

## Jens Stoltenberg Emphasizes NATO's Expectation for Georgia to Adhere to Sanctions and Prevent Russian Support for Aggression in Ukraine



BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

During the The Road to Vilnius discussion hosted by the German Marshall Fund in Brussels, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg addressed the issue of Georgia's role in the pattern of Russian aggression. He emphasized that Georgia's involvement in this pattern did not commence in 2014 alongside the war in Ukraine, but rather in 2008 when Russia invaded Georgia.

The question posed to Jens Stoltenberg was about how NATO could assist the Georgian people in avoiding potential Russian aggression, given the ongoing

war in Ukraine and the overall Russian threat. The question also emphasized the importance of Georgia moving forward towards NATO membership.

Stoltenberg stated that the ongoing war in Ukraine serves as a vivid reminder of a broader pattern of Russian aggression. He emphasized that the failed attempts to build a better and friendlier relationship with Russia after the Cold War were primarily due to Russia's aggressive behavior. Stoltenberg highlighted Russia's objective of re-establishing spheres of influence to control neighboring countries, which contradicts the vision of a world where all nations can enjoy independence.



He strongly expressed NATO's belief in the importance of every country, including former Soviet republics and former members of the Warsaw Pact, having the right to maintain their independence.

Stoltenberg explained that NATO has been actively engaged with Georgia for many years, providing assistance in implementing reforms and fostering practical and political cooperation. He acknowledged that countries that are not NATO allies, but are caught in-between, face vulnerability and resistance against Russian coercion. In response to this, NATO made the decision to enhance support for these countries, including Georgia, at the Madrid Summit.

The NATO Secretary General emphasized the importance of Georgia upholding democratic values, as it is crucial for NATO's engagement. Additionally, he expressed the expectation that non-NATO allies should adhere to sanctions and avoid facilitating Russia's financing and organization of aggression against Ukraine.

"So it is this pattern, that is a stark reminder of that, this is not only about this war in Ukraine, it is about that the relationship we tried at the end of the Cold War to build with Russia, a better, friendlier relationship has failed because of

Russia's aggressive behavior. They want to re-establish spheres of influence to control neighbors and of course, that's not the world we would like to live in because that means that a lot of neighbors, former Soviet republics and members of the Warsaw Pact, will not have the independence, we strongly believe that all countries should have.

Therefore, NATO has worked with Georgia for many, many years, we have helped to implement reforms, practical, political cooperation. And of course, after the war we have also seen that countries which are neither, which I would call them sometimes "in between", which is I think not the best phrase but which are not NATO Allies, but then try to also resist coercion from Russia. They are vulnerable. So we are, we decided at the Madrid Summit to step up what we do for these countries on the verge, Georgia is one of the strongest examples. Having said that, I think also we have to understand that it is important Georgia lives up to the democratic values we all believe in. And of course, we also expect non-NATO Allies to adhere to the sanctions and to not make it easier for Russia to finance and to organise the war of aggression against Ukraine," Stoltenberg stated.

## NATO's Javier Colomina Voices Concerns over Georgian Government's Reactions to Russia's Flight Resumption Decision

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

During his visit, Javier Colomina, NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia, conducted meetings with representatives of the diplomatic corps, the government, and opposition politicians in Tbilisi, as part of his official agenda.

Colomina expressed that NATO has a strong and close partnership with Georgia, and that the bilateral work being conducted is highly commendable. He emphasized the effective utilization of partnership frameworks to enhance interoperability, professionalism, practical cooperation, and political dialogue between NATO and Georgia. Colomina reiterated NATO's unwavering commitment to the open door policy and affirmed their dedication to Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, in line with the decision made at the Bucharest summit in 2008.

Colomina highlighted that there are

reforms that Georgia needs to implement, expressing concerns regarding the level and pace of the implementation of these essential reforms. He also expressed concerns about foreign influences on the country and the recent reactions that occurred due to Russia's unilateral decision to resume flights.

"The reactions we are witnessing and reading about are concerning to us. I have conveyed this message to the authorities in Georgia. While we understand that Moscow's decision is unilateral, the reactions from Georgia's side during this critical time are disconcerting. It is crucial for all of us to provide as much support to Ukraine as possible. We believe that such reactions may create an impression that there is a potential violation of sanctions by Russia at this moment. Therefore, it is imperative for us to be clear and united in our support for Ukraine. This is our expectation from Georgia and all our partners. Naturally, the reactions



we have come across raise concerns, and we have shared these concerns with your government," said Colomina.

Furthermore, Colomina mentioned that they have received information from the Georgian authorities regarding the efforts being made to prevent any evasion of sanctions. According to him, commendable work is being done in various

areas. However, the reactions observed at least give the impression that Russia might exploit certain opportunities to circumvent the sanctions. He emphasized the critical importance of supporting Ukraine and preventing any evasion of sanctions. While acknowledging the efforts of the Georgian government to prevent such evasion, Colomina urged the government to take appropriate measures to avoid any sanctions violations.

"Given the critical nature of providing ongoing assistance to Ukraine, which is a priority for each of us, it should also be a priority for our partners. Moreover, these reactions create an opportunity for Russia to potentially circumvent sanctions.

Your government has informed us about the efforts being undertaken to prevent the evasion of sanctions. There is commendable work being carried out in various aspects. However, the reactions we have witnessed, at the very least, create an impression that Russia may exploit this situation to evade sanctions. We have been unequivocal in our stance that such an outcome should not occur, and we have encouraged your government to take appropriate measures to prevent this," Colomina stated.

# How can an effective Georgian leader and political figure maintain peaceful relations with the nation's neighbors and protect Georgian sovereignty and dignity while engaging the world?



By ZURAB GURULI

In 2008, during the invasion of Ossetia, the world abandoned the tiny nation of Georgia to face a very aggressive and superior military foe that had invaded its territory illegally. Even our leading strategic partner stepped aside and tens of thousands of refugees from Ossetia relocated elsewhere in the country of three million people. America had started a “reset” policy with Russia and indicated that it preferred that Georgia not be a factor hinder-

ing the rapprochement between the West and Russia. Georgia had to give up on the idea of joining NATO. Georgia was vulnerable, occupied, and cornered. The country was forced to submit to the demands of the occupier. This policy led to the infiltration of corrupt Russian practices and ways of doing things into Georgian society. Today, while progressive humanity stands together against Russia's illegal and genocidal war in Ukraine, Georgia is still alone. There is no guarantee regarding military support from NATO or anyone else should Russia attempt expansion further into Georgia. Neither is there any assurance of economic support should Russia resume an aggressive stance against Georgia. Instead, the West demands courage from Georgia again. The West insists Georgia participate in sanctions against Russia enacted after the Ukraine invasion and take a stand favoring Ukraine and Western interests. True Georgian patriots have a dream: to

have unfettered national sovereignty, live peaceably without threats, be members of NATO, have a modern liberal democracy, engage economically with the advanced nations of the world, and be a member of the European Union. All these scenarios mentioned above are being made impossible currently by the West. Today we clearly see what the “reset” policy has brought to Russia. Ukraine is fighting heroically to protect its territory and independence and to do the heavy lifting in stopping Russian imperialist expansion. The fact that Ukraine is courageously standing up to the Russians shames a Western world that ostensibly values freedom and democracy for all.

Please stand by us with deeds, not empty promises. Give us a real guarantee that you will not allow Russia to commit the same atrocities in Georgia seen in Bucha and Mariupol. With Western support, we can completely replace corrupt marketplace cronyism and corruption

with a modern free-market capitalist system which can be a valued partner in the EU system. Please do not leave us to face an aggressive and imperialist Russia which does not hesitate to use military force without provocation against smaller neighbors. Georgia no longer has the luxury of trusting the abstract promises of the West for an indefinite period of time. It is time for the Western liberal democracies to take the first step. If the West will provide support for us, another worthy and loyal member will be welcomed into the world's progressive community. Georgians want to look to the future and not the past and earnestly desire their society to be like a Western Europe liberal democracy and not to function as a Russian-dominated satellite state.

Georgia is still fighting today; we fight as hard as possible but we are a tiny country. Allow us to regain full confidence in your assurances. It benefits the West to have a partner in a strategic

area like ours. The West needs citizens of the oppressed countries in the world to have respect for and faith in democracy. To whom do you want the developing world to look for leadership? The U.S., Western Europe, and similar nations, or authoritarian regimes like Russia, China, Iran, etc.? If authoritarianism is allowed to become dominant, all developed nations will have to face uncomfortable realities in their own neighborhoods.

If the West does not want to support those fighting for freedom, then it has neither a moral nor a political right to scold us for conformism with Russia. It might be a matter of pure physical survival for small countries like Georgia, which has a population of three million, against Russia's 145 million, against which we would have zero chance and risk the genocidal obliteration of our entire society. We are obligated to protect our citizens' lives; Please help us preserve their dignity!

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

### Georgian Airways to Provide Transit Flights for Russian Citizens, Says Founder Tamaz Gaiashvili



According to the Russian publication RTVI, Tamaz Gaiashvili, the founder of Georgian Airways, has stated that

the airline will operate transit flights from Tbilisi to European destinations specifically for Russian citizens. The publication reported this information based on Gaiashvili's statements.

According to Gaiashvili, several destinations, including Milan, Paris, Vienna, Larnaca,

Georgian government welcomed this decision.

“We will start on June 15. Let's see how things go. However, we believe there will be sufficient demand for these routes. Traveling from Tbilisi will be more comfortable and faster compared to other destinations. We will continue to maintain air communication with Russia. The Government of Georgia has warmly welcomed this decision. God forbid that it should ever cease,” Gaiashvili told RTVI.

### Irakli Kobakhidze Urges Opposition to Cease ‘Radicalism’

The Georgian Dream Chairman, Irakli Kobakhidze, stated that by the end of June, all 12 recommendations established by the European Union for Georgia to obtain EU candidacy status would be fully implemented.

Kobakhidze said that if a fair assessment is conducted, it would result in a positive outcome for Georgia. However, he also recognized that due to its political nature, the chances of success are uncertain, with a



50/50 probability. Kobakhidze further addressed the topic of depolarization, one of the 12 recommendations, and highlighted the importance of the ‘radical’ opposition's involvement in this process. He called upon the ‘radical’ opposition to cease their radical behavior and contribute to depolarization efforts.

“Our expectations are optimistic in this regard, although this is a political decision, and again the chances are 50/50. By June, the implementation of all reforms in accordance with the

12 recommendations will be completed. As for depolarization, it means that both sides have to take steps, especially the radical opposition. Polarization is essentially a term that has been fabricated.

Radicalism is often associated with polarization, where it is expected that someone would provoke you and you should not react. However, this does not align with the concept of depolarization. Depolarization occurs when radicals cease their radical actions, and consequently, the government has no incentive to act radically.

We urge the radical opposition to adopt a non-radical approach. This is a general call we make. While we may not have grounds for optimism, we can still express this plea,” stated Kobakhidze.

## Weather

Friday, May 26

Day Showers  
High: 27°C

Night T-storm  
Low: 15°C

Saturday, May 27

Day Partly Cloudy  
High: 28°C

Night T-storm  
Low: 16°C

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ROYAL DISTRICT THEATRE

MAKA MAKHARADZE'S BALLET STUDIO AND  
ETERI ANDJAPARIDZE'S "PIANOTHEATRE"

Cast:  
Eteri Andjaparidze,  
Datuna Aladashvili  
Piano Duo

„Vera District Dance Class“ Students  
Actors: Maka Makharadze, Nata Murvanidze,  
Tamar Makashvili, Nika Tetradze

Choreographer – Gvantsa Gavasheli  
Costume designer – Anka Kalatozishvili  
Manager – Nino Metreveli

Project Director  
Maka  
Makharadze



Sergei Prokofiev

Samuel Barber

# PETER AND THE WOLF

(Musical Fairy Tale)

# SOUVENIRS

(The Plaza Hotel Divertissement)

**Thursday, 1 June**  
To International Children's  
Protection Day

**Friday, 2 June**  
To Lexo Toradze

**Saturday, 3 June**  
To Temur Chkheidze

2023

20:00



Tickets: <https://biletebi.ge/maka-makharadze-ballet-studio/Schedule>