

## Minister of Internal Affairs Responds to Shovi Disaster Investigation Inquiry

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Vakhtang Gomelauri, the Minister of Internal Affairs of Georgia, has stated that he sees no necessity for an investigation into the Shovi disaster.

Gomelauri's remarks came in response to inquiries about the opposition's proposal to establish a temporary investigative commission within the parliament.

"They can choose to establish it themselves. I cannot dictate their decision. There is no subject that requires investigation," commented Gomelauri.

Moreover, Gomelauri clarified that he actively participated in the processes and made decisions right from the initial stages of the disaster.

"Absolutely, I was engaged from the very beginning. The Prime Minister and all of us were actively involved. While I couldn't oversee things from a distance of 1,000 kilometers as one can do on-site, I had my deputies present. It's important to acknowledge that I was the one making decisions," the minister explained.

Responding to the question about whether only the Minister of Regional Development was present while others failed to grasp the severity of the situation, the Minister of Internal Affairs emphasized that different agencies were fulfilling their responsibilities.



"Numerous individuals arrived, and I believe it's not essential for everyone to be present," Gomelauri informed journalists from the disaster-affected area.

Gomelauri, who visited the

disaster site, noted that around 26% of the area at the epicenter of the disaster still requires assessment.

"A meeting was convened, and new strategies were devised. Approximately 26% of the epi-

center necessitates further evaluation. Unfortunately, an unoccupied vehicle was discovered. The owners of the vehicle are missing, and efforts are underway to locate them.

Furthermore, plans have been

formulated for post-disaster actions, including procedures such as riverbank operations and a reevaluation of the riverbed. A comprehensive report will be issued in due time," Gomelauri added.



## Tina Bokuchava Emphasizes the Need for Opposition Cooperation Ahead of Majoritarian Constituency By-Elections

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Tina Bokuchava, a leader of the United National Movement party, highlighted that discussions with other opposition parties about the upcoming by-elections in the majoritarian constituencies have not taken place yet. With the majoritarian electoral system set to be phased out within a year in favor of fully proportional elections, she strongly advocated directing efforts toward preparing for the impending general elections during this transitional phase.

Bokuchava stressed that the central consideration when mak-

ing decisions should revolve around the imminent timeline leading up to the crucial national elections. This juncture offers an opportunity to "challenge and overturn" the governing authority of the Georgian Dream party.

The absence of discussions among opposition groups regarding the mid-term elections in the major parliamentary constituencies was acknowledged by Bokuchava. Expressing her perspective, she emphasized the need to focus on gearing up for the upcoming general elections as the transition to a fully

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.6186; Euro - 2.8674; GBP - 3.3288; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.5945; Swiss Franc - 2.9876

# Tina Bokuchava Emphasizes the Need for Opposition Cooperation Ahead of Majoritarian Constituency By-Elections

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proportional electoral system approaches within a year. This approach aligns with the new electoral framework achieved through the determined efforts of the Georgian populace, aiming to counter the deep-seated influence of the 'Russian Dream'

during this interim period. Bokuchava anticipated that the upcoming elections could witness the deployment of official resources to manipulate electoral districts and tamper with votes. This concern has long driven calls, both within civil society and on the international stage, to adopt a fully propor-

tional system. She highlighted the persistent commitment of the Georgian people that led to this reform. Bokuchava pointed out the extensive financial backing enjoyed by the 'Russian Dream', facilitated by 'illicit funds' deposited by Bidzina Ivanishvili. Ivanishvili's exploitation of these resources to the detriment of the Georgian populace, through methods including cryptocurrencies like bitcoins and other deceptive tactics, was also emphasized.

"We haven't yet engaged in discussions with other opposition parties concerning the mid-term elections in the two major parliamentary constituencies. As the majoritarian electoral system will be phased out within a year, transitioning to fully proportional elections, I believe it's crucial for us to use these upcoming months to prepare for the

general elections. This preparation is necessary so that, with the new system that our society secured through the significant struggle of the Georgian people, we can definitively counter the 'Russian Dream' during this interim phase. In the upcoming elections, they will utilize official resources to manipulate the electoral districts and obtain votes through fraudulent means. This concern has prompted longstanding calls, both within the civil sector and on the international stage, to adopt a fully proportional system. With the dedicated efforts of the Georgian people, we have successfully achieved this transition.

"It's evident that the 'Russian Dream' has access to limitless financial resources in the form of undisclosed funds deposited by Bidzina Ivanishvili. Ivanishvili continues to exploit these funds

to deceive the Georgian population on a daily basis, whether through cryptocurrencies like bitcoins or other deceptive practices. This suggests that they are indifferent to the issue of resources. Although this concern also exists within the opposition, I believe our primary consideration when making this decision should be the realization that we have just a year left until the pivotal, decisive, and transformative general elections for our country. In these elections, we must remove the 'Russian Dream' from the government. These elections will operate under a fully proportional system, completely eliminating the detrimental majoritarian system through which the 'Russian Dream' effectively manipulates the Georgian people's votes," stated Bokuchava.

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

### Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili's Statement on the 31st Anniversary of the Abkhazia War

Abkhazia, the Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Gharibashvili issued a statement in which he stated that the "unjustified conflict has resulted in the loss of many lives among citizens on both sides" and that the challenges of "temporary occupation and displacement" confront the

zens – encompassing both soldiers and civilians – on either side. In unison with our entire community, I once again pay tribute to the vivid memory of each one of them.

The territorial disputes and their aftermath – the temporary occupation of our ancestral lands, the uprooting of hundreds of thousands of individuals from their homeland, and our interactions with both Abkhazians and Ossetians – continue to represent the principal challenge confronting our state and society. This challenge can only be met through an unwavering commitment to maintaining peace, the re-establishment of trust, and the comprehensive and universal advancement of our nation.

Fostering a peaceful, robust, and flourishing nation jointly with Abkhazians and Ossetians constitutes the most promising outlook for all of us. Conse-

quently, it represents a collective undertaking for us all.

I firmly believe that the judicious peace policy, centered on rebuilding trust, which we have been diligently pursuing since assuming power, will steadily bring us closer to achieving this objective," affirmed Gharibashvili.

### German Chancellor Advocates Recognition of Georgia and Moldova as Safe Countries

In an extensive interview with the German public broadcaster, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz voiced his support for granting safe country status to Georgia and Moldova. Scholz's statement comes in response to a question posed by a journalist about Minister of Internal Affairs Nancy Faeser's proposal to tighten deportation rules, to

which Scholz responded positively.

Scholz emphasized the importance of taking measures to establish safe country status for both Georgia and Moldova. This designation holds significant significance in the process of granting asylum to foreign nationals. Safe country status is attributed to nations whose citizens face low chances of receiving asylum. To qualify as a safe country, specific criteria must be met, including a sound legal framework, adherence to the rule of law, stable political conditions, and the provision of adequate protection against persecution and violence.

It is worth noting that in January 2019, the Bundestag, the lower house of Germany's parliament, passed a resolution to designate Georgia as a safe country. However, this decision did not receive approval from the Bundesrat, the upper house.



On the occasion of the 31st anniversary of the war in

state and society, requiring a commitment to maintaining peace.

"31 years have passed since the commencement of one of the most tragic events in our history – the Abkhazia war.

This unwarranted confrontation has exacted a heavy toll in terms of lives lost among our citi-



## Weather

### Tuesday, August 15

Day ☀️ Clear High: 36°C

Night 🌙 Clear Low: 22°C

### Wednesday, August 16

Day ☀️ Clear High: 35°C

Night 🌙 Clear Low: 22°C

published by

**The Messenger**

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