  
Low: 12°C

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