

US Sanctions Four Judges for Damaging Georgian Democracy with Their 'Significant' Corrupt Activity



"The United States of America continues to support the citizens of Georgia in strengthening democracy and the rule of law, and will continue to ensure the accountability of those who abuse public power for personal gain."

We stand by all judges with the courage and integrity to act impartially and independently," Blinken said.

US Ambassador to Georgia Kelly Degnan also explained the reasons for the decision to sanction Georgian judges. In a video address on the matter, she said that the decision was based on reliable information that these judges "abused their public office and engaged in significant corrupt activities."

"Through their actions, they disregarded the judicial and public process by offering or pressuring judges to make decisions in favor of their political allies and manipulating judicial appointments for personal gain.

With these corrupt actions, they violated the rule of law and the democratic process and weakened the confidence of the Georgian people in the independence of one of the most important institutions among the democratic institutions of Georgia," said Kelly Degnan.

According to Kelly Degnan, under American law, such important information is the basis for sanctioning.

"All citizens of Georgia deserve justice, the rule of law and the right to a fair and independent court, regardless of their property status, family or political ties. These sanctions reflect the importance of the fight against corruption for America. Corruption and interference in justice hinders Georgia's European integration," the US Ambassador to Georgia said.

By Liza Mchedlidze

On April 5, the US made a decision to sanction three current and one former judges of Georgia. The US State Department imposed sanctions on the Chairman of the Tbilisi Court of Appeals, Mikheil Chinchaladze, the member of the

Supreme Council of Justice, Levan Murusidze, the Deputy Chairman of the Tbilisi Court of Appeals, Irakli Shengelia, and the former chairman of the Tbilisi Court of Appeals, Valerian Tsertsvadze.

Sanctioned persons are banned from entering the United States and it applies not only to these judges but also to their

family members. They had their valid US visas revoked due to 'significant corrupt activity'.

According to the United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken, sanctioned persons abused their positions and harmed the rule of law and the public's trust in the Georgian judicial system.

Foreign Minister of Georgia Calls on US Department to Review or Present Evidence on Four Sanctioned Judges

By Liza Mchedlidze

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Ilija Darchiashvili, wrote a letter to the US Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken, on the issue of imposing sanctions on four judges, and wrote that the Georgian government expresses hope that the decision will be reviewed or evidence presented.

In his letter to Blinken, Darchiashvili noted that if it's not reviewed or proven, sanctioning the judges will be perceived as pressure on the independent court of the sovereign state and gross interference in its activities.

"The decision of the US State Department on sanctioning judges, which was made public without presenting any evidence, is completely incomprehensible and unacceptable.

We hope that the State Department will provide relevant evidence or reconsider its decision. Otherwise, the State of Georgia and the people of Georgia will perceive this as putting pressure on the independent court of the sovereign state

and gross interference in its activities, which will damage the long-standing friendly relations between Georgia and the United States," Darchiashvili's letter reads.

In his letter, the Minister of Foreign Affairs said that it was after the Georgian Dream came to power that reforms were carried out and the court became

independent.

Darchiashvili said that until 2012, the court was one of the rings of the 'repressive machine', the rate of guilty verdicts exceeded 99 percent, and 300 thousand citizens were convicted. He wrote that Convicts were tortured in prisons.

Minister emphasized that after the Georgian Dream came to power, the num-

ber of prisoners in prisons decreased by 2.5 times, and the death rate decreased by 10 times.

Ilija Darchiashvili also talked about the statistics of appeals by Georgian citizens to the Strasbourg Court and wrote that after the changes in the government, the number of appeals has decreased dramatically.

"In 2009-2012, the European Court considered about 4,000 complaints filed against Georgia. According to the data of 2023, only 147 complaints filed against Georgia are considered in the Strasbourg Court, which is the best indicator of Georgia during its membership in the Council of Europe.

It should be noted that during the period of the previous government, the main creators and architects of the court's criminal system - Mikheil Saakashvili and Zurab Adeishvili - were not sanctioned by any country, and moreover, unfortunately, they enjoyed or still enjoy concrete guarantees of inviolability.



Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.5420; Euro - 2.7817; GBP - 3.1686; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.1991; Swiss Franc - 2.8073

Foreign Minister of Georgia calls on the US Department to review or present evidence on four sanctioned judges

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The sharp decrease of complaints in the Strasbourg court, as well as the above statistics, is a clear proof that after 2012,

systemic problems in the judicial system have been eliminated, which is the result of the relevant political will and the four waves of fundamental judicial reform carried out by the Georgian Dream gov-

ernment," he said.

According to the letter, the government has repeatedly appealed to the critics of the current judicial system of Georgia, calling them to present specific court

cases, which, in their opinion, were decided unfairly. However, the critics have not been able to present any such case so far.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

MEP Rasa Juknevičienė Says it is Important to Sanction Bidzina Ivanishvili



MEP Rasa Juknevičienė, in an interview with Formula Channel called the US State Department's decision to sanction four Georgian judges an 'important' step forward and said

that it is also important to sanction Bidzina Ivanishvili who, according to her, is behind everything including justice, judges, political systems.

"It is a very important step forward and a message from the State Department. The European Parliament has more than once requested the imposition of sanctions, but we are talking about the imposition of sanctions against the most important person who is behind everything, including judges, justice and political systems, naturally, I mean Bidzina Ivanishvili.

I believe that the case of the judges and this decision is the beginning of the process. As for sharing the decision of the US State Department with the European Union, let's see, I can't say anything in advance yet. Here, the unanimity of all EU member states is important," said Juknevičienė.

Archil Talakvadze Criticizes US for Sanctioning Judges, Questions Fairness of decision

One of the leaders of the ruling party, Archil Talakvadze, criticized the US decision to sanction Georgian judges and said the judicial system has improved under the rule of the Georgian Dream.

"Today's court is much freer and our government has improved the independence of the court," Talakvadze said.

"It is unfortunate that our friendship has reached the point where we speak to each other in the language of sanctions. I mean Georgia and the USA. Second, you know that the court, like other democratic institutions, is evaluated by objective criteria.

4 judges were approved today. One of these four, Tsertsvadze, has been working in the court for a long time. The other three

are in different hierarchical positions. Under the conditions of our government, balance has returned to the court, which means that when citizens dispute with the court, they win equally," said Talakvadze.

a tool and moreover, it is categorically unacceptable. When there is such a strategic partnership between our countries, it is not fair to use such a tool," said Talakvadze.

According to Talakvadze,



According to him, this is a very serious decision and the ruling party will take this issue seriously.

"We will inform and explain to the public what the next steps will be. It is not fair to use such

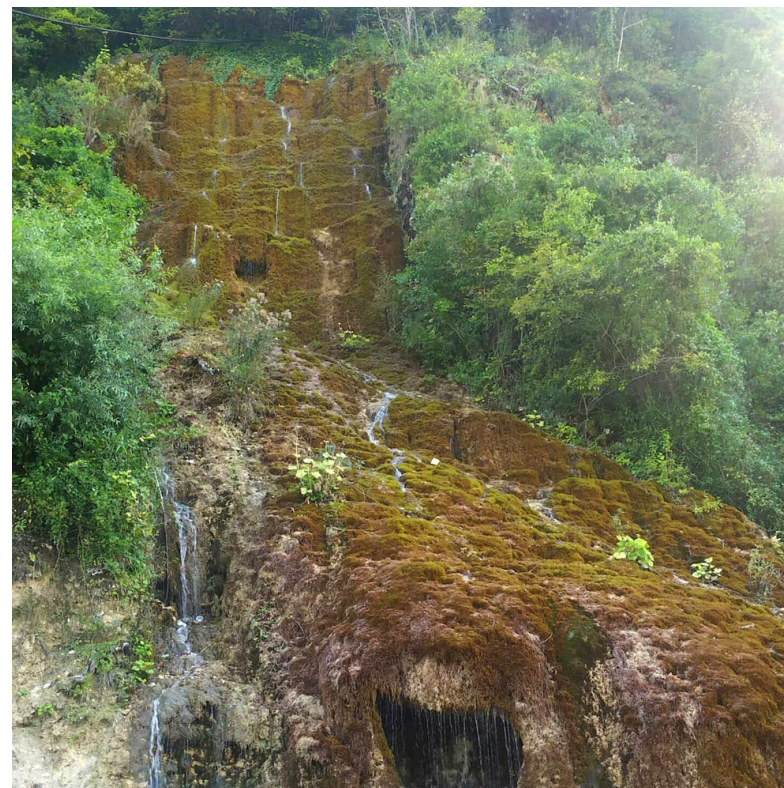
sanctions make sense when they are fair.

"Sanctions make sense when they are fair. If you are unfairly sanctioned, it will not weaken you morally in any case," said stated Talakvadze.

Germany supports the establishment of additional protected areas in Georgia

With German support, at least three more nature reserves are to be set up in Georgia via KfW. These are set up in Racha, Shida Kartli and Kvereti. Support services include the construction of visitor centres, the provision of hiking trails and accommodation for rangers.

Germany has been active in the field of environmental protection and sustainable use of natural resources in the South Caucasus for more than 20 years and is the largest bilateral donor in Georgia.



Weather

Friday, April 7

Day Mostly Cloudy High: 18°C

Night Showers Low: 9°C

Saturday, April 8

Day Mostly Cloudy High: 12°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 6°C

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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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