

Ombudsman Presents Evaluation of March 7-9 Protests

By Liza Mchedlidze

Ombudsman Levan Ioseliani held a briefing, where he stated that the Public Defender of Georgia and his representatives were continuously monitoring the rallies held on March 7-9, protesting the draft laws initiated by People's Power at the Parliament of Georgia.

The Public Defender and the employees of the office visited various divisions, departments, and temporary detention centers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia to visit the persons arrested during the protests.

According to the Ombudsman's assessment, unjustified cases of use of force in a similar situation always contribute to the artificial escalation of the situation, which law enforcement officers should avoid. However, the use of said force continued in a completely illegitimate manner against the peaceful participants of the assembly standing in front of the Parliament of Georgia.

"We emphasize that the freedom of peaceful assembly is protected by the Constitution of Georgia. On the basis of international standards, continuous monitoring and information and video recordings disseminated through the media for this stage, the Public Defender of Georgia presents his evaluations to the public:

On the evening of March 7, the situation on the ground became tense after some of the participants of the meeting tried to



approach one of the entrances of the parliament, the way to which was blocked by law enforcement officers. This was followed by the statement of the Ministry of Internal Affairs that the protest became violent, there was an attempt to block one of the entrances to the Parliament, and there were incidents of violence against the employees of the Ministry. Soon, a small part of the citizens moved to the second entrance of the Parliament. Cases of conflict were recorded at both locations."

According to the Public Defender's assessment, at the

time of the announcement of the warning by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia in the evening hours of March 7, 2023, the protest was peaceful and there was no reason to stop it and use force against it. As for the cases of violence on the part of the participants of the rally, if there are any, individual, necessary and proportionate measures should have been taken against them. Contrary to this, the law enforcers started using special means against the participants of the assembly, including the peaceful demonstrators, which contradicts the stan-

dard of necessary and proportionate interference with the right," the statement reads.

Levan Ioseliani said that the public defender and his representatives went to various divisions, departments and temporary detention centers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and visited 96 arrested persons.

According to the Ombudsman, the detainees pointed to the harsh forms of detention and in some cases, they had injuries. In the case of several detainees, with their own wish and consent, the Office of the Public Defender immediately applied to the Spe-

cial Investigation Service in order to start an investigation.

The Public Defender emphasized the case of 'Girchi - More Freedom' party leader Zurab Japaridze and said that his case is 'particularly noteworthy' as, according to Ioseliani, several representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs physically assaulted Japaridze, beat him with hands, feet and batons. As a result, he has multiple injuries in the head and neck area, as well as in the wrist area.

"In addition, during these days, information was constantly spread and many people contacted the Office of the Public Defender that they could not find family members or lawyers of the arrested persons, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs did not provide information about the places of their placement. This violates the detainees' right to defense, as they were not given the opportunity to meet with lawyers on time and develop a defense strategy," the statement reads.

According to the public defender, the office of the ombudsman will continue to study the cases of persons arrested at the rallies, as well as in the future it will carry out monitoring of the investigation started on the fact of improper treatment of persons detained in the special investigative service.

The Public Defender called on investigative agencies to conduct an effective investigation into the facts of the use of disproportionate force, as well as the injury of media representatives.

Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili Accuses Several NGOs of 'Destructive' and 'Provocative' Behaviour

By Liza Mchedlidze

Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili spoke about the events that took place in the country on March 7-8 in an interview with TV Imedi.

He explained the importance of the draft law on "agents of foreign influence". According to him, the main motivation for the adoption of the draft law was to let the population know what the activities of non-governmental organizations serve.

The PM said that after gaining independence in the country, a large amount of funding goes to the accounts of non-governmental organizations, their goals and activities are opaque, and the law would establish the minimum level of transparency and responsibility toward citizens.

Prime Minister accused several non-governmental organizations of being destructive and creating provocations and

added that its government's job to inform people about their activities:

"For example, known for its destructive actions and provocations, the so-called "The Shame" movement, which is

financed directly by foreign organizations, including state organizations of foreign countries, we saw that this organization demanded the resignation of the government, my resignation, many destructive

actions were carried out by them or with their complicity.

We know the so-called provocative movement "Tbilisi Pride", which intended to hold highly provocative events. The holding of so-called parades, you remember very well, caused a lot of controversies, all of which is related to their destructive activities.

Organization EMC, for example, may not be known by many, but I know very well how many destructive projects this organization is engaged in. These people directly serve to incite strife and are involved in many provocations.

For example, "Transparency International", also known as ISFED, which directly presented falsified data on the day of the elections, and the results of parallel counting in the subsequent period were falsified, which they later admitted, our task is to know and let our people know what their activities serve," said Gharibashvili.



The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Prime Minister Accuses President Zelensky and Leaders of Ukraine of 'Direct Intervention' in Georgian Internal Politics



Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili was asked about Volodymyr Zelensky's video addressing people at the March 7-8 protests. In response, Gharibashvili accused the President of Ukraine of being motivated for something to happen in Georgia.

"You mentioned Zelensky's video address - now when a person who is at war leaves and responds to the destructive

protest of several thousand people here in Georgia, this is direct evidence that this person is involved, motivated to make something happen here, to change," Prime Minister said.

Gharibashvili accused Ukrainian politicians of direct intervention in internal politics and asked leaders of Ukraine to

will escalate...

You mentioned Ukrainian politicians, I don't want to list names anymore. Klitschko came out, some incomprehensible people came out, others, Ukrainian politicians, Arakhamia and some sleazy 'losers' came out, who say that there is a need for change and scenarios, a coup. It is a direct intervention. I don't want to continue now, man is at war. I want to wish everyone a timely end to this war and peace, success and reunification of the country. But first, take care of yourself and your own country, we will take care of our country," said the Prime Minister.

Polish Authorities Express Readiness to Send Doctors to Tbilisi to Treat Mikheil Saakashvili



Polish government representative Piotr Müller said that Polish doctors are ready to visit Georgia and conduct examinations on the third president, Mikheil Saakashvili.

Müller said that Poland is still waiting for formal consent from Georgia and said that Saakashvili's medical services "cause serious concern of the international community."

"We are ready to send a medical mission to Georgia. We hope that an agreement will be reached on this. If the Georgian government has no excuse to criticize itself in this direction, then I do not see a problem [in sending a medical mission]. This is not only a call of Poland but also of the European parliamentarians," said Müller.

"take care of their own country first".

"In Ukraine, let me tell you in a few words that the situation is very difficult, further escalation is expected, and Ukraine is also preparing some counterattacks, according to our information. There will probably be very difficult battles in the Donetsk region as a whole, and after the capture of Bakhmut, it will probably become even more difficult and

Georgia: EBRD to help improve solid waste management in Kobuleti and Batumi

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is committing new funds to address solid waste treatment issues in Batumi and the wider Adjara region in Georgia. A sovereign loan of up to •19 million for Adjara Waste Management Company will help tackle some of the most pressing environmental challenges faced by the tourist region's inhabitants and visitors.

The first committed tranche of up to •3 million will be used to purchase new solid waste management equipment. This will enable the borrower to start



new landfill operations and, consequently, stop waste being disposed of at the current non-European Union (EU) compliant dumpsites. The second uncommitted tranche of up to •16 million will be used to build a new waste treatment plant, allowing the company to recover recyclables and divert waste sent to the new sanitary landfill.

The investment will address the priority needs of Batumi and the wider Adjara region. This includes stopping the disposal of waste at existing dumpsites in Kobuleti and Batumi, with the latter being the largest and most dangerous polluter in Georgia. "These dumpsites are active sources of land, water and air pollution, impacting the ecosystem of the region in particular, and the Black Sea in general," says EBRD.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Tuesday, March 14

Day Mostly Cloudy
High: 18°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 10°C

Wednesday, March 15

Day Mostly Cloudy
High: 18°C

Night Clear
Low: 7°C

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