

## Prime Minister Gharibashvili Reflects on August War Anniversary, Blames Previous Government for Russia - Georgia War in 2008

By MESSENGER STAFF

Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili spoke again about the National Movement and Mikheil Saakashvili at the Brothers' Cemetery, where he paid his respects to those who died during the August war.

He once again stated that the previous government could not avoid the war and said nothing about the aggressive steps taken by Russia.

According to Gharibashvili, he knows a lot of things that are not known to the public and he refrains from disclosing information because he "cares about the interests of the country".

"This disaster, this tragedy, and this war happened during the previous government. The previous government did nothing to prevent this war for our people and country. What did we get as a result? 20% is occupied, and the Russian army withdrew from the territory of the country in 2007.

Who should we criticize and who should we condemn? The shameful hostile force that ruled our country, as a result of their foolish policy, turned [the Russian army] around even more," Gharibashvili said.

As for the date of the start of the war, according to Gharibashvili, according to the decree of the previous government, the date of the start of the war was August 8.

15 years have passed since the war of August 2008.

On August 7, 2008, the long-standing Russian-Georgian conflict turned into an open military aggression by Russia, resulting in hundreds of casualties, ethnic cleansing, and Russia's occupation of Georgian territories.



## Georgian Dream's Quest for Victory: Unpacking the Dynamics and Challenges Ahead of 2024 Parliamentary Elections

By MESSENGER STAFF

More than a year before the 2024 parliamentary elections, although there is how to go to the elections, what kind of configuration has created the 'victory formula'. For now, these are only preliminary calculations, which will become more concrete as the elections approach.

According to the leaders of the Georgian Dream, they are guaranteed to win the next parliamentary elections. According to Tbilisi Mayor Kakhi Kaladze, Georgian Dream will win not only in 2024 but also in the 2028 parliamentary elections.

The purpose of such statements is to show the public that they feel calm and are guaranteed victory, but it is difficult to say how far they will manage to stay in power for the 4<sup>th</sup> term.

The parliamentary elections of 2024, for the first time in the history of Georgia, will be held entirely by the proportional system. This is a long-standing demand of the opposition, which finally became a reality, but such a "concession" was "balanced" by the ruling political force by maintaining the 5% threshold in par-

liamentary elections and prohibiting the creation of pre-election coalitions. This puts the opposition spectrum in front of serious challenges.

The Georgian Dream promised that the 5% electoral threshold would be reduced to approximately 3%. This would drastically change the electoral environment in favor of the opposition. A number of opposition parties will easily manage to overcome the 3% threshold and already the majority in the parliament may be in the hands of the opposition.

That is why it can be said with certainty that the Georgian Dream will not reduce the electoral threshold and the next elections will be held under the conditions of the 5% threshold.

All pre-election public opinion surveys show that only two political forces - the ruling Georgian Dream and the main opposition party United National Movement manage to overcome the 5% threshold. One way for small opposition parties to 'save themselves', which has already become a tradition, is to seek connection with the UNM. The National Movement

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always called for other pro-Western opposition forces to unite. Obviously, some parties will take advantage of this call and get some seats in the unified electoral list.

Recently, information was spread that Strategy Aghmashenebeli would contact National Movement before the elections, instead, Grigol Vashadze would become the candidate for Prime Minister. In response, the UNM said that they support the unification, but it is too early to discuss the candidate for the position of prime minister. In itself, who will be the first number on the electoral list of the National Movement is important. There is also an assumption that this place can

be taken by Nika Gvaramia, who after his release from prison has already made a statement about his active involvement in politics. Joining the National Movement automatically means accepting the current rules of the game in this party, while Gvaramia may choose to act with a different program. It is not excluded that Nika Gvaramia will create a new pre-election union and attract politicians of Western orientation, for example, the same Nika Melia, who, after establishing Khabeishvili at the head of the UNM party, has actually withdrawn from active politics.

All opposition forces do not want to unite with the National Movement. The same Giorgi Vashadze previously stated that the union with the National Move-

ment does not provide a victory formula: The National Movement has its solid electorate, but it also has many opponents, and it will not be able to create such a union that will be able to win. According to some, it should not be attractive for the National Movement to join other small parties either, because this does not actually increase the rating of the National Movement, and the obligations towards the joined small groups increase.

Since the parliamentary elections of 2020, there have been talks about the creation of the "third political center". To put it simply, an opposition political union that is not associated with the National Movement and manages to overcome the 5% threshold. During the 2020 elections, "Strategy Aghmashenebeli" tried to create such a center, now Lelo is trying to get this status. However, in none of the pre-election surveys, it is not able to overcome the 5% barrier on its own.

One of the pre-election advice for Lelo from the experts is to connect the former Prime Minister Gakharia with the political party Georgia, although a number of factors prevent this union: One is related

to the controversy that exists between the leaders of Gakharia and Lelo; The second is a different political profile. Lelo was formed as an opposing force to the Georgian Dream, while the Gakharia political union is a part of the Georgian Dream that has moved into opposition.

In the opposition spectrum, there are parties whose rating ranges between 2-3 percent. To what extent they will be able to unite and form an attractive pre-election list is a separate issue. There are those who, traditionally, stand alone in the elections. Such is, for example, the Labor Party. But an independent entry into the election marathon carries a high risk of failure in the conditions of a high electoral threshold. Finding the optimal configuration of the opposition spectrum is certainly important, but what they will do and say to voters is even more important.

It should be noted that from 40% to 60% of voters, during various polls, state that they do not see a political party they like. This is a resource, the support of which even a part can fundamentally change the pre-election reality.

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

### Another Fatality Found in Natural Disaster Zone as Landslide Toll Rises to 19

Another dead person was found in the natural disaster

zone in Shovi. The rescuers found the body in the river near Shovi.

According to Temur Mghebrishvili, the head of the emergency management service, the deceased is a woman.

"The body of a female person was seen in the riverbed, and a fragment of a person was also seen. Additional mobilization is

On August 3, a landslide occurred in Shove Resort, including the Sunset Shovi Hotel. The risen river swept away the vehicular bridge.

Two rescue helicopters of the border police flew to the place to help the population. Rescue operations are still ongoing. A total of 210 people have been evacuated from the disaster area.

Minister of Defense Juansher Burchuladze claims that it 'didn't matter' whether the country had more helicopters in the disaster area of Shovi or not.

When asked by reporters when the country will have new helicopters, he said that the helicopter has been ordered.

not a product that you can go somewhere and buy directly. They take the order and start making it," said Burchuladze.

According to Georgian Dream deputy Mikheil Sarjveladze, he does not think that the immediate response had any effect on saving people.

According to him, all the



underway at the mentioned location to expand and expand the search and rescue area," said Mghebrishvili.

According to the available data, 19 people died in the landslide.

### Defense Minister Burchuladze Says Number of Helicopters didn't Matter during Shovi Landslide

"Here [in Shovi] the helicopters didn't matter, whether we had more or not. The helicopters are ordered, and the helicopters are ordered to make a particular helicopter. A new helicopter is

people who were not covered by the mass survived.

Rescue operations are still ongoing. A total of 210 people have been evacuated from the disaster area. More than 10 people are missing.

## Weather

Wednesday, August 9

Day ☀️ Clear  
High: 37°C

Night 🌙 Clear  
Low: 24°C

Thursday, August 10

Day ☀️ Clear  
High: 37°C

Night 🌙 Clear  
Low: 24°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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