

Geneva International Discussions Co-Chairs Meet with Georgian Delegation in Tbilisi

By Liza Mchedlidze

On February 10, co-chairs of the Geneva International Discussions (GID), representatives from the European Union (EU), the United Nations (UN), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) held a meeting in Tbilisi with Lasha Darsalia, the head of Georgia's delegation to the GID. The meeting focused on preparations for the upcoming 63rd round of discussions, set to take place on March 4-5.

The GID, established following the August 12, 2008 ceasefire agreement brokered by the EU, serves as a platform for addressing issues stemming from the Russian occupation of Georgian territories. Co-chaired by the EU, UN, and OSCE, the discussions involve multiple parties, including representatives from Georgia, Russia, the U.S., and both the exiled Georgian administrations of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, along with the Russian-backed authorities of these regions.

The talks are divided into two main working groups: one focused on peace and security, and the other on humanitarian concerns. Central issues under discussion include the implementation of the 2008 ceasefire agreement, the return of displaced persons and refugees, and the security and humanitarian challenges resulting from the ongoing occupation of Georgian territories.

According to the Georgian Foreign Ministry, the meeting covered critical topics on the GID agenda, such as the EU-brokered ceasefire agreement, its implementation, and the return of internally displaced persons. Additionally, the importance of resuming the Incident Prevention



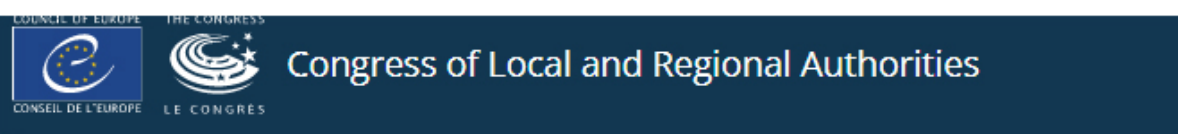
and Response Mechanism (IPRM) in Gali, without preconditions, was underscored. The IPRM, designed to facilitate communication and address security incidents, is considered vital for regional stability.

The Georgian delegation also raised concerns over the security, humanitar-

ian, and human rights situation in the occupied territories and near the occupation line. The Georgian side called attention to actions that violate international law and threaten Georgia's territorial integrity, notably the illegal launch of an airport in occupied Abkhazia and the

planned presidential elections in the region, which Georgia deems unlawful and an affront to its sovereignty.

The upcoming GID discussions are expected to continue addressing these critical issues in the hope of advancing peace and security in the region.



Statement by the Congress Bureau on the urgent situation in Georgia

LUXEMBOURG | 10 FEBRUARY 2025



Council of Europe Congress Bureau Urges Georgia to Address Political Crisis

By Liza Mchedlidze

The Bureau of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe has issued a statement calling on the Georgian government to respect democratic principles and address growing political tensions in the country.

Following a visit by Congress leadership on February 3-4, the Bureau raised concerns about political polarization, the independence of public institutions, and restrictions on fundamental freedoms. "The Congress Bureau is clear that the Georgian authorities should begin by taking immediate steps to address the extreme political and social polarization that is harming their country," the statement read.

One of the key issues highlighted was the dismissal of public servants for political reasons. "Public servants at local and national levels have been removed from their positions for political reasons. This practice must stop," the Bureau stated. The Congress also emphasized the importance of judicial independence and ensuring that law enforcement operates free from political influence.

The statement further called for the release of individuals detained for participating in peaceful protests, including politicians and journalists such as Mzia Amaglobeli. "Everyone should be allowed to exercise their democratic rights to freedom of ex-

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.8004; Euro - 2.8889; GBP - 3.4607; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.9184; Swiss Franc - 3.0706

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pression and freedom of assembly and association," the Bureau said, stressing that peaceful protest is a fundamental element of democratic societies.

The Congress also urged the Georgian government to engage in constructive dialogue with the

opposition to restore political stability. "The government must change its position and make clear its commitment to genuine, open, and constructive dialogue with the opposition," the statement noted. It added that such engagement is necessary to restore trust in democratic institutions and reduce political tensions.

The Congress announced that it will hold a debate on Georgia during its next session on March 25-27, 2025. It reaffirmed its readiness to support efforts to strengthen democracy in Georgia. "The Congress stands ready to provide whatever support possible in achieving that end," the statement concluded.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

GYLA Calls for Information on Temur Katamadze's Health as Hunger Strike Reaches 26 Days

According to the association, relevant agencies have failed to provide updates on his condition. The Public Defender's Office, which was notified of Katamadze's health status, reviewed his medical documentation and identified the need for further medical examinations. However, it

GYLA is calling on the Ministry of Internal Affairs to urgently provide information regarding the tests being conducted on Katamadze and an update on his health condition.

Zourabichvili Promises to Bring Georgia's Media Struggles to Munich

of Georgia, but I will also bring the concerns of our society and its challenges with me, across all sectors of the country."

She also expressed her desire to establish platforms within her administration that collaborate with various segments of society. "For example, I previously met with diplomats and created a diplomatic club. Today, meeting with media managers was a crucial step in understand-



მოვუწოდებთ შინაგან სამინისტროს, დაუყოვნებლივ მოგვანოდოს ინფორმაცია რა კვლევები უტარდება თემურ ქათამაძეს



The Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA) has raised concerns over the lack of information regarding the health condition of Temur Katamadze, a Batumi-based flag bearer who has been on a hunger strike for 26 days at the temporary detention center of the Migration Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

was noted that the office did not receive the necessary medical documents on time.

"The state is responsible for the life and health of the detainee, as he is under its control. Any deterioration in Temur Katamadze's health or serious consequences will fall entirely on the state's shoulders," the statement emphasized.

The 5th President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili, recently met with media representatives to address the challenging situation facing the press in Georgia. After the meeting, Zourabichvili shared that media managers had briefed her on the difficulties the media is experiencing before her departure for Munich.

"I will convey their messages in Munich," Zourabichvili stated, emphasizing her commitment to representing the concerns of the Georgian media on the international stage.

The meeting was attended by representatives from television stations, online outlets, and regional media.

"These meetings, which I initiated, serve a dual purpose," Zourabichvili explained. "When I go to Munich, I won't just be representing myself as President

ing how we can work together to strengthen Georgian media at a time when it faces significant pressure."

Zourabichvili stressed the importance of supporting the media in the face of increasing challenges, noting that authoritarian regimes often target both society and the press. "Every dictatorial regime that seeks to consolidate power has two main targets – society and the media," she said.

She reassured that her efforts to support the media would continue beyond her trip to Munich. "I will take their messages with me, but this is just the beginning. We will have regular meetings, and, of course, Mzia Amaglobeli will be one of the key topics. She has become a symbol of freedom of speech and the mounting pressure on regional media," Zourabichvili concluded.



EU and UNDP provide Ukrainian rescuers with specialised equipment

The European Union and the

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Ukraine have provided the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SES) with new equipment worth US\$410,000 (Euro398,000).

The SES units in Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Chernihiv, Kharkiv, and Kherson oblasts have received advanced technical equipment, while local firefighting teams in 10 communities across Kharkiv and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts have

also been provided with critical tools.

Ukrainian rescuers received explosion-proof flashlights for nighttime and low-visibility operations, jackhammers, and battery-powered combination rotary hammers for debris removal.

They were also supplied with battery-operated telescopic hydraulic jacks, which are essential for quickly reaching people trapped in collapsed buildings and damaged vehicles. Addition-

ally, the deliveries included fire hoses, chainsaws, and motor pumps to strengthen firefighting efforts and enhance flood management caused by shelling and other emergencies.

"The speed and efficiency of first responders' work directly impacts the number of lives saved," said Stefan Schleuning, Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to Ukraine.

The equipment delivery is part of a broader support

programme implemented by the EU and UNDP as part of the flagship EU-UNDP partnership 'EU4Recovery — Empowering Communities in Ukraine'. The programme aims to strengthen community resilience and enhance residents' ability to respond to current challenges, particularly amid active hostilities of war and post-destruction recovery efforts.

(eunighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Wednesday, February 12

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 7°C

Night Clear

Low: -2°C

Thursday, February 13

Day Mostly Cloudy

High: 8°C

Night Mostly Cloudy

Low: -1°C

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On February 11, the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Tbilisi hosted a special ceremony to honor the young Georgian participants of the 52nd International Children's Exhibition of Fine Arts Lidice (ICEFA Lidice 2024). This prestigious competition, founded in 1967 to commemorate the child victims of the Lidice tragedy, has grown into a globally recognized event, attracting over 25,000 submissions annually from 60 to 70 countries.

This year, under the theme "Caravan", 65 artworks from 8 Georgian schools and art galleries were submitted, and 11 tal-

ented young artists received an honorable mention for their outstanding creativity. The winners were presented with diplomas and special gifts in recognition of their achievements. The Embassy congratulates the young artists, their families, and their teachers for their dedication and artistic talent. A special thank-

you goes to the schools and art institutions that supported their participation.

As part of this event, the Embassy has also prepared a special exhibition about the Lidice tragedy, which will be on display for three weeks on Chavchavadze Avenue, where the Embassy is located. This exhibition offers visitors an oppor-

tunity to learn more about the historical events that led to the establishment of ICEFA Lidice.

Looking ahead, the 53rd edition of ICEFA Lidice in 2025 will explore the theme Play. The Embassy warmly encourages all young artists to take part in this inspiring competition.

52nd International Children's Exhibition of Fine Arts Lidice 2024

