

Georgian Dream Firmly Opposes Proposed Investigative Commission in Parliament for Shovi Disaster

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

In response to the opposition's initiative to establish a temporary investigative commission in the parliament for the Shovi natural disaster, Beka Odisharia, a majority MP from the Georgian Dream party, firmly expressed his stance against it. Odisharia stated that they will not provide their support to this initiative, neither at present nor in the future.

As per Odisharia's remarks, the incident is currently under investigation by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and if deemed necessary, the prosecutor's office will also participate in the inquiry.

"If the outcome leaves questions unanswered for the public, then the possibility of establishing an investigative commission can be discussed.

Can you imagine the process of summoning investigators and witnesses to the parliament during the investigation, while also arranging political concerts and elaborate performances, as the opposition has done? Such actions do not align with the interests of the government or the genuine individuals who express empathy for the bereaved families and the entire nation of Georgia.

The formation of an investigative commission primarily serves the interests of minor politicians aiming to generate a negative narrative and adhere to such an agenda," commented Beka Odisharia.

In connection to the interpellation summoning Minister of Internal Affairs Vakhtang Gomelauri regarding the Shovi disaster, as pointed out by Odisharia, the Ministry of Internal Affairs stands as one of the most successful agencies. This es-



tablishment operates as an apolitical entity, consistently demonstrating timely and appropriate actions.

From Odisharia's perspective, Gomelauri effectively manages all branches of the Ministry.

"Furthermore, aside from Vakhtang Gomelauri's strong human qualities, his high level of professionalism allows him to consistently provide clear and composed explanations to both society and the Parliament.

Should the United National Movement refrain from orchestrating theatrics in the parliament, Vakhtang Gomelauri is more than capable of addressing any inquiries without leaving any questions unanswered," remarked Odisharia.

Switzerland Declares Non-Recognition of Russian-Issued Passports in Occupied Georgian and Ukrainian Territories

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Switzerland has announced its non-recognition of passports issued by Russia in the occupied territories of Ukraine and Georgia. A statement released on the Swiss Federal Council's website clarifies that individuals hailing from the Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine or the separatist regions of Georgia will no longer have the ability to acquire Schengen visas or traverse the internal Schengen border using travel documents issued by Russia. This encompasses both regular and diplomatic passports, residency permits for stateless individuals, seafarers' return certificates, and identity papers.

The timeline for the non-recognition of documents pertaining to Ukrainian regions varies based on the specific area. For the occupied regions of Georgia, August 26, 2008, has been cited

as the pivotal date; consequently, Schengen visas will not be granted for travel documents issued by Russia after this date. The statement elaborates that "in August 2008, Russia acknowledged the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as sovereign nations... Switzerland regards these territories as integral components of Georgia."

Georgian Dream deputy Irakli Kadagishvili has reacted to Switzerland's decision, asserting that it is long overdue and that Russian passports should not have been permitted within the Schengen Zone well in advance.

Furthermore, Kadagishvili highlighted that numerous residents of the occupied territories utilize Georgian passports. He emphasized that, in accordance with the applicable legislation, the government remains prepared to facilitate fellow citizens



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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.6219; Euro - 2.8487; GBP - 3.3369; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.7935; Swiss Franc - 2.9777

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residing in these occupied regions in obtaining Georgian passports, enabling them to explore the world using these documents.

Kadagishvili emphasized that the state's policy is aimed at re-

storing relations between the parts of Georgia that are divided by occupation, utilizing peaceful rapprochement.

Tina Bokuchava, the chairperson of the United National Movement, has also responded to Switzerland's decision regarding the non-recognition of Russian

passports issued in the occupied territories of Georgia and Ukraine. She noted the implementation of a so-called 'status-neutral' document that Georgian citizens living in the occupied regions could use. However, she expressed disappointment in the current government for neglect-

ing this policy and not providing any support for the citizens of Georgia residing in these occupied areas.

"The so-called 'status-neutral' document, intended for Georgian citizens residing in the occupied region, was implemented, even for international travel, and our

government spared no effort to enable Georgian citizens in the regions under Russian occupation to travel. Unfortunately, the current government has forgotten this policy and has not offered any assistance to the citizens of Georgia living in the occupied regions," stated Bokuchava.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Body Found 55 Kilometers from Disaster Epicenter in Shovi, Death Toll Reaches 28



Rescuers have discovered another body situated 55 kilometers away from the epicenter of the disaster, leading to an increase in the death toll to 28.

According to information from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, search operations are currently underway for 5 individuals.

"Search operations are continuing within the disaster zone in the Oni municipality. Through the diligent efforts of the rescue teams, another body was found 55 kilometers away from the disaster's epicenter.

The search activities involve scouring the riverbeds of Rioni

and Chanchakha, as well as the adjacent island sections. This operation includes the deployment of heavy machinery, watercraft, personnel, and a team of canine experts.

So far, rescuers have recovered a total of 28 bodies from the

disaster area, and efforts are ongoing to locate the 5 individuals," the statement reads.

Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili Holds Farewell Meeting with US Ambassador Kelly Degnan

The Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Gharibashvili, held a farewell meeting with Kelly Degnan, the Extraordinary and

Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the United States of America to Georgia. As mentioned by the Prime Minister's press service, the meeting underscored the significance of the robust partnership between Georgia and the USA, with both sides reviewing the main areas of cooperative focus.

Degnan served as the US

Ambassador to Georgia since January 2020. The head of the government expressed gratitude to the US ambassador for her contributions and extended well wishes for her future endeavors. The meeting at the government administration was attended by Jean Foster, the leader of the economic division at the US Embassy.



Georgia: EU supports campaign on personal data protection

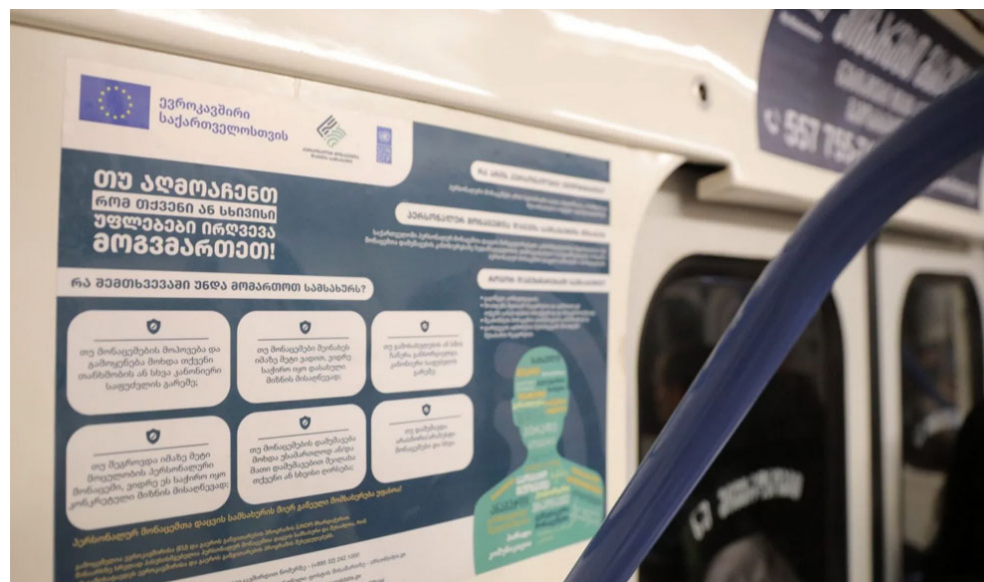
The European Union Delegation to Georgia and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supported a campaign on personal data, which is currently underway in the Georgian capital – Tbilisi.

Information posters, which can now be seen in buses and Tbilisi metro trains, have been prepared by the Personal Data Protection Service (PDPS).

From the displayed posters one can learn what personal data is, what are the potential risks associated with providing personal information, in what cases are rights violated and how to contact the Personal Data Protection Service.

The information campaign will later be extended to other cities in Georgia.

(euneighbourseast.eu)



Weather

Monday, August 21

Day ☀️ Clear
High: 34°C

Night 🌙 Clear
Low: 21°C

Tuesday, August 22

Day ☁️ Partly Cloudy
High: 35°C

Night ☁️ Partly Cloudy
Low: 21°C

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