

Parliamentary majority to not participate in special Parliament session convened by President

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili on Friday satisfied the opposition's appeal and signed a decree convening a special session of the Parliament to address the 12-point recommendations outlined by the EU for granting the country the membership candidate status. However, the decision caused controversy among the politicians.

On Monday, the ruling Georgian Dream rebuffed to partake in a "parallel, contrived, sabotaged and unpromising process, planned by the radical opposition." As Givi Mikanadze, an MP for the ruling Georgian Dream party, said, none of the 81 members of the fraction would participate in it. According to him, the aim of this process was not to contribute to fulfilling the conditions of the European Union for granting the country the membership candidate status but to "deepen the polarisation" of the domestic political environment. He also added that the agenda of the domestic opposition did not comply with the requirements of the Parliament's regulations.

"We declare once again that we are not going to participate in a parallel, made-up sabotage process planned by the radical opposition with no prospects for the outcome. None of the 81 members of our faction will participate in the special session", Mikanadze said.

Mikanadze noted that since



Forty-six opposition MPs had appealed to the President about convening the special session of the legislative body.

the Georgian Dream parliamentary faction would not attend the session and the quorum would not be formed, the session could not be opened.

"Salome Zourabichvili said

fulfilling the [EC] recommendations requires to team up. The opposition and the ruling team should cooperate, both in working groups, as well as in plenary sessions and committees," said

the President's Parliamentary Secretary Giorgi Mskhiladze.

The opposition believes the majority's decision to not attend the session would be a "sabotage and boycott of the European in-

tegration process." As Strategy Agmashenebeli member Paata Manjgaladze noted, "this will directly illustrate that the Georgian dream does not need and does not want EU integration."



Republican Party Chair Khatuna Samnidze hopes that "the ruling party would consider the current reality and this historical chance, which we should not miss, and find the political will and strength to hold a session."

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Soso Gogashvili says weapon was planted on him by Deputy Director of General Inspectorate

Soso Gogashvili, a former State Security Service deputy chief, says he was arrested violently.

"At two o'clock at night, they intruded into our house. They did not follow any rules, they did not warn me. I explained to them that I had little children - a 4-year-old grandson and a 10-year-old son. I told them I would take the children to another room and open the door for them, but they kept breaking the door," Gogashvili said today at the pre-trial hearing.

He said that Giorgi Gambashidze, the General Inspectorate's deputy director, planted placed a weapon on him.

They forced Gogashvili to handle the weapon before putting it in his home, he claimed today during the trial.

"When I felt what they were doing, I tried to free my hands. At that time, I looked at that person and recognized Giorgi Gambashidze, Deputy Director of the General Inspectorate. After I shouted: "What you doing?", he kicked me in the jaw, then I cursed him and another person hit me. I felt a very strong pain," said Gogashvili at the pre-trial hearing.

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.8348; Euro - 2.8782; GBP - 3.3955; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.9712; Swiss Franc - 2.9033

Prosecutor's Office Charges Former Deputy Head of State Security Service, Gogashvili with 3 Articles

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The former deputy head of the State Security Service, Soso Gogashvili, was officially indicted. The Prosecutor's Office charged him with 3 articles - exceeding his official authority, illegally obtaining, storing, distributing personal data using his official position, and illegally purchasing and storing firearms.

According to the statement of the Prosecutor's Office, as a result of the investigation, it was established that Ioseb Gogashvili had access to information containing state secrets, as well as personal and personal data, given on his official position, while working in various leadership positions in the State Security Service in 2015-2018.

"Gogashvili, exceeding his official authority, took the above-mentioned data from work for personal purposes and kept it in his residence, some of which information was disseminated publicly with his participation, which caused a violation of the constitutional right of citizens and significant damage. In addition, there was a danger of disclosure of state secrets."

In the same statement, it is written that Gogashvili purchased 5 firearms and ammunition, 2 of which were unregistered, and three, which were also kept in his home, were signed under the name of a close relative.

Employees of the State Security Service arrested Gogashvili on July 16. He is accused under the 1st part of Article 333 of the Criminal Code of Georgia (exceeding official authority by an official, which caused a substantial violation of the legal interest of the state), under the 4th part of Article 157 (illegally obtaining, storing, distributing personal data, causing significant damage) caused by the use of official position) and was presented under the 3rd part of Article 236 (illegal purchase and storage of firearms and ammunition), which provides for imprisonment for a term of 4 to 7 years.

The prosecutor's office has al-



ready applied to the court with a motion to extend the prison term to the accused as a preventive measure.

"As a result of the search conducted by the court's ruling, marked state secret documents related to the activities of the State Security Service, documents containing personal and personal data, dozens of techni-

cal equipment and illegal firearms were removed from the residence of Gogashvili. The investigation of the mentioned criminal case in the State Security Service is continuing."

Soso Gogashvili was arrested in Tbilisi on July 16, at his home. The video footage shot by his wife shows that masked law enforcement officers physically

arrest Gogashvili in the first seconds of entering the house. According to the agency, the arrest of the former head 'became inevitable as a result of the search'. His relatives

Gogashvili himself connects his arrest with the statement made by him on the disclosure of information related to election fraud. According to the lawyer,

the documents, which Gogashvili intended to make public, will probably be published by July 25.

According to Gogashvili's wife, Tea Martkopishvili, law enforcement officers planted a firearm under the bed and another in the closet, as well as a 'flash drive, computer, written documents, and a hard drive' next to the bed. She claimed that law enforcement officers did not allow her to call an ambulance or a lawyer.

Notably, Gogashvili's arrest was preceded by the dissemination of a secret audio recording by TV host and singer Gia Gachechiladze, who has had close ties with the government, of Mtavari Arkhi TV journalists discussing how to cover 'secret files' given to them by Gogashvili. The former deputy head also authored a July 15 Facebook post after the distribution of the secret recording, which exposed authorities' falsification of last year's local elections and claimed that Gogashvili already provided evidence of the 'entire structure' to media and other organizations.

Georgia shifts to sustainable practices in forest management

With support from Japan, UNDP builds and equips Business Service Yards in Mtskheta municipality to protect forests from illegal logging



TBILISI. 18 July 2022 – Three Business Service Yards to be established in Mtskheta municipality serve as an alternative to illegal logging and offer people easy access to firewood used for heating and other daily needs. Once fully operational, they will supply around 43,000 people with wood biomass and sustainably harvested timber.

With US\$920,000 in funding from Japan, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) assists the National Forestry Agency (NFA) of Georgia's Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture to build, develop and improve Business Service Yards

and ensure that they provide quality services to local communities.

By the end of 2022, UNDP will help the NFA to build and equip a Business Service Yard in the village Jighaura and equip two more Business Services Yards in the villages Dzegvi and Qvemo Lisi with all-terrain vehicles and firefighting tools. UNDP will also train foresters in sustainable forest management, distribute energy-efficient stoves to the most vulnerable families and organise an information campaign to let people know why forest protection is so important.

The Japan and UNDP support is part of a broader effort to pro-

mote Georgia's ongoing forestry reform and help the country achieve its far-reaching climate goals.

On 15 July, Ambassador of Japan to Georgia **Imamura Akira**, Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture **Kakha Kakabadze**, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative in Georgia **Anna Chernyshova**, Acting Head of the National Forestry Agency **Davit Aladashvili** and Mtskheta Municipality Mayor **Dimitry Zurabishvili** visited the newly opened Business Service Yard in the village Bodorna to see how this new model contributes to the progress of forestry reform.

"The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture already established forty-three Business Service Yards across Georgia. This initiative is part of the ongoing forestry reform which aims to ensure sustain-

able development of the forestry sector and replace social logging with environment-friendly practices," Deputy Minister Kakabadze said.

"Georgians and Japanese share a deep cultural connection to forests. Japan made sustainable forest management a national priority and achieved impressive results in sustaining and conserving its woodlands. We are happy to share this experience with Georgia, help safeguard fragile forest ecosystems and assist people to explore green energy solutions for sustainable livelihoods," Ambassador Imamura said.

"75 percent of Georgia's population still rely on firewood for their heating needs. Unsustainable harvesting threatens forests and increases greenhouse gas emissions. UNDP welcomes the adoption of the new Forest Code which provides a clear vision of how to reduce illegal logging and manage forests sustainably. To support this national effort, we provide practical assistance to the National Forestry Agency and local communities and help introduce greener, healthier and more sustainable solutions in everyday life," Chernyshova said.

Weather

Tuesday, July 19

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 36°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 20°C

Wednesday, July 20

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 33°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 20°C

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