

## Opposition Voices Concerns Over Bidzina Ivanishvili's Political Comeback

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Giorgi Gakharia, the former Prime Minister of Georgia, whom Ivanishvili accused of betraying the country in his return announcement speech, briefly responded by saying that Ivanishvili's 'excuses were weak.'

"Good to see Ivanishvili finally managed to come out of his hiding. Excuses were weak. Challenge accepted. Happy New Year!" Gakharia wrote on X.

Lelo party leader Mamuka Khazaradze responded by expressing skepticism about Bidzina Ivanishvili's ability to lead the country into the European Union if he is sanctioned by European partners. Khazaradze emphasized that Ivanishvili's association with a 'Russian party' could be an obstacle to the country's European aspirations.

"Today, Ivanishvili admitted that he is sanctioned by America and Europe and also acknowledged being a shadow ruler. If Ivanishvili is sanctioned by our European partners, then how does he plan to lead our country into the European Union with his Russian party?! It was the gathering of the defeated party, an action taken by the fearful Bidzina, who received an order from Putin. This is precisely why Russian politics will end in Georgia in 2024, and this is exactly why we will emerge victorious alongside the Georgian people," Khazaradze stated.



Nika Melia, former Chairman of United National movement, responded to Ivanishvili's return

by predicting his public 'defeat' in 2024 and emphasized that the real catalyst for change lies

in the will of the people influencing politics, rather than engaging in financial or backstage

power struggles.

"In 2024, Ivanishvili's defeat will be public, and it won't be Gharibashvili, Kobakhidze, or Papuashvili who will be defeated. Instead, it will be the creator of this vicious political system, Bidzina Ivanishvili, who will not transition from one behind-the-scenes role to another, perpetuating shadow management.

However, in this process, everyone should understand and recognize their own responsibility. Change will happen only through the will of the people, reflected in politics, not through a confrontation of money against money, one backstage against another backstage. Today, the most potent weapon in the fight to dismantle the vicious system is the truth—creating the right perspective for the future, implementing it, and taking public responsibility for the processes," Melia wrote.

According to Roman Gotsiridze, an opposition member of the Parliament of Georgia, by returning to politics, Bidzina Ivanishvili has not shed the label of an informal ruler.

"Did the appointment of Bidzina Ivanishvili as an 'advisor' merely shift informal, oligarchic governance to solely oligarchic, or did it effectively eliminate the informal label? No, of course not. Firstly, he doesn't hold any official position in the party and is not involved in decision-making. Secondly, even if he were the party chairman, he would have no authority to interfere in the day-to-day operations of the constitutional bodies. So let's refrain from legitimizing his return to politics by stating that he is officially back," Gotsiridze stated.

## Bidzina Ivanishvili Explains His Return to Politics and Speaks on Giorgi Gakharia's 'Betrayal'



BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

On December 30, the founder of the Georgian Dream, Bidzina Ivanishvili, announced his return to politics and revealed that he would serve as the honorary chairman of the party.

In his announcement, Bidzina Ivanishvili discussed entering politics in 2018 for specific reasons. He mentioned receiving a warning from a former EU ambassador about potential challenges for the ruling party, fulfilling a mission by organizing a political team and system, and subsequently leaving politics after reaching retirement age. Ivanishvili expressed disappointment at the 'betrayal' by Giorgi Gakharia, whom he claimed turned against the country and the team. Ivanishvili emphasized that to save the country

from a 'challenging scenario,' he assumed the role of an advisor.

"I had to turn to politics for the first time in 2018. I won't bother you anymore by reminding you of the reasons for this decision. I will only recall the words of the former EU ambassador, whose family I was friends with. The ambassador told me that if I didn't return, one month would pass, and nothing would be left of the ruling party. It was true, and I knew it very well. However, from what the ambassador said, I realized that what I saw and assessed was visible from the outside as well.

Then, I fulfilled my mission; we organized the team from scratch, built the system, and only after that, I left politics for

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.6869; Euro - 2.9448; GBP - 3.4156; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.9445; Swiss Franc - 3.1637

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the second time. Additionally, reaching the retirement age pro-

vided another honorable reason for this decision.

The only thing I could not anticipate was the betrayal of the

country and the team by Giorgi Gakharia, which occurred just one month after I distanced myself from politics. During that

time, I had assumed the role of an advisor. Had I not provided assistance to the team through consultations, the processes

could have unfolded in the most challenging scenario for the country," Ivanishvili stated.

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

### Gia Volski Addresses Ivanishvili's Return as Georgian Dream Chairman, Emphasizing Sanctions Were Not a Decisive Factor

parliament, Gia Volski, addressed Bidzina Ivanishvili's return to the post of chairman of the Georgian Dream party and clarified that the sanctions imposed on Ivanishvili were not a determining factor for his return.

According to Volski, 2024 is an important year due to the upcoming

Ivanishvili's role as a 'consolidating' force must be taken into account, as he is "one of the important guarantors of stability."

"The fact is, a large part of society, including supporters and others, viewed this step quite positively. Moreover, given that it is 2024—an important year with upcoming elections—Bidzina Ivanishvili's role as a consolidating force should be taken into account here.

In addition, the opposition appears to be quite disorganized and unstable. It cannot be ruled out that, in such a situation, their actions may become particularly aggressive, and sabotage could take more sophisticated forms. It's important to note that sanctions were not a factor in Ivanishvili's decision," Volski stated.

retary of the Georgian Dream and Tbilisi Mayor dismissed accusations against Bidzina Ivanishvili regarding informal governance as mere "political speculations."

plenty of resources, and much respect from the people of our country. He can truly consolidate the ruling team and the people.

This is the usual political



The first vice-speaker of the parliament, Gia Volski, addressed Bidzina Ivanishvili's return to the post of chairman of the Georgian Dream party and clarified that the sanctions imposed on Ivanishvili were not a determining factor for his return.

### Kakha Kaladze Rejects Accusations of Informal Governance Against Bidzina Ivanishvili as Political Speculations

Kakha Kaladze, General Sec-



"Naturally, Bidzina Ivanishvili's return to politics is highly significant, bringing benefits not only to the ruling party and its team but also to the entire country. Bidzina Ivanishvili has a lot of support in society,

speculation. I will say it simply: if a person is the informal ruler of the country, then why did he return to politics? If he was governing the country from the outside, as you suggest, why would he come back?" Kaladze stated.

# EU adds world largest Russian diamond-mining company Alrosa and its CEO to sanctions list

The Council of the European Union today added Russian company PJSC Alrosa and its CEO Pavel Alekseevich Marinychev to the EU sanctions list for their actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and independence of Ukraine.

PJSC Alrosa is the largest diamond-mining company in the world, owned by the Russian state. It accounts for over 90% of all Russian diamond production. "The company constitutes an important part of an economic sector that is providing substantial revenue to the government



of the Russian Federation," said a press release by the Council.

These designations complement the import ban of Russian diamonds included as part of the 12th package of economic and individual sanctions adopted on 18 December 2023 in view of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

Altogether, EU restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine now apply to almost 1,950 individuals and entities. They are subject to an asset freeze, and EU citizens and companies are forbidden from making funds available to them. Natural persons are additionally subject to a travel ban, which prevents them from entering or transiting through EU territories.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

## Weather

Friday, January 5

Day Mostly Cloudy

High: 8°C

Night Mostly Cloudy

Low: 4°C

Saturday, January 6

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 10°C

Night Clear

Low: 0°C

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