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A protest was held this year in response to last year's events.



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The meeting was held in  
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# Parliament of Georgia passes electoral bill at first hearing



parliament.ge (Official publication)

136 have supported the changes in the electoral system.

BY NIKA GANTSEMLIDZE

The Parliament of Georgia has supported amendments on the electoral system at the first hearing. According to the changes, the current electoral system will have to be changed and 120 MPs will be elected to the next convocation of the

parliament instead of 77, while the majoritarian will be only 30 instead of 73. The changes were supported by 136 deputies, with 5 voting against.

Before the voting, it became known that Emzar Kvitsiani, Nato Chkheidze, Bidzina Gegidze, Davit Chichinadze and Aleksandre Erkvania would not support

the changes. The National Movement did not take part in the voting either. Also, it was known that the majority MP, Kakha Okriashvili, would not support the changes.

The agreement was reached by the opposition and the government on March 8 after lengthy negotiations mediated by diplomats. The change will also affect the election threshold. Before, the party needed 5% of votes to get into the Parliament, but the new system sets the threshold at 1%.

It was also agreed upon that if a political party doesn't get more than 40% of votes, it will not be able to form a government. As for the districts, it is known that there will be 8 majoritarian constituencies in Tbilisi.

The Speaker of the Parliament Archil Talakvadze expressed his concern about the fact that the UNM didn't take part in the voting process even though they used to support the idea.

However, according to the leaders of the National Movement, the reason why they decided not to take part in the voting process is that the ruling party did not do everything they way they agreed to. For example, according to the UNM, Giorgi Rurua, co-founder of the Main Channel, is still in custody.

Davit Bakradze, one of the leaders of the European Georgia, there is no doubt



Mzia Saganelidze (RFE/RL)

UNM did not take part in the voting process.

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BY NIKA GAMTSEMLIDZE

# One year after June 20-21 rally

A year has passed since the 2019 June 20-21 rallies. The protests started as the Russian MP Gavrilov sat in the seat of the Speaker of the Parliament of Georgia. The fact was followed by protests and an aggressive dispersal of the rally, which was criticized by local and international diplomats. Authorities say the dispersal of the rally was ‘an inevitable necessity’ caused by the attempts of a group of protesters to break into the parliament building. Authorities believe that a certain group of opposition members intended to overthrow the government. However, the investigation didn’t find the mentioned group guilty of the government’s accusation.

This year, activists and political figures gathered in front of the parliament building in response to the events of June 20-21, 2019. Former President of Georgia Giorgi Margvelashvili also attended the protest.

“The government that fires bullets at patriotic slogans is not a democratic one. The government that then disperses their citizens with patriotic slogans is not a democratic one. The govern-



According to official data, about 240 people were injured during the dispersal.



Authorities say the dispersal of the rally was an inevitable necessity.

ment that has political prisoners in its country is authoritarian. The government that promises and deceives its own nation and international partners is a fraud,” said Margvelashvili.

An anti-occupation protest took place on Rustaveli Avenue, which is dedicated to the anniversary of the events of June 20-21, 2019.

The protest was carried out in compliance with the recommendations of the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Health of Georgia. The members of “Shame” warned the protesters several times that it was obligatory to use a face mask and maintain the recommended distance.

According to official data, about 240 people were injured during the dispersal of the demonstration on Rustaveli Avenue, including about 80 police officers. Among the injured were several dozen journalists. Protesters received various injuries, with a few of them losing eyesight.

One of the main demands of the protesters following the dispersal was the resignation of then Minister of Internal Affairs, Giorgi Gakharia, who ended up becoming Prime Minister of Georgia.

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that UNM wants these changes, adding that they have different strategies. According to him, even though Rurua is still not released, it is important for the future of the country to adopt these changes. However, it is still unknown if the European Georgia will take part in the second and third hearings.

H.E. Carl Hartzell, EU Ambassador to Georgia, wrote on

Twitter that he had counted 142 votes behind the constitutional deal after March 8<sup>th</sup>. “Welcome that Parliament today cleared first reading with 136 votes. Hope all sides will take responsibility to ensure its final success,” wrote Hartzell.

Negotiations on the electoral system began after Bidzina Ivanishvili promised in June 2019 that the country would switch to a fully proportional system, but in November the Georgian Dream refused to do so. This was followed by huge criticism from different parts of the society, with a number of members leaving the party.



Carl Hartzell wrote on Twitter that he hopes the process continues.

### Weather

Monday, June 22

Day Mostly Clear

High: 31°C

Night Partly Cloudy

Low: 18°C

Tuesday, June 23

Day Clear

High: 33°C

Night Clear

Low: 20°C

published by

**The Messenger**

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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All contributions should be submitted by e-mail.

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 3.0385; Euro - 3.4040; GBP - 3.7629; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.3743; Swiss Franc - 3.1944

## Minister of Economy meets with co-financing Grants Program winners



Participants of the meeting introduced to the Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development the new ideas.

BY NIKA GAMTSEMLIDZE

The Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, Natia Turnava, has met with the winners of the various grant programs of the Innovation and Technology Agency.

The meeting was also attended by the Deputy Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development, Irakli Nadareishvili, and the Head of the Innovation and Technology Agency, Avtandil Kasradze.

“Covid- 19 is certainly a big challenge for the world, but it has become a new

opportunity for our startups, innovators and creative people who have the chance to come up with the interesting ideas, and we always support those ideas,” Turnava told reporters.

Natia Turnava noted that many interesting inventions have emerged in various fields, including medical technologies and inventions aimed at improving people’s lives in isolation and offering more comfort, as well as startups aimed at mitigating the impact of various challenges, such as queuing problems, safety protocols, etc.

“It is very important that there are innovations in tourism, because the tourism industry will no longer be the same as it used to be - there are a lot of new developments and our startups are helping. There are various solutions that are very interesting not only for Georgia, but also for the global market as a whole. We have a special program and policy to encourage our startups, our ecosystem, in the future. We have already prepared a package of legislative changes and we think that these are new opportunities that we will support,” said the minister.

The meeting was held in an interactive mode. The participants of the meet-

ing introduced to the Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development the new innovative ideas, the challenges they face and their future plans.

The co-financing Grants Program aims to stimulate innovations and innovative enterprises through the development and commercialization of innovative products and services of international potential in Georgia.

The project includes co-financing grants for startups. The total budget for grant competition is €2 million. The maximum amount of the requested grant shall not exceed hundred thousand Lari.



The Co-financing Grants Program aims to stimulate innovations and innovative enterprises.

## Facilitators to the political dialogue publishes joint statement regarding electoral amendments

Facilitators to the political dialogue published a special joint statement regarding the electoral amendments in Georgia, which was discussed and adopted by the Parliament of Georgia with a first hearing on June 22. We offer you the statement unchanged.

The 8 March agreement was a historic achievement, agreed by a broad majority of political parties and Members of Parliament. As Parliament prepares to vote on Constitutional amendments that would establish a more proportional electoral system in Georgia, we again urge

all sides to fully implement the 8 March agreement.

We recognize that differences remain regarding implementation of the Joint Statement portion of the agreement. We underline that the commitments made to address actions that could be perceived as inappropriate politicization of Georgia’s judicial and electoral processes will remain crucial in the period leading to the upcoming elections, and their implementation will continue to be monitored closely.

At the same time, given the significance of the Constitutional amendments for Georgia’s democratic process, we encourage all signatories to the 8 March agreement to participate in this important vote and to ensure that the amendments are adopted.

Passage of these amendments, along with pending election reform legislation that incorporates OSCE ODIHR recommendations, will advance Georgia’s progress toward a more representative Parliament and contribute to depolarizing the political environment – achievements that we sincerely believe are in the interest of Georgia’s democracy and the Georgian people.



Parliament voted in favor of the amendments with the first hearing