

# The Messenger

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#098 (5158)

WEDNESDAY, MAY 25, 2022

GEL 3.00

WWW.MESSENGER.COM.GE

## Changes in the Self-Government Code



BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The draft law envisaging amendments to the Election Code and the Code of Local Self-Government was discussed in

the first reading in the Parliament of Georgia.

According to the version initiated at the first hearing, the winning candidate in the by-elections of the municipal council

will take the place of the excluded majoritarian member 11 days after the publication of the final protocol of the by-elections on the official website of the CEC.

The deputies agreed that the

changes envisaged in the draft submitted for the first hearing would be extended to the deputies elected by the majoritarian rule, as well as to the members elected by the proportional rule.

As a result, according to the deputies, the adoption of the law will solve the crisis in Batumi Sakrebulo, as well as the crisis in Senaki Sakrebulo.

When the bill was initiated by members of the Georgian Dream in parliament, the opposition claimed that the ruling team had made changes to the organic law to address the crisis in the Batumi City Council.

At May 24 sitting of the parliament, Ani Tsitlidze, a member of the National Movement faction, said that if the crisis in Batumi and Senaki Sakrebulo is to be resolved through legislative changes, then the change should be extended to the MPs elected by the majoritarian system as well as the proportionally elected ones.

According to Khatia Dekanoidze, if the amendments to the law are extended to the Senaki Sakrebulo, this condition will be acceptable to them and they will support the bill.

The Chairman of the Legal Committee, Anri Okhanashvili, in response to the MPs of the National Movement, suggested

to Guram Macharashvili, who submitted the bill, that in order to end the ‘political speculations’, it be regulated on the basis of one principle.

According to Guram Macharashvili, the bill submitted during the second reading will already reflect the change in the recognition of the authority of the MP elected in the by-elections as well as in the proportional system.

According to the current law, the authority of a Sakrebulo member is recognized at the Sakrebulo sitting.

The authority of the Georgian Dream majoritarian MP elected as a result of the by-elections in the Batumi Sakrebulo cannot be recognized, because the opposition is boycotting, and due to the lack of a quorum, the session cannot be held. If the session is not held by June 3, the authority of the City Council will be suspended.

Georgian Dream boycotts Senaki Sakrebulo sittings, but despite this, the opposition still held a sitting and recognized Gakharia’s candidacy as a member of parliament, after which he won a majority in the Sakrebulo and was elected chairman. Georgian Dream appealed to the court to declare the opposition’s actions illegal.

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The former US ambassador to Georgia Ian Kelly and US Assistant Secretary of State David Kramer during the George Bush presidency released an article for the news website The Bulwark, discussing Georgia’s wrong direction towards Euroatlantic integration during the Ukraine crisis, emphasizing that Georgia is becoming more similar to the Russian model which is a one-party rule and the persecution of the opposition.

Diplomats criticize the Georgian Dream government’s policies, saying that despite the desire of the vast majority of the Georgian people to join NATO and the European Union, the ruling party rhetorically supports Western integration policies and its actions show that it chooses the wrong groups.

The letter by Kelly and Kramer reads that the Georgian government is calculating its decisions based on whether it upsets the dictator in the Kremlin or not, which became more apparent in the Georgian Dream’s refusal to make changes urged by the U.S, Europe, and NGOs to ensure an independent judiciary system in Georgia:

“The Georgian Dream government seems to calculate its decisions based not on whether a policy furthers integration with Western norms, but whether it

might upset the dictator in the Kremlin. In its domestic policy, the government has been steadily gathering all the reins of power, in all three branches of government, and marginalizing or dismantling institutions that could provide a check on that power.”

Both authors of the article are heavily criticizing Georgia’s ruling party’s position regarding the war in Ukraine, calling it concerning:

“Most concerning is Georgian Dream’s policy toward the war in Ukraine. As a fellow victim of a hostile Russian invasion, Georgia should be a natural ally of Ukraine. Instead, the Georgian government’s refusal to impose sanctions on Russia, its prevention of its citizens from joining the fight in Ukraine, and its alleged efforts to help Russia avoid sanctions prompted Ukraine to withdraw its ambassador from Tbilisi.”

Ian Kelly and David Kramer write that the Georgian Dream has strong control over the judiciary and law enforcement agencies for their own political and economic profits. According to them, the ruling party has launched a campaign of persecution and demonization of opposition leaders, especially



against the United National Movement.

“Georgian Dream keeps a firm grip on the judiciary and law enforcement not only to ensure judicial outcomes in its political and economic favor but also to prevent a robust opposition. It has waged a campaign of persecution and demonization against leaders of the country’s opposition, particularly the United National Movement. Georgia’s former president, Mikheil Saakashvili, imprisoned after

returning to Georgia from Ukraine last fall, has suffered declining health and poor treatment in prison.”

The article also mentions the recent arrest of Nika Gvaramia, leading opposition channel director of Mtavari Arkhi, sentencing him to more than three years in jail, calling it a “disturbing step” from the ruling party:

“The latest disturbing step in Georgia’s march toward authoritarianism occurred last week when a judge sentenced

Nika Gvaramia, the director of leading opposition TV channel “Mtvari Arkhi,” to more than three years in prison on politically motivated charges. The U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi said in a statement that Gvaramia’s case “calls into question Georgia’s commitment to rule of law” and suggested it sends the wrong signal about its Western orientation at a time “when Georgia has an unprecedented opportunity to advance its Euroatlantic integration.”

## Putin is Failing in Ukraine, but Winning in Georgia, Ian Kelly and David Kramer’s Joint Article Reads



Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.8668; Euro - 3.0706; GBP - 3.5889; 100 Russian Ruble - 5.0950; Swiss Franc - 2.9689

BY THE MESSENGER STAFF

# Vivamedi: Saakashvili's Health Condition Not Deteriorate in the Hospital

Vivamedi Clinic releases a statement regarding the health condition of the third president of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili.

According to the information spread by the clinic, Mikheil Saakashvili's health condition did not deteriorate during his stay in the hospital.

However, according to the clinic, the changes seen on magnetic resonance imaging - are older, are not related to the current condition of the patient, and do not require active medical intervention.

The clinic published a statement:

"Patient Mikheil Saakashvili was admitted to the Vivamedi Clinic on May 12. This year, based on the results of laboratory tests and the assessment of the patient by the specialists, he was placed in the therapeutic department for inpatient supervision.

In order to avoid possible complications due to insufficient food intake, the patient continues laboratory monitoring, is consulted by a specialist doctor of various profiles and has conducted numerous instrumental



examinations (including magnetic resonance imaging).

The prolongation of the studies was directly related to the

procedural issues, which involved obtaining permission

from the patient, and the laboratory data allowed us to 'wait'.

The health condition of the patient during the hospital stay did not deteriorate: the laboratory data is stable in dynamics, part of the results of instrumental examinations - without negative dynamics. Changes seen on magnetic resonance imaging - older, not related to the current condition of the patient, and does not require active medical intervention, it is recommended to observe the dynamics.

The information that is often voiced in the media that the Vivamedi Clinic is not able to diagnose and manage the patient properly is absurd and offensive. It is totally unacceptable to put pressure on the clinic and the clinic doctors, to question their competencies, and to spread false information about the patient's health.

It is frustrating and questioning the repetition of the hysterical information that some patients are disconnected from reality, that the patient is not in contact, cannot move, the condition is critical, and so on.

"We urge everyone to act in the best interests of the patient," the statement read.

## May 23 - Abkhazia Day Celebrated at Mtatsminda Park

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Garibashvili voiced messages of unity to mark Abkhazia Day on May 23 with Georgian citizens, and in particular with 'Abkhaz brothers and sisters in the occupied region.

Gharibashvili noted the celebratory date as 'another wonderful tradition' established with the blessing of the Georgian Orthodox Church Patriarch Ilia II and highlighted the day as one that 'symbolizes the unity' of Georgians and Abkhazians.

"Today we are separated by an occupation line, but what unites us is a common history and culture, values and aspirations for a better future for our children, and this gives us faith that tomorrow also belongs to unity, peace, and friendship," head of the government said.

In the message, the PM also

expressed the belief that the day when Georgians and Abkhazians would be able to reunite in the name of the future and build a strong, developed, European country together was not far off.

Various events were organized by the Government of the

Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia in Mtatsminda Park on this day.

An immersive projection of Abkhazian cultural heritage was shown in the space of the Digital Museum, where unique photos of cultural heritage monuments in Abkhazia were presented.

A photo exhibition 'Shots from Abkhazia' was held on the territory of the park, which displayed unknown and unique photos from family album of public figures - Ilia Chavchavadze, Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia II, Nino Ramishvili, Iliko Sukhishvili, Giga Lortkipanidze, Nodar Dumbadze, Medea Japaridze and Rezo Tabukashvili - taken in Abkhazia.

During the event, the works of the calligrapher from Abkhazia were exhibited, as well as the archival and photo material of the National Center of Manuscripts 'Abkhazia - Manuscript Heritage'. An exhibition sale of products of IDP entrepreneurs from Abkhazia was held in the open space of the park.

The celebration ended

with a concert by Guram Kurashvili Abkhazian State Choir, Abkhazian State Academic Song and Dance Ensemble 'Abkhazia', and Abkhazian State Song Ensemble 'Shavnabada'.

May 23, the day of commemoration of the Apostle Svimon Kananeli, was established as the

'Day of Abkhazia' with the initiative and prayer-blessing of the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia Ilia II. Since 2014, the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia has been celebrating this every year with various thematic events throughout Georgia.



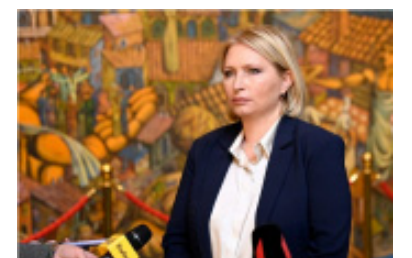
### The News in Brief

#### Natia Turnava Nominated for National Bank Board Membership

The President of Georgia Salome Zurbashvili has nominated Natia Turnava, the former Minister of Economy, as a member of the National Bank Board.

The relevant initiative was presented at the sitting of the Parliamentary Bureau today. The leading committee will be the Parliamentary Finance and Budget Committee, and the final conclusion should be presented by the Committee on Sectoral Economics and Economic Policy.

According to the law on the National Bank, the NBB Board



should consist of 9 members. There are currently 7 members on the board, and 2 positions are vacant.

"I want to change the field and try myself in another arena. I remain a loyal member of our team. So far, we are discussing some directions, nothing specific yet, as soon as the final decision is made, we will inform the public." Natia Turnava said on February 9 when she resigned from the post of minister.

### Weather

Wednesday, May 25

Day Cloudy  
High: 21°C

Night Partly Cloudy  
Low: 9°C

Thursday, May 26

Day Partly  
High: 22°C

Night Clear  
Low: 11°C

published by  
**The Messenger**

43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi,  
0108, Georgia  
Founded by Prof.

**Zaza Gachechiladze**

**Tamar Gachechiladze**  
Publisher

Mob.: +995 599 565621; +995 577 760000  
E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge  
http://www.messenger.com.ge/

**Nino Metreveli**  
Commercial Director

**Mariam Mchedlidze**  
Editor-in-Chief

**Khatuna Gogichaishvili**  
Layout Designer, Photographer

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