

By Liza Mchedlidze

The European Council Grants Candidate Status for EU Membership to Georgia

The European Council granted Georgia candidate status. The President of the Council, Charles Michel, announced it on X (formerly Twitter).

According to Michel's statement, the Council decided to initiate negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova regarding their potential accession to the European Union.

The EU will also commence negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina once it fulfills the membership criteria.

"The European Council has decided to open accession negotiations with Ukraine & Moldova. #EUCO granted candidate status to Georgia. And the EU will open negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina once the necessary degree of compliance with the membership criteria is reached and has invited the commission to report by March with a view to taking such a decision. A clear signal of hope for their people and for our continent," Michel wrote.

The President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, also made a statement, saying that the European Council has made "a strategic decision and the day that will remain engraved in the history of the European Union."

"Leaders have decided to open accession negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova and to grant candidate status to Georgia. A strategic decision and a day that will remain engraved in the history of our Union. Proud that we have lived up to our promises and delighted for our



partners." von der Leyen wrote.

President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili responded to the European Council's decision to grant Georgia candidate status on X.

"Today signifies a monumental milestone for Georgia and our European family! The unwavering will of the Georgian people has spoken, leading to the well-deserved attainment of candidate status. Georgia's reunification with its European family is an irreversible prospect!" Zourabichvili wrote.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Ilia Darchiashvili, remarked on the European Council's decision, stating that it is a clear recognition of Georgia's aspirations, many years of efforts, and the progress achieved.

"Congratulations, Georgia on this historic day! Our country has been granted candidate status! Today's decision is an explicit recognition of Georgia's aspirations, its striving for many years and the progress achieved! The will of the Georgian government to make Georgia's civilizational choice a reality remains unchanged. We stand ready to work together with our European friends and partners to bring our country to its ultimate goal - EU membership!" Darchiashvili stated.

President Salome Zourabichvili Clarifies Position on Mikheil Saakashvili's Pardon

By Liza Mchedlidze

In her recent interview with Radio Liberty, President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili

addressed the topic of a potential pardon for Mikheil Saakashvili. She clarified that she has not rejected Saakashvili's pardon, highlight-

ing her policy of refraining from commenting on such matters unless she explicitly announces her intention to grant a pardon.

Radio Liberty interviewed the

president on December 12 at the main office in Prague, discussing crucial political developments in the country as well as the president's plans.

"I didn't refuse; I don't comment on pardons unless I explicitly state that I will pardon someone. This, however, does not diminish the fact that he played a major role in putting Georgia on this [European] path. Not only him but also Shevardnadze played a significant role.

He was the first to open the gate. Zurab Zhvania, whose 60th birthday was celebrated a few days ago, played the main role. Everyone remembers that he was the first to declare: "I am Georgian, and therefore I am European." All these individuals, governments, and administrations have played their part. Unfortunately, the governments in Georgia, which started off very well, then sometimes start behaving a bit autocratically," Zourabichvili said.

The journalist also inquired with the president about the matter of pardoning Lazare Grigoriadis.

President Zourabichvili reiterated that she does not find it appropriate for the President to comment on individual pardons.

"This falls within the president's discretion. If you begin commenting and explaining, it may lead to discrimination against others who are also detained and seeking pardons, especially those without external support, including journalists from outside the country," Zourabichvili explained.



The News in Brief



PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

US Ambassador Dunnigan Leads Border Monitoring Mission along Georgia's Administrative Line

Ambassador of the United States of America to Georgia, Robin Dunnigan, monitored the occupation line. The American Embassy in Georgia is disseminating information about this.

The statement released by the embassy states that Ambassador Dunnigan joined Tibor Kozma, the head of the European Union Monitoring Mission, and a group of observers in patrolling the administrative dividing line in the villages of Tvaurebi, Odzi, and Goraka.

"Russia's ongoing occupation of 20 percent of Georgia's territory, and borderization, undermines Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Ambassador Dunnigan joined Deputy Head of Mission Tibor Kozma and EUMM monitors on a patrol to the Administrative Boundary Line at Tvaurebi, Odzisi, and Goraka. She heard about EUMM's efforts to enhance Georgia's security and to support people living within this conflict-affected area.

The United States continues to call on Russia to uphold its

commitments in the 2008 ceasefire agreement and UN Charter," the statement reads.

Prime Minister Gharibashvili Congratulates 'Georgian Dream' and Bidzina Ivanishvili on Candidate Status Achievement

After the announcement of the European Council's decision to grant Georgia candidate status, Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili congratulated the citizens on the European Council's decision, stating that "this is a well-earned, well-deserved status that the government has achieved with and for our people."

Gharibashvili held a briefing and expressed gratitude to European leaders, including the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, and the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen.

He also congratulated the Georgian people, members of the ruling party team, parliament, civil servants, and Bidzina



Ivanishvili on achieving candidate status.

"I would like to extend special congratulations on today's historic victory to every member of our team, every member of the government, thousands of civil servants, our parliament, our party, the governing team—every individual who has made a worthy contribution to achieving this great historic victory.

I want to congratulate everyone. On this day, I would like to extend congratulations to the founder of our party, Mr. Bidzina Ivanishvili, whose leadership brought about this victory and success. Since 2012, our political team has reached its maximum potential, and today can be seen as a kind of crowning achievement of our successful governance." Gharibashvili stated.

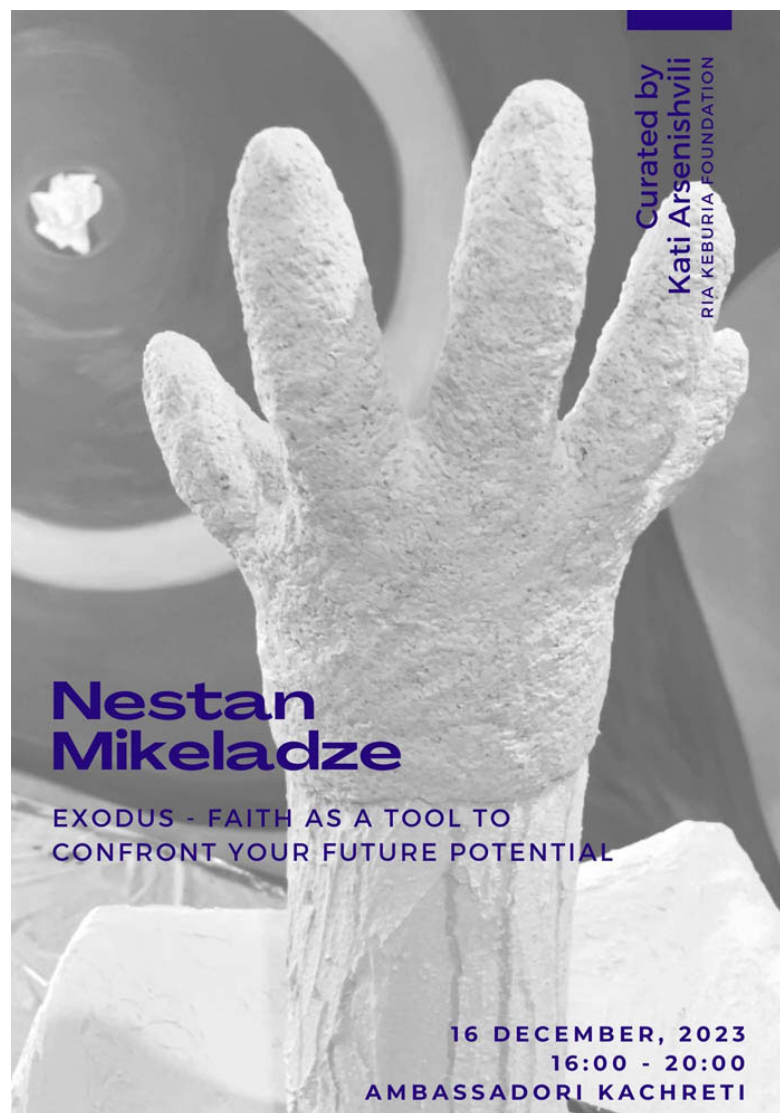
Solo exhibition of contemporary Georgian artist NESTAN MIKELADZE opens at Ria Kiburia Foundation gallery located on Ambassadori Kachreti premises on December 16th, at 4:00 pm. Artist successfully completed an artist-in-residency program within last two months at the foundation.

ESSAY BY CURATOR, KATI ARSENISHVILI:

"Exodus"
Nestan Mikeladze is a contemporary Georgian artist. She had her first solo show in 2014, and since then her works have been exhibited in various group shows in Paris, Madrid, Berlin, and New York. Her experimentations are a result of her permanent quests. It is always interesting for her to work in different mediums. Nestan's works are distinguishable by their materials and artistic expressions. Current show exhibits artworks created during her residency within the last two month.

"Faith - as a tool to confront your future potential" becomes an impetus to move and exit - Exodus". Faith, confrontation with the difficulties, movement onward, and reaching the point of actualization of an individual psychopathy. That exact human path is expressed on the presented canvases - from potential to the path and from the path to the point of actualization. To have faith in something that you don't see and won't be able to see (first canvas), to have faith in the energy accumulated within you and its manifestation in the

The exhibition with the name - "Exodus: faith as a tool to confront your future potential" will last until the end of January, 2024. The exhibition will include works in several different mediums: oil on canvas, installation, watercolor, and ink works.



ending point, which is depicted on the last canvas. From faith until the point of actualization is a long way, a desert to pass (second canvas). The social unconscious reveals itself on the way, you are in a crisis and contemplating whether your faith in your future is real or mere delusion.

The exhibition makes us ponder over possibilities of faith as a tool. Departure from the microenvironment towards a better future, towards a purposeful life, having faith and silently yielding to your inner logos, instead of sabotaging yourself, and having a sense of the potential that you have within you.

Installation of human hand is a symbol of an instrument to actualize potential.

Installation: "Instrument"; 160x45 cm; Armature, iron net, gypsum, paper mache, acrylic paint; 2023

Art piece one: "Potential"; 300x200 cm; Oil on canvas; 2023

Art piece two: "Desert"; 300x200 cm; Oil on canvas; 2023

Art piece three: "Land of milk and honey"; 300x200 cm; Oil on canvas; 2023

Three wallpapers: sketches of the main three canvases; watercolor and ink works; 280x90 cm; 2023

Weather

Friday, December 15

Day Cloudy
High: 11°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 5°C

Saturday, December 16

Day Mostly Cloudy
High: 15°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 4°C

published by
The Messenger

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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Embassy Tulip 2023 award for Georgian grassroots human rights activists handed out by Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on 13 December



erlands to Georgia, Meline Arakelian, presented the Embassy Tulip award to three human rights activists from Georgia, for their outstanding work promoting human rights.

Support for human rights defenders is one of the human rights priorities of the Netherlands. The Embassy Tulip is an annual award of the Dutch Embassy for outstanding and courageous human rights activists. Through the award, the Netherlands supports human rights activists to continue their work and to share their story.

The winner is Madona Kharebava, human rights activist from Samegrelo.

The second prize went to Aram Akopian from Kvemo Kartli, and Temur (Toma) Kakabadze from Adjara. The award also includes a monetary contribution for a project to support the winners for promoting human rights.

The Embassy Tulip is a Dutch initiative led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, taking place close to the Human Rights Day, December 10, meant to enhance awareness about human rights worldwide.



On 13 December 2023, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Neth-







