

Bokuchava: Alt Info and Other Violent Groups Operate with Impunity as 'Satellites' of the Georgian Dream

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Tina Bokuchava, the chairperson of the United National Movement party, responded to the violent rally of the pro-Russian radical group Alt Info, which occurred near the residence of activist Nata Peradze. The rally was triggered by Peradze's act of splashing paint on Joseph Stalin's icon in Sameba Cathedral, an icon that had been donated by Alt Info to the cathedral.

According to Bokuchava, violent groups, including Alt Info, operate freely and with impunity because they are satellites of the government and implement government policies. She condemned any form or context depicting Stalin's image in the cathedral.

"Alt Info is one of the violent satellites of the Russian Dream. There are also other pro-Russian, anti-Western entities that are violent towards journalists, cameramen, and citizens of Georgia, who may have a different opinion or defend the European future of our country.



Naturally, they operate with such freedom and impunity precisely because they function as satellites of the government, representing its interests and executing its policies. This is why

there exists a syndrome of impunity towards these forces.

Joseph Stalin was one of the bloodiest dictators in the history of mankind, who fought against the Georgian Church. For me,

as an Orthodox Christian, it is, of course, unacceptable to see his image in the cathedral in any form, with any context. I am sure the same holds true for the absolute majority of Georgian citi-

zens. Regardless of our political views, there are issues on which we should agree as a society, and I am sure we do. This is just such an issue," said Bokuchava.

For Georgia Leader Giorgi Gakharia Challenges Bidzina Ivanishvili to a Debate



BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Former Prime Minister and leader of the For Georgia party, Giorgi Gakharia, has issued a challenge to Bidzina Ivanishvili, the newly elected honorary chairman of the Georgian Dream party, to a debate. Gakharia expressed his readiness for a debate in any format, be it legal, political, or linguistic. He offered flexibility, suggesting it could take place in a legal setting, on Ivanishvili's media platform, or in the Georgian language, under any conditions.

"From the very first day of my resignation, Ivanishvili knew exactly that nobody and nothing could stop us. He knew exactly because he knew the reasons for this resignation best, in detail. He has been cursing like this for three years. At first, he cursed through letters, then through these little cowardly boys. Now, he has come out himself and continues to curse. Sometimes, I think—Ivanishvili believes that his curse has some magical power. In fact, it's not a magical power; he has deceived people and the team so many times

that even his words hold no power! That is why he will continue to curse," Gakharia stated.

According to Giorgi Gakharia, following Ivanishvili's accusations against him, all responsible individuals are obligated to take concrete steps. He expressed hope that Ivanishvili, as a responsible politician, will summon the courage to no longer hide and will accept the invitation to a debate with him.

"Moreover, from my side, if he wishes, I am ready for a debate in any format: legally? - in his own court; politically? - on his own media platform; in Georgian? - in any format, under any attendance conditions. Because I know for sure that legally I am 100% right, politically I am 100% right and, most importantly, I am humanly right and he knows it very well. Ultimately, this is the traditional Georgian way of settling disputes or confirming allegations, and it is also the European standard for doing politics. Therefore, I very much hope that he will have the courage and will not hide anymore, and this will be a step of a responsible politician," Gakharia said.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Georgian Dream Party Plans Legislative Changes to Strengthen Criminal Penalties for Insulting Religious Buildings and Objects



The Georgian Dream party plans to introduce legislative changes to strengthen criminal penalties for insulting religious buildings and objects. This announcement was made by Anri Okhanashvili, the Chairman of the Legal Committee, during a briefing in the Parliament. Okhanashvili stated that the motivation behind this initiative stems from the damage inflicted on the icon of Matrona in the Trinity Cathedral. The damaged fragment of the icon depicts the Soviet dictator Stalin alongside Matrona.

Okhanashvili further asserted that the public protest over the icon's damage is justified.

According to him, such 'non-Christian' behavior is unacceptable in a place of sacred importance for society.

"It is true that the incident that occurred in Holy Trinity Cathedral is

against current Georgian legislation and entails appropriate responsibility, although the existing laws do not prescribe proportional consequences for such actions. Therefore, we have already initiated an in-depth study of the mentioned issue. We will examine international practices, especially those of EU member states, consider the approaches of the Strasbourg Court, have consultations, and initiate relevant legislative changes soon," Okhanashvili said.

Education Minister Amilakhvari Accuses Activist Nata Peradze of 'Blasphemy'



history of Georgia. Society is wise, and society sees everything." Amilakhvari said.

The Minister of Education of Georgia, Giorgi Amilakhvari responded to activist Nata Peradze's act of splashing paint on the icon of the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin in Trinity Cathedral, accusing her of carrying out similar attacks on the Georgian state and the Georgian church for an extended period.

"We have seen another similar blasphemous manifestation and another attack on our mother church, which has an inseparable role and history in the

The Education Minister also addressed the pro-Russian radical Alt Info group's rally near the residence of activist Nata Peradze and expressed satisfaction that people themselves responded to the 'blasphemy'.

"If there were no evaluation from our politicians and the government, you can see that society has given these people the answer and has answered the blasphemy, the very unnatural, unkind intentions behind it," the Minister said.

War against Ukraine: EU and its partners condemn North Korea's ballistic missile deliveries to Russia

The European Union and its partners have condemned "in the strongest possible terms" the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) export and Russia's procurement of DPRK ballistic missiles, as well as Russia's use of these missiles against Ukraine on December 30, 2023, and January 2, 2024.

The statement, released on 9 January, is signed by the EU High Representative Josep Borrell, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of 25 EU countries, the Foreign Ministers of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, as well as Foreign Ministers of Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Canada, Guatemala, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Liechtenstein, Mo-



naco, Montenegro, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, the Republic of Korea, San

Marino, and the United Kingdom, and the Secretary of State of the United States of America.

"The transfer of these weapons increases the suffering of the Ukrainian people, supports

Russia's war of aggression, and undermines the global non-proliferation regime. We are deeply concerned about the security implications that this cooperation has in Europe, on the Korean Peninsula, across the Indo-Pacific region, and around the world," the statement says.

It also reminds that the transfer of ballistic missiles, along with any other arms and related materiel, from the DPRK to Russia, flagrantly violates multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions (UNSCRs) – namely resolution 1718 (2006), resolution 1874 (2009), and resolution 2270 (2016) – that Russia itself supported.

"We are closely monitoring what Russia provides to the DPRK in return for these weapons exports. We call on the DPRK and Russia to abide by relevant UNSCRs and to immediately cease all activities that violate them," the EU and its partners say.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Thursday, January 11

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 7°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 1°C

Friday, January 12

Day Mostly Cloudy
High: 8°C

Night Cloudy
Low: 2°C

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