

Georgian soldiers risking their lives in Ukraine can't be frightened by confiscation of passports, Georgian Legion commander in Ukraine says

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Mamuka Mamulashvili, the commander of the 'Georgian Legion' in Ukraine, told "TV Pirveli" that Georgian soldiers are not frightened of their passports being taken away.

"People who have arrived and are going to die, I doubt that the confiscation of their passports will frighten them... This will not diminish the people who defend their country in Ukraine," said

According to him, this persecution has been going on since 2014, it's just a more active phase today.

As he mentioned, if the Georgian society failed to give a decent answer to this, of course, the next stage will be the development of what [members of the Georgian Dream] talked about.

Mamulashvili said that only Russia's hired soldiers can be motivated by money:

"Talking about depriving

you of your citizenship... you know, these people are well-deserved people, in many cases, they are also boys with good European education, and I think it's stupid to frighten people that you will take away your citizenship. This is the primitive level they can represent. These are soldiers of the highest level, these people know what they are doing, and what they are going for. People whom Russia hires can be motivated by money.

Many times it is emphasized to us that there is no salary here, when we are recruiting, we tell this to the soldier so that he knows that he is not coming here to get a salary," he said

Mamulashvili called on the ruling party to protect the interests of Georgia:

"...people know very well what they are doing and we know very well what we are doing. We protect the interests of Georgia and we urge you to protect the interests of Geor-



gia, do not interfere with what they themselves do not do, have not done, and will never do," said Mamulashvili.

According to him, the Georgian Legion is the largest foreign unit in the Ukrainian army and, according to statistics, is one of the most advanced in the number of destroyed enemies.

"This is one of the factors why they are irritated, and it seems that Russia demanded that they somehow stop the recruitment of Georgians," he says.

He called the Georgian Dream government collaborators.

"Unfortunately, they are so emboldened that they reached out to the fighters already, because the rest, everything went without asking for an answer for cooperation with the Russian special services... there is so much pressure from Russia that they simply have no way out," said Mamulashvili.

Russia to revisit direct flights ban to Georgia

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

According to Denis Gonchar, director of the fourth department of the CIS countries of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Russia may decide to resume direct flights with Georgia and start visa liberalization for its citizens.

However, as Gonchar noted in an interview with TASS, flights will be resumed "if the necessary preconditions are established".

"As for the prospects of restoration of direct flights and visa liberalization for Georgian citizens, if the necessary preconditions are established for this - the conditions are known in Tbilisi - we do not rule out making a decision on this issue," said Gonchar.

According to the Russian diplomat, the forecast of economic growth in Georgia has increased to double digits 'thanks to incoming tourism from Russia, remittances, and trade with Russia'.

Up to 15 people from Georgia took part in the forum held on December 7 in Moscow. According to the website of

the Russian Strategic Culture Foundation, the Russian-Georgian Relations: 'Prospects for its Development forum' was organized by the CIS Affairs and Eurasian Integration Committee of the Russian State Duma and the Georgian public organization "Solidarity for Peace".

"The parties are sure that it is necessary to regulate diplomatic relations between the two countries. Despite the unfavorable military-political situation, friendly contacts have never stopped, which is evidenced by a significant tourist flow, mutual interest, a large number of kinship ties that connect the citizens of the two countries, and - growing cargo turnover," we read on the foundation's website.

The ban on direct flights between Russia and Georgia entered into force on July 8, 2019. The decision was made by President Vladimir Putin on June 20 after the visit of the communist deputy Sergei Gavrillov to Tbilisi which resulted in Georgians rallying against his visit to Parliament.



Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.6802; Euro - 2.8300; GBP - 3.2811; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.2862; Swiss Franc - 2.8724

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

Mikheil Saakashvili's health worsens, doctors advise to transfer him abroad

Georgian politics is still polarized, and one of the important factors leading to polarization is the issue of Saakashvili being transferred abroad for treatment.

On this topic, on the one hand, the ruling Georgian Dream and on the other hand, most of the opposition parties and non-principal parties have radically different positions.

Judging by the statements of government representatives, they do not believe that it is necessary to transfer Saakashvili abroad for medical treatment, which is demanded by their opponents. In principle, the decision on the issue is entrusted to the judge, and the further development of events depends on this decision. The health condition of Mikheil Saakashvili, who is in prison, is getting worse and worse. There are already several conclusions from local and foreign doctors about it. The third president of Georgia is confirmed to have several serious illnesses and it is considered necessary to take him abroad for treatment.

Several opposition parties, non-governmental organizations, and some doctors are actively demanding the physical

survival of Mikheil Saakashvili. According to their statements, since Saakashvili's health condition, despite the treatment, cannot be improved in the Georgian medical institution, it is necessary to transfer him abroad for treatment.

Proponents of transferring Saakashvili for treatment are trying to depoliticize this issue and point out that it is only about saving human life. Saakashvili himself has been declaring for a long time that he is no longer interested in Georgian politics. There are mainly two ways to achieve the release of Saakashvili, who is in prison. President Salome Zurbishvili's pardon of Saakashvili is one thing. However, even if Zurbishvili wants to, there are several court proceedings against Saakashvili, and without the completion of these proceedings, the president cannot pardon the arrested person.

The second way to release Saakashvili is through the court. The judge, due to Saakashvili's health condition,

can make a decision to postpone Saakashvili's imprisonment or release him altogether his health condition. Government officials claim that the court is independent and no one will interfere in the judge's decision. The representatives of the opposition do not believe these statements and believe that the judge will only voice what the government dictates.

The representatives of Georgian Dream make almost the same statements and completely rule out Saakashvili's release for treatment and sending him abroad. They do not believe that Saakashvili is really seriously ill and they think that the ex-president is just 'simulating', 'not eating properly' and if it becomes necessary, or the prisoner demands, doctors can be brought to him from abroad.

According to the same statements, Saakashvili "must answer for the crimes committed" and come to terms with the fact that he will have to spend years in prison. 'Georgian Dream' is trying to convince the public of

the correctness of its position, and in this regard, official propaganda works quite effectively. Pro-government media is full of materials directed against Saakashvili.

On December 9, if nothing has changed, the judge should make a decision to transfer Mikheil Saakashvili abroad for treatment due to his health condition, or consider the presented conclusions regarding Saakashvili's health condition to be groundless.

This is a peculiar boundary, which, according to the decision made, will either contribute to mitigating the conflict in the country or, on the contrary, will further increase polarization. As already said, the opposition does not believe in the independence of the court, and if they leave Saakashvili in prison, they will consider it a political decision dictated not by the judge, but by the government, which comes from Bidzina Ivanishvili, and they consider it a confirmation that Saakashvili is "Putin's personal prisoner."

Saakashvili's party, which

has a serious internal conflict, reached an agreement that the 'internal party elections' will be temporarily postponed and the UNM will actively try to achieve the transfer of Saakashvili abroad for treatment through protest rallies.

Probably, several other opposition parties and non-governmental organizations will join the National Movement.

However, some are skeptical that periodic or permanent protest rallies, even if these rallies are numerous, will successfully put pressure on the ruling Georgian Dream and agree to transfer Saakashvili for treatment. A negative reaction is expected in the West as well, but it does not have a significant impact on the current government of Georgia. The situation will, of course, become even more tense if Saakashvili's health continues to deteriorate.

It is clear that the government is facing an important choice and the further development of events will depend a lot on the decision the government makes.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Georgia to purchase generators to send over to Ukraine as humanitarian aid



According to the decision of the Prime Minister of Georgia, generators will be sent to Ukraine in order to provide hu-

manitarian aid.

The government instructed the Economy and Sustainable Development Agency to purchase the generators as soon as possible. The exact number of generators planned to be purchased has still yet to be specified.

appropriate support from a financial point of view, as well as appropriate support from an educational and medical point of view. Today, 2,345 young people study in different schools in Georgia, including 1,565 in Ukrainian. More than 900 people were provided appropriate support within the framework of referral programs in various medical institutions.

As of December 1, the approximate support provided by Georgia to the citizens of Ukraine amounts to 23 million GEL. Our support has never stopped and the fuss caused by the seeming non-consideration of various proposals that have entered various agencies is incomprehensible. We are studying all these proposals in great detail," said Revaz Javelidze, the head of government administration.

at strengthening the country's defense capabilities and will promote Georgia's active cooperation with the European Union within the framework of the Common Defense and Security Policy (CSDP), the press service of the Ministry of Defense reports.

"Georgia received EU financial aid for defense and security

This year, for the first time, the European peace instrument will provide support to Georgia in the field of cyber security. Also, the aid package will be aimed at strengthening military-medical, military-engineering, and transport capabilities.

This important decision once again confirms the dynamism of



for the second time. In 2021, Georgia was one of the first countries to receive EPF. This fact once again demonstrates that for the EU, Georgia is the most important and reliable partner in the region and exists on both sides in the field of defense and security. Strong interest in deepening cooperation, including increasing resilience to various hybrid threats.

Georgia-EU cooperation and makes it clear that the security dimension is one of the critical areas of the bilateral agenda. The European Union continues to be actively involved in the process of promoting peace and stability in Georgia, with strong support for the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity within internationally recognized borders," the press release reads.

Weather

Monday, December 12

Day Mostly Cloudy
High: 5°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 1°C

Tuesday, December 13

Day Mostly Cloudy
High: 5°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 2°C

"Since the beginning of the war, the Georgian government has never neglected its Ukrainian friends and tried to help them as much as possible. The proof of this is that Georgia remains in the first place among the countries that have provided humanitarian aid to this state.

26,000 people, citizens of Ukraine, who currently live on the territory of Georgia, receive

European Union approves 20 million euros worth aid for Georgia

The European Council approved a package of financial assistance for Georgia within the framework of the European Peace Facility (EPF). The aid worth 20 million euros is aimed

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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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Women spend five times more on unpaid care work compared to men, Georgia's first Time Use Survey finds

Since the early twentieth century, over 250 Time Use Surveys have been carried out in more than 80 countries, generating data on the time spent on paid and unpaid work by women and men and shedding light on women's disproportionate share of the world's unpaid work. In Georgia, this data was unavailable until recently. UN Women and the National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat) filled this data gap releasing the results of Georgia's first Time Use Survey on 09 December 2022.

Georgia's Time Use Survey revealed that women in Georgia spend almost five times more on unpaid domestic and care work compared to men. Being married and having young children significantly reduces women's likelihood to engage in paid work and their weekly labour market work time on the one hand, and in-

creases their time spent on domestic and care work on the other hand. Mothers, on average, spend 20.4 hours on childcare per week, compared to 3.9 hours spent by fathers.

The data also shows that women have less free time (1.2 hours per day) compared to men (1.8 hours per day), spend less time on social and community interaction activities (2.1 hours compared to 2.8 hours) and are more likely to experience time pressure (32.6%) compared to men (25.1%), which has adverse effects on their physical and mental health and wellbeing. As a result there are stark differences in time poverty for women and men with more women (51%) experiencing time poverty compared to men (40.9%).

"The key objective of the Georgian Time Use Survey was to generate internationally comparable time-use data to moni-

tor, and report on, the volume of unpaid domestic and care work in Georgia. In addition to generating internationally comparable time-use data, the study informed the baseline indicators for relevant SDG targets. The findings of the study will further provide policy makers with evidence to inform relevant state policies on gender equality," - Gogita Todradze, Geostat's Executive Director said at the study presentation bringing together up to 100 representatives from the legislative and executive governments, development partners, civil society organizations and academia.

As women globally spend three times longer on unpaid care work than men, women's disproportionate share of the world's unpaid care work continues to be a major impediment to gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

"We hope that the data generated by the study will serve as the catalyst for sparking a national debate about the value of care and the gender inequality crisis in Georgia. It is also our sincere hope that the findings of this study will inform government policies to reduce the disproportionate share of unpaid care work carried by women and girls and to redistribute care responsibilities equitably between women and men in households, communities, the world of work and indeed the State." - UN Women Country Representative in Georgia, Kaori Ishikawa said.

The Time Use Survey was implemented within the framework of the "Good Governance for Gender Equality in Georgia" project funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UN Women's flagship programme Making Every Woman and Girl Count.



UN Women and the National Statistics Office of Georgia presented the main results of the first ever time use survey in Georgia.



Photos by The National Statistics Office of Georgia