

Georgia Celebrates Independence Day

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

May 26 is the Independence Day of Georgia. The country marks the day when the National Council passed the Act of Independence in 1918.

The celebration started in the morning on capital's main avenue. At the event the conscripts took the oath, officials addressed people and the event was concluded with a gala concert in the evening. The swearing-in ceremony was held in 5 regions besides Tbilisi.

This year the event was attended by the Ambassadors of EU member states and the US. For the first time in the history of the celebration of May 26, the anthem of the European Union was performed.

President of Georgia Salome Zurbishvili delivered a speech at the event dedicated to the Independence Day. She said there was a historic opportunity on the road to Europe that did not open without sacrifice. Georgia has common values with Europe and these common values are the key to a European future. According to the President, these are the 4 main principles - Fair trial; Tolerance and diversity; Christianity, which thinks of man as the center of the universe, which also refers to the woman, who stands on the agenda on the road to Europe; and the balance of power to avoid authoritarianism.

"A fair court, which dates back to many centuries in Georgia and is based on the monuments of Georgian law: it will be the customary law of antiquity, the 13th century 'book of all the mistakes of men', the 14th century King George's the Magnificent criminal law or the law of Vakhtang VI. The history of Georgian law would have adorned many European countries, and it is a bit of a shame that we cannot continue this legacy properly today," President emphasized.

Zurbishvili also spoke of the cornerstone of Georgian culture which was considered to be the defining value for Europe - tolerance and diversity. 'Even today, we



and Europe owe it to ourselves to continue this tradition.'

"The first outline of Queen Tamar is related to the division and balancing of the executive and legislative branches, in the form of a 'tent' and a 'hall', which is considered to be one of the foundations of Georgian parliamentarism," she said.

According to the President, the protection of these values is to take decisive steps on the path to Europe and return to oneself. According to the President, cognitively or intuitively, this path is supported by the whole society and this support has not slowed down but rather strengthened over the years. The president called on political groups to unite on the path to European integration.

"For the first time, a real chance has arisen. Neither the civil society, nor the spirits of our ancestors, nor future gene-

rations will forgive us for missing this chance.

Today, May 26, my request and wish to you, to the society and to the political elite is said in two words: Power is in unity! When if not today, we must realize that we have no other way! A united nation has a great future, a return to Europe and us! Once again, I would like to appeal to all of you that national consent in this direction should not remain an empty word and should reflect our statehood and historical consciousness. This chance exists today!"

Zurbishvili also emphasized that the challenges in the occupied territories are not slowing down and, on the contrary, in this tense environment, there is an attempt to convince the population that Georgia can 'use the time' and try to return the territories by force, which is another Russian disinformation.

"Once again, I appeal to you, our citizens in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali, to confirm that Georgia will never do anything against you through war and force. We offer to join the united European future. Offer you freedom and respect for and protection of your language, identity, history, and culture. Offer new consent.

At this time another provocation by Russia, threatening a referendum and annexation, will not achieve the result of stirring up a confrontation between us and deviating from peaceful politics. Russia must not make another fatal mistake and crime, and must not once again try to disregard all the norms and principles of international law. It will not go unanswered and will provoke appropriate reactions from the international community."

President also spoke about the Russian war in Ukraine. According to her, Georgia knows the price of such devotion to the country and Georgia owes its solidarity - Georgia is well aware that the accelerated move to Europe is the merit of Ukraine.

"I want to pay tribute to the fallen Ukrainian and Georgian heroes because they all fought for independence and freedom. We know and will not forget that Ukraine today defends not only its own freedom, sovereignty, and independence but also the freedom of us and other European countries. It protects a united, strong, free, European future."

The First Republic of Georgia, independent of Russia, ceased to exist in February 1921 as a result of Soviet Russian military aggression and occupation. Georgia regained its independence on April 9, 1991. According to the press services of public agencies, the President of the United States of America Joseph Biden, the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine Ruslan Stefanchuk, the Foreign Ministers of Poland, Greece, Latvia, Bulgaria and Iran, and officials from many countries have congratulated Georgian leaders and people on Independence Day.



EXCHANGE RATES: US DOLLAR - 2.8598 | EURO - 3.0488 | GBP - 3.5725 | 100 RUSSIAN RUBLE - 4.0012 | SWISS FRANC - 2.9669 |

Union Holds Protest as Georgian National Museum Sacks Employees

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

The Science, Education and Culture Workers' Union announced on May 24 that the Simon Janashia Museum of Georgia 'unlawfully' sacked 40 "high-level professionals" over the past month amid an ongoing reorganization. The union was formed earlier this month, following a series of sackings from cultural bodies over the recent months since the appointment of Culture Minister Tea Tsulukiani in March 2021.

According to the union's statement, among the dismissed employees are Nikoloz Tsikaridze, Chairman of the Union of Science, Education and Culture Workers of Georgia, as well as the other members of the Union. As the statement reports, the list of sacked employees includes scientists who have participated in projects that have led to Georgia 'becoming globally known as the homeland of the first Europeans and the ancient civilization of wine'.

As the statement reads, the dismissals were 'unlawful' and the process of reorganization lacked transparency. The union demands that the museum management reconsiders the decisions and vows to "fight until the end for protecting employee rights".

In an interview with Publika on May 24, the chairman of the union noted that the dismissals were a form of punishment for the employees who "dared" to establish the union and speak up about existing problems in the museum system.



► The Science, Education and Culture Workers' Union vows to "fight to the end for protecting employee rights".

"This is a persecution of a different opinion... Before Tea Tsulukiani was appointed Culture Minister, there was no political pressure on us... there was no conflict in the museum.

Whatever political views a person might have, you should not terminate their project and because they do not agree

with you, you should not punish them," Tsikaridze said. The employees dismissed from the National Museum held a protest in Tbilisi on Wednesday, where Tsikaridze told Mautskubeli news outlet that their access to museum funds had been "restricted" and their projects "suspended" before the sackings. Tsikaridze stressed that they

have 'exhausted all internal resources' trying to resolve the matter as they had sent letters to newly appointed authorities of the network and offered talks with them, however, as Tsikaridze noted, the authorities 'did not wish to communicate'.

Maia Pataridze, a Senior Curator at the GNM told Mautskubeli that the document for her dismissal did not include specific reasoning, only mentioning the decision on the sacking had been made by the commission for establishing the competence of employees. Pataridze assessed the meeting with the commission as a 'questioning'. According to her, the commission had not spoken to her about her competence and instead focused on her critical social media messages about Tsulukiani's culture policy.

Among the dismissed employees is Iulon Gagoshidze, a historian and archeologist who has worked at the Museum for about 60 years. He was also the State Minister for Diaspora Issues during the previous, United National Movement administration in 2008-2009.

Ekaterine Kiknadze, a former manager at the Museum of Fine Arts said in her social media comments that she and her colleagues had been removed on political grounds. According to her, Nika Akhalbadashvili, a former lawyer of the Ministry of Justice formerly headed by Tsulukiani, recently appointed to the position of the Fine Arts Museum Director, had confronted her colleagues with their social media posts that showed criticism of the Minister and Akhalbadashvili himself.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Resolving the Food Crisis in Exchange for Lifting Sanctions - Putin Promises

BY MESSENGER STAFF

Russia is ready to contribute to alleviating the international food crisis if Western sanctions are lifted. This was stated by Russian President Vladimir Putin during a telephone conversation with Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi.

"Vladimir Putin has stressed that Russia is ready to make a significant contribution to overcoming the food crisis by exporting grain and fertilizers if politically motivated restrictions from the West are lifted," the

Kremlin said in a statement. Ukraine calls Russia's position 'blackmail'. British Foreign Secretary Liz Trass said Putin was "asking the world for ransom" as a tool for the food crisis created by the war with Ukraine.

Russia's blockade of Ukrainian ports halts grain shipments. The main exporters are Russia and Ukraine.

For its part, the Russian Defense Ministry said that civilian ships could safely use the Sea of Azov port in Mariupol. Russia claims that the threat of a mine explosion near the port has been eliminated.



► The museum employees believe that the decision of their removal was made on political grounds.

FRIDAY		MAY 27	
Day		Sunny	High: 26°C
Night		Clear	Low: 13°C
SATURDAY		MAY 28	
Day		Sunny	High: 27°C
Night		Clear	Low: 15°C

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43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi, 0108, Georgia

Founded by Prof.

Zaza Gachechiladze

Tamar Gachechiladze
Publisher

Phone: +995 99 56 56 21; +995 77 76 00 00
E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge
http://www.messenger.com.ge/

Nino Metreveli
Commercial Director

Mariam Mchedlidze
Editor-in-Chief

Nino Kavelashvili
Design and Layout

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