

## ISFED says they were banned from participating in the working group for 'Election Code' revision for their impartiality



BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The non-governmental organization International Society for Fair Elections And Democracy (ISFED) was not allowed to participate in the working group created for the revision of the "Election Code" which was created to fulfill the recommendations issued by the European Union for Georgia to obtain candidate status, the first meeting of which was held on August 18. Givi Mikanadze, the head of the working group, told journalists about this and explained the reason for the decision. According to him, "Fair Elections" lost its neutrality when it joined the demand for the dismissal of the Prime Minister. According to Mikanadze, ISFED is an organization "which falsified the results of the parallel counting of 2020, hid them for 7 weeks, and thus tarnished the image of the country".

International Society for Fair Elections And Democracy (ISFED) published a statement, responding to the non-govern-

mental organization not being allowed to participate in the working group created for the revision of the "Election Code". According to them, the ruling party's banning of the organization from participating in the election working group is a limitation of the civil organization's rights and persecution.

As ISFED explains, the government's attitude is a direct demarche against "Fair Elections" and the civil sector as a whole, despite their constructive position and willingness to engage in working groups, adding that such an attitude of the government is caused by the non-acceptance of the organization's impartiality and critical position.

"Today it became known that the ruling party blocked the inclusion of "Fair Elections" in the parliamentary working group on election issues, which was created to fulfill the recommendations issued by the European Union for Georgia to obtain candidate status.

In order to fulfill the recommendations

of the European Union, the involvement of the civil society in the work process was recommended by the Western partners, however, the format created by the government excluded the broad representation of the non-governmental sector. The ruling party did not give all willing organizations the opportunity to work on reforms in the desired direction, as it determined only 2 places for them in each working group.

It should be emphasized that in the case of other working groups, the government did not intervene in the selection of organizations submitted by the civil sector, unlike the group working on election issues. The ruling party refused "fair elections" presented by the agreement of the non-governmental sector to participate in this group.

Thus, the government's attitude represents a direct demarche against "fair elections" and the civil sector as a whole, despite their constructive position and willingness to engage in working groups. This attitude of the government is caused by the non-acceptance of the organization's impartiality and critical position. "Fair Elections" believes that the removal of the

professional organization from the process actually indicates the formal creation of a working group, the purpose of which, instead of improving the electoral legislation and fulfilling the recommendations of the European Commission, is to prolong the process and create the illusion of readiness to fulfill the recommendations. This decision of the "Georgian Dream", at such a crucial moment for the future of Georgia, is against the national interests of the country.

"Fair Elections" is an independent, leading organization working on election issues with many years of experience, which is proven by the support and cooperation of both local and international partners during the 27 years of the organization's existence.

"Fair Elections" assesses such a position of the ruling party as a limitation of civil society, which significantly harms the country's European integration process. However, the organization is not going to deviate from the chosen path and will continue to work for the promotion of the age-old aspiration of the Georgian people - western integration," the statement reads.

## 'Republican Party' leader meets with international partners regarding 12 recommendations for Georgia obtaining EU candidacy

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Khatuna Samnidze, the leader of "Republican

Party", after the meeting with Adviser to EU Ambassador Julien Crampes, Court Program Manager Anne-Bridget Hansen



and American Embassy Political Officer Evan Elliott, regarding the completing the 12 recommendations for Georgia to receive European Union candidacy, told media that the meeting was initiated from Georgia's partners and they are willing to observe the process closely for Georgia to achieve the candidacy status:

"It is in the interest of our partners that all 12 recommendations are fulfilled as much as possible and the country is able to receive the status - of course, they will observe this process very closely and try to support as much as possible everyone who will participate in this process - the leader of

CONTINUED ON Page 2

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Electoral Code revision working process is an illusion for Georgian Dream, says Giorgi Vashadze



The leader of "Strategy Agmashenebeli" Giorgi Vashadze states that the "blocking" of ISFED from the meeting of the working group created on the revision of the electoral code is an illustration that the working process of the "Georgian Dream" government is an illusion.

According to Giorgi Vashadze, the government is not motivated to implement the recommendations and the process needs to be imitated.

"Today it became known that the ruling party blocked the inclusion of "Fair Elections" in the parliamentary working group on electoral issues, which was created to fulfill the recommendations issued by the European Union for Georgia to obtain candidate status.

This is a clear illustration of the fact that the authorities are not motivated to implement the recommendations, they need this process for imitation to create an illusion as if they have worked, done everything, and Europe has unfairly denied us the candidate status.

The working groups of the opposition parties are open to all interested parties regarding the implementation of the 12-point recommendations. We cooperate with "Fair Elections" and other authoritative international organizations, and all their suggestions will be reflected and shared in the draft laws prepared by us", Giorgi Vashadze said.

Levan Machabeli, Illegally detained by Russian occupation forces is free from prison, State Security Service releases statement



Levan Machabeli, a former soldier illegally detained by the Russian occupation forces, has been released from prison.

According to the State Security Service of Georgia, he is on the territory controlled by Georgia.

The State Security Service of Georgia releases the statement regarding the Machabeli case:

"The central government of Georgia actively used both the "hotline" mechanism and other tools at the disposal of the central government to demand the immediate release of Levan Machabeli.

The issue of his release from illegal detention was regularly discussed in the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) format, and information was continuously provided to the co-chairs of the Geneva International Discussions and international partners.

The central government continues to

work actively for the release of other illegally detained Georgian citizens, both in the direction of occupied Tskhinvali and occupied Abkhazia.

The occupying power bears full responsibility for the destructive actions carried out in the occupied regions of Georgia and along the occupation line.

Levan Machabeli, born in 1987, was arrested by the occupying forces on March 26, 2022, in the village of Artsevi.

According to the so-called security committee of the occupied Tskhinvali region, "from 2005 to 2009, Levan Machabeli was a serviceman of the 3rd brigade of the Georgian Armed Forces and took an active part in the August 2008 military operations on the territory of South Ossetia".

The Security Service of Georgia denied this information and said that Machabeli is not a former soldier.

'Republican Party' leader meets with international partners regarding 12 recommendations for Georgia obtaining EU candidacy

According to her, the partners were interested in why there is a parallel process and how these processes will be combined at the committee hearings, where specific initiatives and legislative projects of the Georgian Dream working groups, as well as legislative projects of the opposition, will be presented.

"The meeting was initiated by our partners, the European Union, and there was also a representative of the United States of America. The main topic was the process of implementing the 12 recommendations - how we, our political group, "Republicans" and "Strategy Agmashenebeli" see this process, why and with what arguments we are not involved in the main process, why there is a parallel process and how we see the unification of

these processes at committee hearings, Where specific initiatives and legislative projects of "Georgian Dream" working groups, as well as legislative projects of the opposition will be presented.

Of course, it is in the interest of our partners that all 12 points are fulfilled as much as possible and the country can get the status - this is in the interest of our partners, and of course, when we, part of the opposition, refused to participate in the work process, one of the main arguments was that "Georgian Dream" did not say what the process and decision-making mechanism would be. They also did not say what the criteria would be for the involvement of experts and non-govern-

mental organizations working on a specific topic in this process.

Refusal of "fair elections" is proof that "Georgian Dream" wants to lead the process only with its own, one-party interest, to discredit all non-governmental organizations and opposition parties that do not agree with its positions. It is normal to be critical of any NGOs decision. This is a proof that "Georgian Dream" does not intend to make the process inclusive and only intends to have its own associates in this process and make decisions with its own one-party interest - this is dangerous, it is a step taken against the interests of the country," said Samnidze.

Weather

Friday, August 19

Day Clear High: 34°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 21°C

Saturday, August 20

Day Partly Cloudy High: 34°C

Night Mostly Cloudy Low: 21°C

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

the "Republican Party" Khatuna Samnidze said.

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

The Messenger welcomes your contributions. If you are interested in submitting an article or news item please contact.

All contributions should be submitted by e-mail.

The Messenger Georgia's English language daily is an independent newspaper, and,

therefore, the opinions expressed in some articles do not necessarily coincide with those of the newspaper. We take no responsibility for any claims made in advertisements.

The Messenger preserves the style of a source written in English where possible.