

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

First International Diaspora Theater Performance Held at Orbeliani Palace

The Orbeliani Palace recently hosted the first international diaspora theater performance, bringing together Georgian immigrants and young people displaced from the occupied territories. Organized by the Presidential Administration, the event aimed to unite these communities through cultural expression.

The President of Georgia opened the event, celebrating the participants' creativity and efforts. She praised the initiative by Mrs. Tika Svanidze-Venko, stating, "I am glad that you have gathered here and we all have the opportunity to see and appreciate your creativity." She emphasized the significance of the project in building bridges between young people in the diaspora and those displaced from the occupied territories, saying, "You find each other in all these things – theater, songs, and dances – in Georgian culture."

The President, who grew up in the diaspora herself, spoke on the importance of staying connected to one's cultural roots. She noted the growing number of Georgians living abroad, highlighting this as both a challenge and an opportunity. "This can become the wealth of the country, if we approach this problem and this situation well," she remarked. She suggested making it easier to obtain citizenship and creating more programs for young people to collaborate in various fields, adding, "If we grant citizenship very easily and much more easily than today, if we open the borders, there will be more programs and projects for young people to come and work with their peers."



Reflecting on the global presence of Georgians, the President mentioned, "When we look at the Olympic Games, we see that Georgians compete not only under the flag of Georgia, but also under the flags of other countries and win medals." She stressed the importance of supporting and

utilizing the Georgian diaspora for the benefit of both Georgia and their host countries, noting, "As a small country, we may need this human resource more and we should take care of it."

Tika Svanidze-Venko, a Georgian businesswoman and philanthropist from the Netherlands,

founded the first international theater "Return" in 2021. At the event, she spoke to the participants and guests, reinforcing the goal of building connections and fostering community among Georgians worldwide. She expressed her gratitude to everyone involved, stating, "This ini-

tiative is a big deal, so that between you – young people living in the diaspora and young people displaced from the occupied territories – bridges will be built again and you will have the opportunity to get to know each other."

'Foreign Agents' Law Comes into Force

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Starting August 1, 2024, all non-governmental and media organizations in Georgia receiving more than 20% of

their income from abroad must register with the National Public Registry Agency as foreign agents. This requirement is part of the new, controversial 'Foreign Agents' Law, which according to the

Georgian Dream party, aims to ensure transparency regarding foreign funding.

The law mandates that organisations provide detailed information during registration, including the source, amount, and purpose of any foreign funds or material goods received in the previous year. Additionally, they must disclose how these funds were spent over the same period.

To support the enforcement of this law, the Ministry of Justice has established the Department of Financial Declaration within the National Public Registry Agency. This department is responsible for maintaining the register of foreign agents, ensuring transparency, and aiding the Ministry in enforcing the law.

The law grants the Ministry of Justice the authority to conduct research and monitoring on organizations suspected of serving foreign interests at any time. Organisations that fail to register or do not submit the required declarations will

face substantial fines. The penalty for avoiding registration is 25,000 GEL. Further fines include:

• 10,000 GEL if the organization does not fill out the application form within 10 working days after it is posted on the Ministry of Justice website.

• 10,000 GEL for not correcting defects in the documents within the specified period.

• 20,000 GEL for committing a legal offense after one month.

This legislation has caused a series of protests among Georgians, drawing significant controversy and criticism. International partners have repeatedly called on the Georgian government to withdraw the law, expressing concerns that it may stifle civil society and media freedom. Despite these calls, the government has moved forward with its implementation, arguing that the law is necessary to ensure transparency and accountability regarding foreign influence in the country.



The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

US Suspends \$95 Million in Aid to Georgia Over Democracy Concerns

government's actions do not meet the democratic standards expected for countries seeking to join the European Union and NATO. The aid being suspended was intended to support the Georgian government directly.

schools, hospitals, and strengthen Georgia's military and coast guard.

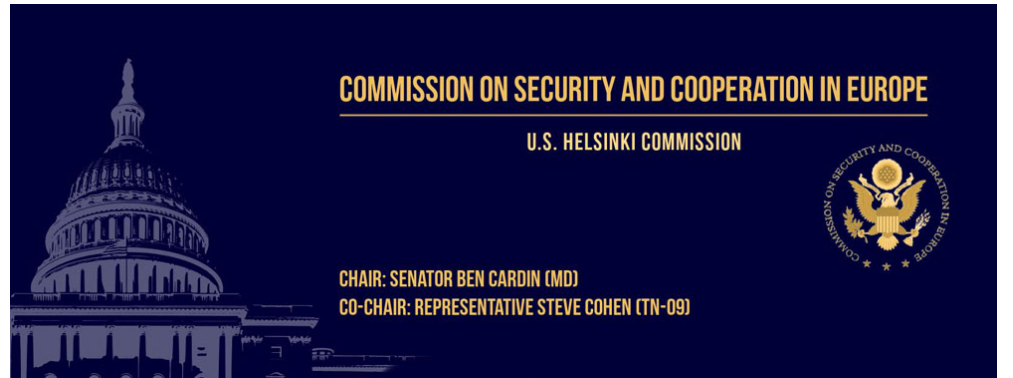
Blinken assured that despite the aid suspension, the US remains committed to helping the Georgian people and supporting their goals for a stronger democracy and closer ties with Europe. "We will continue to stand by the Georgian people," he said.

Wilson, Steve Cohen, Richard Hudson, and Mark Wiese, the commission supports Blinken's recent policy of visa restrictions on those undermining Georgia's democracy. However, they argue that more immediate action is needed to protect Georgian citizens and reinforce democratic norms.

The commission specifically targets Ivanishvili and his associates, urging the US to impose financial sanctions on them. They claim that Ivanishvili and his circle are central figures in corruption and anti-Western influence in Georgia.



US Helsinki Commission Urges Sanctions Against Bidzina Ivanishvili



The Helsinki Commission has called on US Secretary of State Antony Blinken to impose sanctions on Bidzina Ivanishvili, founder of Georgian Dream party.

In a letter signed by Congressmen Joe

gia. "It is essential that those who perpetuate corruption and undermine democracy face consequences," the letter reads.

The United States is halting more than \$95 million in aid to the Georgian government due to worries about anti-democratic actions and false statements by Georgian leaders. This decision was announced by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

Blinken said the Georgian

Even though this aid is being stopped, the US will still support programs that help the people of Georgia. The focus will be on improving democracy, the rule of law, and economic development in the country.

Over the last 32 years, the US has given more than \$6.2 billion in aid to Georgia. This money has helped build

The Latest Projects of the Embassy of Japan in Adjara

A press tour was held in Adjara A/R, organized by the Embassy of Japan in Georgia. During the tour, Ambassador of Japan in Georgia, H.E. Mr. Ishizuka Hideki, opened two projects funded by the embassy:

1. "Project for Provision of Heavy Equipment for Forest Fire Response and Prevention in Adjara" - Within this project, heavy machinery was purchased to strengthen the Adjara Autonomous Republic's Forest fire response and disaster prevention capabilities. Enabling approximately 361,000 inhabitants to enjoy a safe and secure living environment. Grant Amount is 69,000 USD.

2. "Project for Establishment of Greenhouse for Growing Tangerines in Autonomous Republic of Adjara" - Within this project, a greenhouse was constructed,

which enable the cultivation of mandarin seedlings with reduced use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. It will help small and medium-sized farmers in the A/R Adjara to grow improved quality seedlings and meet EU market-

ing standards. In addition, the yield per mandarin tree grown will be approximately 40% higher by the third year, contributing to increased income for these farmers. Grant Amount is 64,330 USD.

During the tour, media representatives also visited Machakhela Valley and see the



results of the project "Machakhela Valley - Green Energy Zone". The project was implemented last year by the United Nations Development

Program (UNDP) with the financial support of the Japanese government aiming to mitigate the vulnerability of the globally unique Colchic forest ecosystem in the Protected Area of Machakhela Valley and reduce the risk of forest degradation caused by fuelwood over-exploitation, climate change and global human security challenges (war in Ukraine, COVID-19).

Specifically, the project introduced solar water heaters and on-grid solar photovoltaic panels (PV) in villages of Machakhela Valley. As a result, 1,350 direct beneficiaries from the most-affected households of Machakhela National Park support zone have benefited from the project. The main beneficiaries are local women. Grant amount: 594,486 USD.

Weather

Thursday, August 1

Day Clear High: 29°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 19°C

Friday, August 2

Day Showers High: 27°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 19°C

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therefore, the opinions expressed in some articles do not necessarily coincide with those of the newspaper. We take no responsibility for any claims made in advertisements. The Messenger preserves the style of a source written in English where possible.

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Poland to Georgia, H.E. Mr. Mariusz Maszkiewicz hosted a reception on July 30th, say farewell to his friends and colleagues he has worked with during his 7 years in Georgia.

The Messenger wishes H.E. Mariusz Maszkiewicz good health, prosperity and all the best in his careers.





