

Opposition Leaders Discuss Coordination for New Elections with President Zourabichvili

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

On March 10, 5th President Salome Zourabichvili met with leaders of opposition political parties to discuss the formation of a coordinated front in preparation for upcoming elections.

Tamar Chergoleishvili, a leader of the Federalists Party, spoke to the media following the meeting, explaining that Zourabichvili's initiative aims to create a unified front not only involving political parties but also the civil sector and protest movements. She also revealed that a major rally is being planned for March 31.

"Salome Zourabichvili's initiative is to create a common coordination front to prepare for new elections, which includes not only political parties, but also the civil sector, the protest part. In addition, she is preparing a rally for March 31.

In addition, we went through all the issues related to the preparation of new elections, including political prisoners, the legislative framework – what we need in order to hold normal elections in the future. We talked about these issues. The main thing is that our focus remains on new elections, and I think we will achieve new elections," Chergoleishvili said.

Tina Bokuchava, Chairperson of the Unity - National Movement, emphasized the significance of March 31 as the day of the referendum on Georgia's independence and announced the start of joint preparations for that day.

"We discussed the big rally on March 31, which is the day of the referendum on Georgia's independence and is a very important date in the history of Georgia's independence, for which we will jointly begin preparations.



Among them, we discussed the creation of a 'common resistance front' – the participation of all political parties around President Zourabichvili, for whom it is important to save the Euro-Atlantic future of our country. It is important that such a coordination format exists. Among them, maximum unity and maximum effort are the orders that exist in society," Bokuchava said.

Badri Japaridze, one of the leaders of Strong Georgia, stressed the need for

greater coordination between political groups, civil society, and Zourabichvili.

"We also talked about the importance of closer coordination around political centers, society, and the president, and we will continue this conversation. It was another working and very interesting, meaningful meeting.

Salome Zourabichvili's position is that there should be maximum coordination, maximum rapprochement between political groups and civil groups. We believe

that a common format should be developed around the president. 'This could be an internal resistance front, it could be a coordination council – the names don't matter here, the content is that there should be real political centers here, at the same time the public and the people who stand on the streets every day – their representation should be reflected here, in this coordination council,'" Japaridze said.



GYLA Condemns Shota Rustaveli Theater and Film University's Actions Against Student Protesters

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) has strongly criticized the actions of the Shota Rustaveli Theater and Film University administration, accusing them of violating students' rights to free expression and assembly. According to GYLA, the university's actions reflect a disregard for students' fundamental freedoms.

In a statement released by GYLA, it was noted that the administration had revoked the student status of several students involved in ongoing protests. "On March 10, 2025, it became known that students participating in the ongoing protest at the university had their student status revoked. The university administration cites the decision of the Ethics Commission as the basis for this, claiming that the students violated

norms," GYLA said. The students were notified of their suspension by email at 10:04 AM on March 10, with the decision deemed "unsubstantiated and vague."

GYLA also expressed concern over events that took place the day before, March 9, when protest participants were asked to leave the university building under the pretext of disinfection work. "Under the pretext of conducting disinfection work, the university administration asked students to leave the building. The students requested a separate space where they could continue their peaceful protest," the GYLA statement explained. Despite the students' request, the university administration did not offer an alternative space.

Instead, the university involved representatives from the Ministry of Inter-

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nal Affairs, who demanded that the students vacate the building. The following day, nine students were fined 5,000 GEL each by the police. GYLA emphasized that these actions were a violation of students' rights to peacefully assemble and express their views.

GYLA urged higher educational institutions in Georgia to respect students' rights to freedom of expression. "The

GYLA has repeatedly called on the administrations of higher educational institutions in Georgia to respect and protect students' freedom of expression," the organization stated. In light of recent events, GYLA condemned the actions of the university administration, stating, "The aforementioned actions of the Theater University administration representatives clearly show that they are not respecting the rights of students, but rather the opposite."

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Former Co-Investment Fund Head Sentenced to 11 Years in Prison



Giorgi Bachiashvili, the former head of Bidzina Ivanishvili's co-investment fund, has been sentenced to 11 years in prison in absentia by Tbilisi City Court. The verdict, announced on March 10, follows charges of cryptocurrency misappropriation and money laundering.

The Prosecutor's Office confirmed that Bachiashvili was found guilty under Article 182, Part 3, Subparagraph "c" (misappropriation of a large amount of

cryptocurrency) and Article 194, Part 3, Subparagraph "c" (legalization of illegal income) of the Criminal Offense Code.

The Prosecutor's Office also noted that Bachiashvili is facing criminal proceed-

ings in two other cases: failure to fulfill official duties during the "Mtkvari HPP" project and illegal crossing of Georgia's state border.

In response to the ruling, Bachiashvili condemned the decision, calling it "shameful." He had previously posted on social media on March 4, stating that he was "forced" to leave Georgia, accusing Bidzina Ivanishvili, along with several judicial officials and prosecutors, of orchestrating his persecution. He claimed to be a target

of Ivanishvili's "corrupt machinery" and expressed concerns for his safety, alleging that the former prime minister had threatened to "crush" him in prison.

Papuashvili Warns Against Relying on External Support, Cites Ukraine's Experience

Shalva Papuashvili, Speaker of the



Parliament, discussed Georgia's approach to international relations and national security. Reflecting on the country's 3,000-year history, he emphasized that Georgia has survived geopolitical challenges by prioritizing its own interests over reliance on others.

Papuashvili pointed to Ukraine's situation as an example of the dangers of trusting external actors. "Ukraine was offered support, but we saw how that sup-

port worked in 1994 when Ukraine was forced to give up its nuclear weapons! Or where is the support given in February 2022?!" he stated.

He warned that had Georgia trusted others as Ukraine did, the country would have been in a similar situation to Ukraine today — "a mourning, destroyed country."

"We've been in these conditions for 3,000 years. Our genetic memory should

teach us some things, if not our own experience over the last few decades. It should teach us that the first thing we should trust is ourselves and our own people," Papuashvili said.

He also emphasized that the key to Georgia's survival has been focusing on its own national interests. "An independent country should focus on its own national interests, not on having someone's support," he added.

Georgian and Ukrainian authors shortlisted for 2025 European Union Prize for Literature

The EU's Creative Europe programme has shortlisted emerging authors from 13 countries for the 2025 edition of the

European Union Prize for Literature (EUPL).

more international audience and connect with readers beyond their national and linguistic borders.

Tea Topuria from Georgia, with her book *აკობის ჯვარი* (By Jacob's Well), and Halyna Matveeva from Ukraine, with her book *(The Key of G)*, are among the finalists.

The European Union Prize for Literature is an annual initiative of the Creative Europe programme that started in 2009 to recognise the best European emerging authors and celebrate the linguistic diversity and excellence of literature in countries participating in the Creative Europe programme.

The 2025 EUPL Prize winner and the special mentions will be revealed on 16 May, during the announcement ceremony at the Prague Book Fair.

All shortlisted authors will be promoted across Europe. This will help them reach a wider and

(euneighbourseast.eu)



Weather

Tuesday, March 11

Day Clear
High: 21°C

Night Clear
Low: 5°C

Wednesday, March 12

Day Clear
High: 23°C

Night Clear
Low: 7°C

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43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi, 0108, Georgia
Founded by Prof. **Zaza Gachechiladze**
Tamar Gachechiladze
Publisher

Mob.: +995 599 565621; +995 577 760000
E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge
<http://www.messenger.com.ge>

Nino Metreveli
Commercial Director

Mariam Mchedlidze
Editor-in-Chief

Khatuna Gogichaishvili
Layout Designer, Photographer

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The 2nd Japanese Speech Contest

On March 9, 2025, the 2nd Japanese Speech Contest was held at the Tbilisi Free University, organized by the Embassy of Japan in Georgia. 21 participants from Tbilisi and other cities demonstrated their Japanese language skills in their speeches on the topic of “sports”.

There has been a steady increase in the number of applicants for the Japanese Language Proficiency Test held in

Tbilisi year by year – 150 in July 2023 and 191 in July 2024 –, which gives an example of popularization of the Japanese language in Georgia, particularly young generation. The Embassy of Japan organized the contest for two consecutive years with the aim of further promoting Japanese language study in Georgia.

The contest was divided into three level categories: beginner, intermediate and

advanced. This year’s speeches revolved around the topic of “Japanese and Georgian sports” and their roles in cultural exchange, as both Japanese and Georgian athletes successfully competed and performed in such sports as Judo in the Paris Olympics and Paralympics held last year. The speech contest provided the Japanese-language learners with a platform for demonstrating their progress and passion to-

wards the Japanese language, and for networking with other like-minded learners, which gives them motivation for further studying. The winners of each category were selected by a jury and awarded with certificates by the Ambassador of Japan to Georgia, H.E. Mr. Ishizuka Hideki.

The Embassy of Japan in Georgia will continue to promote Japanese language learning through organizing relevant events including this contest and other various workshops, and to foster greater cultural exchange and friendship between Japan and Georgia.



