

Public Defender Issues Statement Supporting Alleged Victims of Sexual Harassment

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The Public Defender of Georgia Levan Ioseliani responded to the publicized facts about the possible sexual harassment on several women by the head of the media company, Shalva Ramishvili in recent days and the subsequent events that followed this publicity.

"The Public Defender expresses his support for the alleged victims of violence and, as a mechanism for fighting against discrimination, expresses his full readiness to study their individual cases within the mandate of the institute, if they wish and apply.

Unfortunately, this is not the first time when a part of the public and politicians directs aggression towards the alleged victim - they question their narrative without appeal, point out that they started talking about sexual harassment only years later to damage the reputation of the alleged harasser, and they show support to the alleged harasser.

According to the assessment of the Public Defender of Georgia, such statements by members of the public and especially by politicians further strengthen the existing stereotypes towards the victims of violence, increase discrimination against them and create an additional social barrier for them to talk about



their difficult experiences in the future and apply to the appropriate legal mechanisms," the statement reads.

The Public Defender drew attention to the issue of media coverage of these events.

"Due to the importance and

sensitivity of the topic, the public defender calls on the media to respect the rights to privacy, space and communication protected by the Constitution of Georgia and to take into account the obligation of the Law of Georgia 'On Broadcasting', which

obliges the broadcasters to take all measures to ensure the accuracy of the facts broadcasted on the air and to correct errors in a timely manner. In addition, the Public Defender will be interested in the course of the criminal investigation, which,

according to the private person, was started on the basis of a false report.

The Public Defender would also like to remind the public that any kind of violence against journalists is not allowed and unacceptable," the statement reads.

Eight Female MPs Demand Justice for Shalva Ramishvili's Sexual Harassment Victims



BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Eight Female MPs issued a statement expressing solidarity with all women who have been victims of sexual harassment or other types of rights violations.

The statement reads that they strongly condemn the continuous attack by violent and propaganda machines against Tatia Samkharadze, who was the first to publicly discuss and demand a legal response against the sexual harassment by Shalva Ramishvili in Georgia. Ramishvili was found guilty in the court's two instances.

The female MPs also condemn the statements made by the leaders of the ruling team on these and other alleged harassment facts, which 4 more women have

spoken about in recent days.

"In recent days, the authorities have gone beyond the phase of silence that we have seen in other cases, and are openly supporting the harasser, telling all perpetrators of violence and discrimination to not speak out and report the abusers.

It is especially unacceptable for us that government representatives used the parliamentary tribune to spread this message. Also, the position of the chairman of the Parliament's Gender Equality Council, which has a special responsibility to promote not only the legal framework for the protection of women's rights but also the creation of an appropriate environment for the implementation of laws in practice, is unacceptable.

Over the past few days, we

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have seen the most dangerous and vicious practice of using state institutions to persecute the victim and re-produce false narratives in order to protect the reputation of the abuser and punish the victim. It is unacceptable

when, on the grounds of protecting rights and law and order, with the involvement of state agencies, they invade people's living space. The mentioned incident deepens the suspicion of the use of illegal surveillance and monitoring practices and the misuse of the state machine to

protect party interests. The fact that a person exposed by the court in harassment publicly threatens that information about the whistleblower's personal life will be made public shows a feeling of untouchability and impunity, which reveals the complete incompetence of the state and the

law," the statement reads.

Female MPs demand that investigative agencies study and give a legal assessment of the persecution operation against Tatia Samkharadze; They should also study and give a legal assessment of the accusations made by other women about the harass-

ment by Shalva Ramishvili, including the secret phone recording aired by Formula TV.

The statement is signed by: Ana Natsvlishvili, Teona Akubardia, Khatia Dekanoidze, Ana Buchukuri, Khatuna Samnidze, Ani Tsitlidze, Salome Samadashvili, Tamar Kordzaia.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

PM Irakli Gharibashvili Compares Giving Mikheil Saakashvili Human Rights Award as Giving Prize to Breivik



According to Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Gharibashvili, the prize given to Mikheil Saakashvili in Norway does not mean anything, on the contrary, it is a 'mockery' of the Georgian people.

Gharibashvili made a reference to the 2011 terrorist attacks by Anders Behring Breivik that killed 77 in Norway, and said that Saakashvili 'killed hundreds of people' during his presidency.

"Some kind of human rights award was given. This is a

of people, it's about the same story that some country gave Breivik an award. It's the same for me. Hundreds of people were killed directly," Gharibashvili said.

"People were tortured, raped, tormented, killed by the criminal system and what a mockery of our people and insult it is that the well-known authoritarian, almost dictatorial ruler - former ruler Saakashvili - who was the creator of the oppressive, murderous system, was awarded in the field of human rights," he added.

On March 25, at the Conservative Party Congress in Norway, Mikheil Saakashvili was awarded Norway's Sjur Lindebrekke Award for protection of human rights and democracy.

Mikheil Saakashvili Responds to PM Gharibashvili who Accused Him of Killing Hundreds

Mikheil Saakashvili published a statement on his social media page which reads that it is a lie that he is refusing to get

help from doctors or the council and also responded to Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili's statement regarding his human rights award.

"It is a lie that I say no to doctors and the council, we have been waiting for the EU council for three weeks, which the Geor-

gian government doesn't allow entry," Mikheil Saakashvili said. "I usually work with the clinic's endocrinologist and he has no complaints with me," Saakashvili noted.



In his statement, Saakashvili wrote that no one doubts that he will not find justice.

"For so many years, they want to label me as a murderer, but they cannot say who and

that I will not find justice.

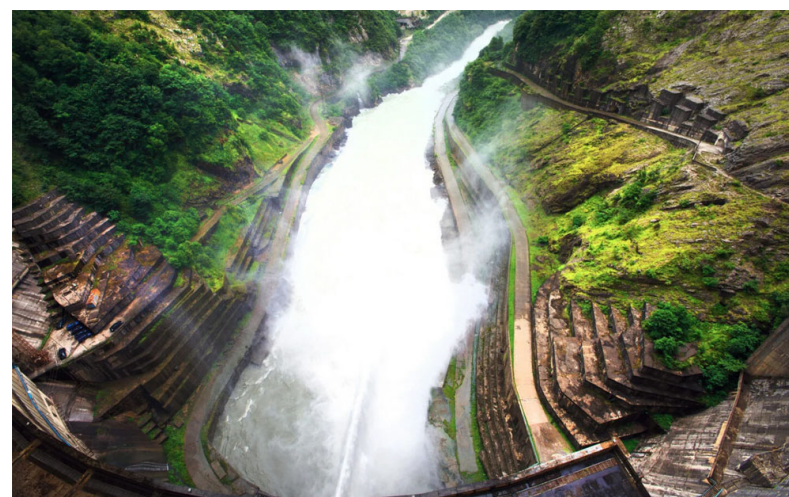
The only hundreds who were killed by the Georgian state forces during my time were the Russian interventionists who crossed our border in 2008. It is about these massacres that the Russian Prime Minister talks about.

They started their rule with my absurd accusations and they are ending with the same thing," Saakashvili's statement reads.

World Water Day: European Union and Eastern Partner countries accelerate change for water

On 22 March, World Water Day was celebrated around the world.

To mark the occasion, the UN Water Conference was held in New York, highlighting commitments by countries to tackle



water-related issues and setting a clear agenda for the second half of the Water Decade (2018-2028) and beyond. Delegates from Ar-

menia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine were also present throughout the conference.

In addition, the following series of videos produced with the support of EU4Environment's Water and Data programme were released in these countries, highlighting how important it is to protect rivers, lakes and all aquatic ecosystems:

The Ukrainian population suffering from the impacts of war has made all of us realise that safe access to drinking water is one of the most crucial human rights.

The example of Armenian farmers switching to more ecological practices shows that it is possible to grow food by respecting the soils and rivers.

The Khojasan Lake in Azerbaijan reminds us that

there is only one health: that of humans, animals and ecosystems together.

The inhabitants of river basins in Georgia highlight the need to bring local stakeholders into the discussion and make them part of the water policy development, as well as part of its successful implementation.

The cooperation between the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine on the Prut river basin is necessary to tackle severe water quality problems, a decline in biodiversity and the impacts of climate change, such as increasingly frequent floods and droughts.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Tuesday, March 28

Day ☀️ Clear
High: 20°C

Night 🌙 Clear
Low: 8°C

Wednesday, March 29

Day ☁️ Partly Cloudy
High: 22°C

Night 🌧️ Light Rain
Low: 4°C

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“Let’s call my country Sakartvelo!” Conversation with Georgian director Data Tavadze



Data Tavadze: “This is the time when we must all stick together, stretch our hands as far as we can, reach out to all our friends. We stand with the Ukrainian people.”

Photo: Timur Subhankulov

The Georgian theatre director, Data Tavadze, premiered his interpretation of Bertolt Brecht’s “Caucasian Chalk Circle” on Friday, March 24th at the esteemed Dailes Theater. Collaborating with composer Nikas Pasuri, stage designer Ketevan Nadibaidzi from Georgia, and Latvian costume designer Kristini Pasternak, Tavadze brought his unique vision to life on stage.

As a well-respected director, Tavadze boasts a long list of accolades, including laureate titles from numerous European theater festivals. With years of experience in both Tbilisi and Germany, Tavadze is no stranger to the stage. In a recent interview with “Kultūrīmes,” Tavadze spoke about the play.

The premiere at Dailes Theater was undoubtedly a momentous occasion, and Tavadze’s interpretation of “Caucasian Chalk Circle” was met with critical acclaim. This is yet another achievement for the talented director, and we look forward to seeing what he has in store for future productions.

– Brecht mentioned the Soviet Union as the place of action of the play. Where will it be in your production?

D. Tavadze: - It’s true, Brecht outlines in the prologue that the place of action is the Soviet Union, but we chose the stage as the place of action, so to speak, a stage on a stage. I think that we reproduce Brecht’s idea very closely because it is known that he was fascinated by this idea of a stage on a stage. It must be understood that it is not meant as a theater stage, it symbolizes the past and the future, it is like a return to the past or reveals a place where people are stuck in time.

– And the time of action, is it the time of war, as in the play?

- It is the time of civil war. Thinking about history, similar events could have happened in the 18th century in the territory of the Caucasus, but, as is often the case in Brecht’s plays, time is conditional. It is possible that the action takes place in the period from the 18th century to the Second World War. If we imagine it in the context of history, often the time span cannot be understood, and events tend to repeat themselves. War is war, the rules of war are similar at all times, and war creates similar stories both today and during the Trojan War. In fact, it is a play about any dark times, in which, however, there are always good and bright people.

– Does the play reveal how it is possible to win the war?

- I am one of those who believe in the joint cooperation of countries, in a joint global decision. But this play does not tell how to win the war, it tells about how to survive - as a humanist, as a human being. In the play, we are dealing with a situation when everything causes the loss of a person’s face, but it is still possible to preserve it, to preserve humanity. For a moment when it seems that all choice is gone, but still, a moral decision remains.

We are currently living in a time which, while creating a special evil, also creates a special kindness. I think that we should focus more on this kind of kindness because it is a quality that has been significantly activated.

It often seems that almost everything pushes us into pessimism, depression and that it is easier to give up. But in this play

it is not, it is full of optimism and faith in the future. It indicates values worth maintaining and fighting for. I think it is very important to talk about all this right now.

– There have been two wars in Georgia alone during your lifetime...

- In the nineties, there was a civil war in two regions, including the capital, and then the 2008 war with Russia came. Maybe what I’m going to say is something very Georgian, it may be that anyone who has experienced the war could say it - we are a nation of survivors. During the war, people focus on big things, important values. In Brecht’s play, war is invisible, just like a specter, like a shadow, but at no point does it depict warfare, its presence is marked by only a few evidence, sometimes we see war scars or fingerprints.

– More about Georgia...

- Please, let’s call my country Sakartvelo!

– That was exactly my question - in Latvia we are now naming many Ukrainian cities, we no longer want the names imposed by Russia.

- Tbilisi is Tbilisi, it is a Georgian name, but Gruzija is a name only in Slavic languages. I don’t understand why Latvians call us that, but the Latvian language does not belong to the Slavic language family. This name is a remnant of imperialism, Soviet times. Two years ago, Lithuania already made a decision to call my country Sakartvelo, that’s what we will call it in the production. I think that this is the first step, and I hope that soon other countries will also call us Sakartvelo, it is very sad that many people in the world do not call us the way we call ourselves, it should be cor-

rected.

– Have you thought about the duty of a creative person in difficult times?

- We must work just like everyone else, be alert, awake, ready to react and support. In such times, you should not stand aside, you should be active, you should get into the middle of problems, you should try to understand and solve them, get involved in the process. Almost everyone now has responsibilities, the most important of which is to be a witness. When a crime happens, something must be done, an active response must be made, the police must be called. He who does nothing stands aside, becomes an accomplice to the crime. Every civilian should be a good citizen, understanding that if we stand still, everyone will stand still.

I think a creative person has a privilege because we have an audience, we are listened to by an audience. There are so many people in our society who do not find even one listener for their thoughts, but here, for example, at the Daile Theater, about a thousand listeners listen to us every night. We have a great responsibility in front of them, we have to tell them the story instead of those who no one listens to. We must stand by the vulnerable, the weak and empower them. This is our responsibility, we spread this message, we are messengers.

We have to see reality with our eyes open and then describe it by showing emotions and symbols. Everything possible must be done to be able to create a language in which to tell the story of these witnesses. It is probably the most difficult, because telling the present is very difficult, especially now when it is so incomprehensible. This is the artist’s task - to find this language, a way to tell everything that has been experienced, moreover, language is needed not only for the spoken word but also for the signs of all other senses.

I have a feeling that this show is so special in an above-mentioned way - it tries to connect this place, the Latvian theater, with the rest of the world. This is a time when we all need to stick together, reach out as far as we can, and reach out to all our friends, all people, to prove that no one is left alone. We stand with the Ukrainian people. Someone probably thinks - what can one do, but even small things help those who experience war.

– The recent events in Sakartvelo were so powerful, we admired how you all managed to stand against it together.

- It was a very important moment. There were so many young people, both my generation and younger; they did not budge even an iota from their demands to be one of the west-

ern countries. They stood against the clouds of tear and pepper gas, they stood against the water cannons, and they were not afraid of the fact that there, on the streets, they were almost tortured. They stood strong for their faith, it was and still is very inspiring. I think that with that moment the people of Sakartvelo firmly proved their will to be members of the Western world. I believe that the time will come when Sakartvelo will become a member state of the European Union. We currently have a very strange government with double standards, one moment it joins hands with Putin and the next moment it reaches out to the West. Now we, the citizens of Sakartvelo, have said loudly that our government must not have any ties with Russia.

Our government also tried to play neutrality in the issue of the war in Ukraine, and in this case, neutrality is considered treason. Anyone who helps that monster is considered a traitor. We’ve had strange governments before, but never before have I felt ashamed of them. This time I was so ashamed that I was even ready to leave my country. At the beginning of the Ukrainian war, it was very difficult to live in a country whose government does not express full and genuine support for Ukraine. This was so contrary to the population, whose large numbers, almost half a million, took to the streets to express their support for the Ukrainians; people send all possible help to Ukraine, especially at the beginning of the war, the Ukrainian flag was flying in almost every window. However, it is possible that if our government had fulfilled its duty, the people would not have risen up to help so widely, and in the end, I am proud of that.

- A lot has been heard about how proud Georgians are.

- We are constantly in defense mode, maybe it even makes us prouder than we really are. We must constantly protect our country, language and culture, take care of it like a sick child. Perhaps we would not be so proud if no one stole our land, did not threaten our territory, did not threaten our language, did not humiliate the nation.

Every day we continue to understand and search for what our true culture and identity are. Every new day we try to understand how to get rid of the ghosts of the past - which part of our identity arose as a result of tsarist ideology and Soviet propaganda, and which part is the true, ancient, Georgian part. This process has been ongoing since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and throughout its former territory. What are our real values? You have to stick to your language and culture.

(www.la.lv)