

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Georgian Prime Minister Responds to UK Sanctions on Judges

Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze addressed the recent sanctions imposed by Great Britain on two Georgian judges, Levan Murusidze and Mikheil Chinchaladze. Speaking to reporters, Kobakhidze defended the independence of the Georgian judiciary.

"Our message is that today the court is independent and we will do everything to protect the independence of the court," Kobakhidze said.

Kobakhidze also pointed out that the individuals or groups behind the sanctions were the same forces that had protected the issues within the Georgian judiciary prior to 2012.

"I can remind you of what was happening in Georgia before 2012, specifically in the justice system, and how the system has changed since 2012," Kobakhidze stated. "I also talked about statistics, the statistics have improved twice, three times, in some cases 20 times. For example, in the Strasbourg Court, despite the fact that the legal culture has changed, the legal culture has been raised, three times fewer cases are being brought to the Strasbourg Court regarding Georgian justice. This is irrefutable evidence not only that the situation in the judicial system has radically improved since 2012, but it is also evidence that today the Georgian justice system is functioning healthily."

The Prime Minister also highlighted the improvement in the judicial system since 2012 and expressed that the criticism from certain forces regarding the current state of the judiciary was inconsistent with these changes.

"It is absolutely logical that, including in relation to British sanctions, those



forces, or the force, the so-called Deep State, are engaged in all this, which had approved of all sorts of vices and ugliness in Georgian justice until 2012, and today

they criticize the healthy judicial system. There is direct logic here — today, those who act on behalf of Britain, with the aim of violating the independence of the Georgian

judiciary, were the same forces that until 2012 completely protected the ugliness that operated in the Georgian judiciary," Kobakhidze added.

Papuashvili: "Some in Europe Are Angry with Georgia for Refusing to Escalate"

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The Speaker of the Georgian Parliament, Shalva Papuashvili, commented on Georgia's foreign policy stance following a meeting with the Speakers of both Houses of the Belgian Parliament during the Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly in Tashkent.

"There were expectations that Georgia would escalate. As we refused to escalate, to impose bilateral sanctions, to close the border and the sky, some in Europe are frustrated, upset and angry with Georgia," Papuashvili said.

He noted that the vision presented by the Georgian side was understood by the Belgian counterparts and that the meeting also covered the potential for deeper cooperation.

"We had a meeting with the Speakers of both Houses of Belgian Parliament, including the former chairman of the parliament. First of all, we talked about the relations between Georgia and Belgium. I thanked them for the fact that Belgian citizens are also involved in the EU monitoring mission in the occupied territories. Of course, we talked about the relations between Georgia and the EU. Among them,

they were interested in why there is some tension."

Papuashvili said the Georgian side offered context and explanation for the strained relations.

"We explained what had been going on for the last three years. Namely, the fact that, unfortunately, there were certain expectations from some European political groups or countries towards Georgia after the war in Ukraine began. The expectations were that Georgia would escalate, despite the fact that before that it had been recommending a peace policy. As we refused to escalate, imposed bilateral sanctions, close borders and skies, that is, to destroy our country, because of this some in Europe are offended and some are angry."

He also addressed concerns regarding interference in Georgia's internal affairs by foreign political figures.

"We also talked about how some European politicians and government representatives were involved in the elections. We remember the Baltic ministers who stood at the rallies before the elections. We talked about all this, explained everything to them, and I think that



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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.7576; Euro - 3.0438; GBP - 3.5909; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.2697; Swiss Franc - 3.2419

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they understand the vision that we presented. In general, there is very good cooperation between the parliaments."

The Speaker emphasized the need for balanced expectations

from European partners when it comes to sanctions and security guarantees.

"We said goodbye to each other with the hope of this cooperation. When we were talking about the fact that when a resolution is adopted in the European Parlia-

ment to impose bilateral sanctions on Russia and at the same time, no one gives us security and economic guarantees, of course, it was also clear to our colleagues that in this situation it is irresponsible to impose such demands on the country."

Papuashvili also reflected on broader geopolitical shifts and the uncertainty surrounding the future of the war in Ukraine.

"From today's perspective, everyone realizes that the ongoing war in Ukraine is coming to an end and everyone is watching this process with caution, because on the one hand, everyone supports Ukraine, hoping that it will end positively for them, but everyone sees that the risk is great and the hopes they had for peace may not come true."

He concluded by referencing

Georgia's own experience with conflict and underlined the importance of relying on national interest over external promises.

"We have seen this in the past, our war was over after eight months, when relations between America and Russia were strained and British and French soldiers stood on Red Square at the May 9 parade, Ukrainian soldiers too, after our war. We have seen all this in the sense that we cannot trust others, we must trust our people, ourselves and national interests," said Shalva Papuashvili.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Tbilisi Court Orders Bail for Lelo Leaders Over Defiance of Parliamentary Commission



A Tbilisi City Court judge has ordered Badri Japaridze, co-leader of the opposition Lelo party, to pay 50,000 GEL in bail after he refused to appear before the Georgian Dream initiated parliamentary investigative commission. The commission is probing alleged crimes committed during the United National Movement's (UNM) time in

power.

Judge Eka Barbakadze granted Japaridze 50 days to pay the bail. His Lelo colleague Mamuka Khazaradze was also ordered to pay the same amount for similarly ignoring the commission's summons. Under

year in prison.

The commission, formed by the ruling GD party, was initially tasked with investigating alleged systemic abuses during the UNM's rule from 2003 to 2012. However, the parliament recently extended the commission's scope to cover the period from 2003 through to the present day.

On April 2, the commission summoned several more opposition figures from the Coalition for Change, including Nika Gvaramia, Nika Melia, and Zurab Japaridze. All three have refused to participate, dismissing the commission as illegitimate and continuing their boycott of the current parliament following the disputed October 26, 2024 elections.

GD has indicated that it intends to send the commission's final report to the Constitutional Court with the aim of banning the UNM and what it terms its "successor parties".

Papuashvili and Israeli Speaker Discuss Regional Security in Tashkent

At the 150th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Tashkent, Georgia's Parliament Speaker Shalva Papuashvili met with the Speaker of the Israeli Knesset to discuss key security issues affecting their regions.

"Of course, we first of all dis-

cussed the security challenges that exist in our region," Papuashvili said after the meeting. He noted that the Assembly offers a platform to engage with representatives from 130 countries, with several bilateral

regional topics, including the war in Ukraine and its impact on Georgia.

"Of course, we talked about the region as a whole, about the ongoing war in Ukraine. About the impact of this security envi-



meetings also scheduled.

The conversation focused heavily on the conflict in Israel and Gaza. "We talked about the situation in Israel, in Gaza. In this regard, we all support the return of the kidnapped people home as soon as possible and the conflict that exists to end soon," Papuashvili said.

He added that the Speaker of the Israeli Parliament expressed his views in light of strong support from the new U.S. administration and hopes that these issues would soon be resolved. The two also discussed broader

environment on Georgia and how important cooperation and mutual support between Georgia and Israel are in order to regulate security issues," Papuashvili noted.

He also said they spoke about shared experiences with the new U.S. administration, which both governments believe is taking steps to "change certain harmful instruments and institutions." According to Papuashvili, Georgia and Israel share "similar experience and similar satisfaction" with the shift in U.S. foreign policy.

European Parliament calls to freeze Lukashenka's assets abroad to use them to support victims of repression in Belarus

On 5 April, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) adopted a human rights resolution on Belarus, calling for an immediate end to the political repression of Lukashenka's re-

gime, the surveillance of demonstrators, and the release of political prisoners. They also condemned how Belarusians abroad are increasingly becoming the target of repression by the regime, and called for EU-wide legal support for exiled individuals.

Parliament reiterated that it did not recognise Lukashenka as the country's leader and considered the persecution of Belarusian citizens abroad to be

a direct violation of member states' territorial sovereignty.

MEPs advocated for the swift development and enforcement of a legal mechanism to freeze and confiscate the assets and properties owned by Lukashenka and his inner circle abroad, in order to reallocate them to support victims of repression.

MEPs urged the immediate imposition of personal sanctions on officials responsible for

transnational persecution and intimidation, including members of the Belarusian Investigative Committee.

They also called for increased support for Belarusian independent media, human rights defenders, and civil society initiatives.

The resolution was adopted by 535 votes in favour, 19 against and 55 abstentions.

(eunighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Monday, April 7

Day Mostly Cloudy

High: 21°C

Night Partly Cloudy

Low: 10°C

Tuesday, April 8

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 21°C

Night Mostly Cloudy

Low: 10°C

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On April 4, 2025, a Tea Ceremony & Kyogen Demonstration were held at the Japanese Garden of the National Botanical Garden of Georgia in Tbilisi to commemorate completion of the garden's restoration. The event took place in the scope of Japan Weeks 2025 in Georgia and was co-organized by the Embassy of Japan in Georgia and the National Botanical Garden of Georgia. The event was highlighted by Kyogen (a form of traditional Japanese comic theater) demonstration presented by a stage actress, Ms. Komaki Yuu and the Japanese a tea ceremony, conducted by a tea master, Ms. Ohner Toshiko.

Tea Ceremony & Kyogen Demonstration Held at the Japanese Garden to Commemorate its' Reopening

In his opening remarks, the Ambassador of Japan, Mr. Ishizuka Hideki, expressed his gratitude to Japanese and Georgian people for their joint efforts for renovation of the Japanese Garden, and spoke about the significance of the garden as a symbol of friendship between the two countries. In her speech, the Director of the Garden, Ms. Irine Danelia, expressed gratitude to the Japanese side and highlighted the Japanese Garden's popularity among visitors. The event was attended by business figures and

representatives of the diplomatic corps, who had the opportunity to experience Japanese Tea and Kyogen performance firsthand.

The Japanese Garden at the National Botanical Garden of Georgia was originally opened in 2016. The project was made possible through cooperation between the Embassy of Japan, Tbilisi City Hall, and the Garden, with support from the JAPAN EXPRO '70 FUND. Both the initial designing and recent restoration work were carried

out by a Japanese company, Kosugi Zohen specializing in Japanese gardening. As part of the restoration, key elements such as the Torii gate, bridge, stone pathway, and other features of the garden were renovated.

The Embassy of Japan in Georgia continues to promote Japanese culture through organizing relevant events, fostering greater cultural exchange and friendship between Japan and Georgia.

