

Khabeishvili Steps Down from UNM Chairmanship, Plans to Nominate Tina Bokuchava

By Liza Mchedlidze

Levan Khabeishvili is stepping down from his position as the chairman of the United National Movement. He attributed this decision to his declining health following an assault by special forces.

According to Khabeishvili, he plans to convene a party congress in the coming days, during which he will nominate Tina Bokuchava as a candidate for the new chairman.

"I have reached a specific decision, unfortunately, due to my health condition. The public is aware of the events that occurred a month ago.

It's undoubtedly challenging for me, but based on the strict advice of doctors, I am actually prohibited from actively working for 2-3 months. Therefore, I cannot allow the party chairman to be non-functional for 2-3 months, not involved in daily operations, and not in a 24-hour working mode, especially with only 4 months remaining before the elections.

As a result of consultations with Tina and our team, we have made a concrete decision - I will convene a congress of the National Movement in a few days. During this congress, I will propose two changes: firstly, I will recommend Tina Bokuchava as the new chairman of the United National Movement party.

Additionally, I will propose myself as a candidate for the chairman of the po-



litical council, as I believe that the political council involves more strategic decisions rather than daily routine matters," Khabeishvili stated at the briefing.

According to Khabeishvili, another election will be held in the party in February 2025, at which the party members will

elect a new chairman, and before that, the change will take place at the party congress, and Tina Bokuchava will be the leader of the UNM for pre-elections period.

Former President of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili, welcomed Khabeishvili's decision to nominate Tina Bokuchava as chair-

man. He supports Bokuchava as the new chairperson, highlighting the party's renewal efforts. Saakashvili emphasizes the need to unite political forces, particularly among the youth, for national progress. He views this decision as a symbol of the party's resilience and commitment to constant renewal.

Georgia and International Community Condemn So-Called Parliamentary Elections in Occupied Tskhinvali Region

By Liza Mchedlidze

The so-called parliamentary elections are taking place in the occupied Tskhinvali region. The "elections" are being held under a mixed, majoritarian-proportional system: 34 so-called MPs are elected, with half from party lists and the other half from majoritarian constituencies. The parties must overcome a 7% threshold.

Seventy-three polling stations have been opened in 17 districts, including Vladikavkaz and Moscow.

Georgian authorities and the international community have condemned these elections as illegitimate and in violation of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

According to the Georgian Foreign Ministry's statement, these elections grossly violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders.

"In conditions where internally displaced persons and refugees from the occupied territories of Georgia are not given the opportunity to return to their homes,

and the remaining population has to live in conditions where basic rights and freedoms are violated, any so-called elections held in the occupied territories are illegal and cannot produce any legal results, contradicting the fundamental norms and principles of international law.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia calls on the Russian Federation to stop the actions that violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, to fulfill its international obligations, including the ceasefire agreement of August 12, 2008, brokered by the European Union, and to withdraw its troops from the territory of Georgia," the statement reads.

Several of Georgia's international partners have condemned the so-called "parliamentary elections" in a breakaway region.

"The European Union does not recognize the constitutional and legal framework in which the so-called 'parliamentary elections' took place in Georgia's occupied breakaway region of South Ossetia. The EU remains firm in its support to Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity," wrote European Commission spokesperson Peter Stano.

"We condemn the so-called 'parliamentary elections' in occupied Georgia's Tskhinvali region and call on the Russian Federation to fulfill its obligations under the 12 August 2008 cease-fire agreement to withdraw its occupation forces from the territory of Georgia," stated Gabrielius Landsbergis, Foreign Minister of Lithuania.

"The so-called parliamentary elections in the temporarily uncontrolled Tskhinvali region of Georgia are a clear violation of international law. We support the sovereignty and territorial integ-

riety of Georgia," asserted Mihai Pop'oi, Foreign Minister of Moldova.

"Estonia condemns the illegitimate parliamentary elections in #Georgia's South Ossetia region. It breaches the August 2008 ceasefire agreement & its implementing measures.

Estonia supports Georgia's sovereignty & territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders," declared Estonia's Foreign Ministry.

"Latvia strongly condemns holding of the so-called parliamentary elections in the South Ossetia region of Georgia under the occupation of the Russian Federation

Latvia strongly condemns holding of the so-called parliamentary elections on 9 June in the South Ossetia region of Georgia that is under the occupation of the Russian Federation. Latvia does not recognize either the legitimacy of the elections, or their results. Latvia reiterates its strong support for the sovereignty of Georgia and its territorial integrity within the internationally recognised borders.

Latvia calls for Russia, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Nauru and Syria to revoke their recognition of the so-called statehood of Georgia's regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as calls for Russia to end the occupation of these regions, respecting all of its obligations stemming from the 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement," read a statement from the Latvian Foreign Ministry.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan reaffirms its support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and does not recognize the so-called "parliamentary elections" held on 9 June 2024 in the Tskhinvali region of Georgia and their results," stated the Foreign Ministry of Azerbaijan.



Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.8247; Euro - 3.0767; GBP - 3.6142; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.1787; Swiss Franc - 3.1756

Georgian Dream's Pivot to Russia Sparks International Backlash and Threatens European Integration

By MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

By overriding the presidential veto on the "Russian Law," the Georgian Dream has shattered the final barrier, ushering in a new reality domestically and internationally. Bidzina Ivanishvili's team has decisively broken ties with the West, prompting calls for Western action to escalate from mere warnings to concrete sanctions. Despite widespread protests failing to sway the Georgian Dream's trajectory, opposition forces must now redirect their efforts towards preparing for the parliamentary elections on October 26 to oust the Georgian Dream from power and realign the country with the Western orbit.

The fight against adopting the law continued for a month and a half. It all began on April 3, 2024, when the Georgian Dream reintroduced the draft law "On the Transparency of Foreign Influence". This was clearly unexpected for the public, as the attempt to pass the same law a year earlier had triggered such a wave of protests that the Georgian government withdrew the draft law after its first reading and promised to never try to pass it again.

However, on Bidzina Ivanishvili's instructions, Georgian Dream acted differently.

There are also suspicions that the reintroduction of this draft law was directed from Moscow, as the attempts to pass this law simultaneously in several countries seemed highly coincidental. It appears that the Kremlin is trying to delineate its sphere of influence with this law. The Georgian Dream had no choice, otherwise, it felt more secure without this law than after its passage.

The re-initiation of the draft law was met with mass protests, primarily led by the youth. This protest and its scale were likely unexpected for the Georgian Dream. The first protest took place in Tbilisi on April 9, followed by another on April 15, when the Parliamentary Committee on Legal Affairs began discussing the draft law. From that point on, the protests became a daily occurrence. The Georgian Dream responded to the protests with police forces and crackdowns.

Despite the protests, on April 17, Parliament passed the draft law in the first reading with 83 votes in favour and 0 against. The opposition did not participate in the voting out of protest. The rallies continued, and on April 28, opponents of the law held an extremely large-scale rally.

The government countered the protest with a mobilisation of its supporters, bringing people

from various regions and holding their own rally in front of the Parliament on April 29. On this day, Bidzina Ivanishvili addressed the gathered crowd, and with his harsh anti-Western statements, he severed all ties with the West. Essentially, based on the content of Ivanishvili's speech, it became clear to everyone that the Georgian Dream would not withdraw the draft law.

On May 1, the Parliament passed the draft law in the second reading with 83 votes in favour and 23 against. The article-by-article discussion took place amid intense debate and protests outside. On May 6, during Orthodox Easter, the protesters spent the night in front of the Parliament. Then, rumours spread that the draft law would be passed in the third reading on May 17, a day recognized for several years as the "Day of Family Purity" by the Orthodox Church. However, Georgian Dream hastened the process, and despite strong protests, passed the law in the third reading on May 14. The law was supported by 84 deputies, with 30 voting against it.

By this time, it was already known that President Zurabishvili would veto the law, for which she had a two-week period according to the constitution. However, she did not use

the entire period and vetoed the law on May 18 without engaging in a substantive discussion of the law's content.

The Georgian Dream was urged both in Georgia and internationally not to override the president's veto. On May 27, during a session of the Legal Affairs Committee, the government demonstrated that they would override the veto, which they did on May 28. President Zourabichvili refused to sign the law which Parliament Chairman Papuashvili did on June 3.

The law will come into effect two months after signing it. During this period, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that receive 20% of their funding from the West must register as agents of foreign influence. However, none of the NGOs intend to comply. Consequently, they will face fines, and after being fined three times, they will be forcibly registered. By this time, the parliamentary elections on October 26 will be approaching.

Regarding the international reaction to the passage of the "Russian law", numerous warnings are now being followed by sanctions. The Georgian Dream hopes that there will be no sanctions from the European Union because, first, no decision will be made before the European Parliament elections, and secondly,

several EU countries will not support sanctioning Georgia. However, the United States has introduced the first tranche of sanctions for a couple dozen responsible for "undermining democracy in Georgia".

Georgian Dream deputies are currently acting surprised, saying it is incomprehensible why they should be sanctioned for adopting the law, as their aim is to ensure the country's sovereignty. Prime Minister Kobakhidze also stated that the adoption of the "Transparency Law" would increase Georgia's chances of joining the European Union. If the threat of sanctions materialises soon, Georgian Dream's narrative about the possibility of the country's integration into the European Union by 2030 will significantly weaken.

In reality, the adoption of the "Russian law" has dealt a severe blow to the Georgian Dream party, resulting in the loss of its pro-Western supporters, whom they are desperately trying to keep. Despite this, they continue to maintain that the path to European Union membership remains unchanged. However, Western sanctions will likely reveal a new reality of altered foreign policy, a direction that the majority of the country's population opposes.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Biden and Macron Urge Georgian Dream to Return to Euro-Atlantic Path



In a statement from the White House following a meeting between US President Joe Biden and French President Emmanuel Macron, the United States and France reaffirmed their support for Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations. They urged the ruling Georgian Dream party to respect public wishes and return to the Euro-Atlantic path.

Both countries emphasised the need for a fair and lasting peace in the South Caucasus, based on international law, sovereignty, inviolability of borders, and territorial integrity. They also expressed support for further regional integration in the South Caucasus to benefit all its people.

"The United States and France affirm their commitment to standing with the people of

Georgia in their Euro-Atlantic aspirations. The Presidents urge the Georgian Dream ruling party to respect the public's wishes by returning to the Euro-Atlantic path. The United States and France support the establishment of a fair and lasting peace in the South Caucasus, based on the respect of international law as well as the principles of sovereignty, inviolability of borders and territorial integrity. They support further regional integration in the South Caucasus for the benefit of all the region's people," the statement reads.

Georgian Citizen Unlawfully Detained by Russian Occupation Forces near Occupied Tskhinvali

The State Security Service has reported that representatives of the Russian occupation forces

unlawfully detained a Georgian citizen near the occupied Tskhinvali.

"Upon receiving information about the mentioned incident, the State Security Service activated the 'hotline' operated by the EU Monitoring Mission. Information about another case of illegal detention was immediately reported to the co-chairs of the international discussions in

Geneva and international partners. All existing mechanisms have been activated to release the illegally detained Georgian citizen as soon as possible.

According to the State Security Service, the responsibility for all destructive actions committed in the occupied territories of Georgia, as well as along the occupation line, rests with the occupying power," the statement reads.

Weather

Monday, June 10

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 26°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 17°C

Tuesday, June 11

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 28°C

Night Showers
Low: 18°C

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