

Council of Europe Commissioner Calls on Georgian Officials to Uphold Human Rights Obligations and Protect LGBTI Rights



cians, and can have a strong negative impact on human rights, the safety, and well-being of LGBTI people, as well as their rights defenders. It also represents LGBTI-phobic political manipulation in the run-up to the elections, which I have so far condemned, and which has no place in a democratic society based on the rule of law and respect for the human rights of all," Mijatovic stated.

Dunja Mijatovic called on Georgian officials to uphold their human rights obligations as a member state of the Council of Europe. She emphasized the importance of protecting the rights of LGBTI individuals and creating a supportive environment for civil society and human rights defenders. Mijatovic also urged all politicians in Georgia to denounce the use of LGBTI-phobic or any other discriminatory language during the election campaign.

"Accordingly, I call on Georgian officials to fully respect their human rights obligations as a member state of the Council of Europe, including protecting the rights of LGBTI people and providing an environment for the activities of civil society and human rights defenders. I call on all politicians in Georgia to strongly condemn the use of LGBTI-phobia or any other discriminatory rhetoric in the election campaign," Mijatovic said.

By Liza Mchedlidze

Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Dunja Mijatovic, criticized the Georgian Dream for engaging in political manipulations and harassing LGBTI people and human rights defenders in a democratic society, stating that

there is no place for such actions.

Mijatovic expressed concern about the political discourse in Georgia, particularly regarding the Georgian Dream party's initiative to amend the constitution and introduce a new constitutional law on "family values and minors." She highlighted that this initiative exposes en-

trenched harmful stereotypes and prejudices against LGBTI people in Georgian society, which could negatively impact their human rights, safety, and well-being, as well as the rights defenders.

"I am concerned about the political discourse in Georgia, as shown by the statement made

by the Georgian Dream party regarding their initiative to amend the constitution and adopt a new constitutional law on 'family values and minors'. It exposes entrenched harmful stereotypes and prejudices against LGBTI people that still dominate segments of Georgian society, including some politi-

By Liza Mchedlidze

Pawel Herczyński, the European Union Ambassador to Georgia, emphasized the necessity of checking the integrity of judges in Georgia, referencing the European Commission's initial enlargement report for the country. Herczyński stressed the importance of involving international experts in this process to ensure its credibility. The EU Ambassador further proposed that discussing the procedure and its implementation with Georgian counterparts is vital for transparency and effectiveness.

"A fully independent, fully professional judicial system is one of the foundations of every democracy. That is why, for all enlargement countries and indeed for our own member states, the European Commission puts judicial reform as one of the priorities. This is also one of the nine steps. If we go back to the first enlargement report that the European Commission developed for Georgia last year, which was published in October of last year, we will see the necessity to check the quality of the judges' integrity, and this should be done with the participation of international ex-

perts," Herczyński stated.

The EU Ambassador emphasized the importance of discussing the procedure for checking judges' integrity with Georgian colleagues. Herczyński offered assistance and shared the European Commission's experience in working with other countries on the path to enlargement. Ultimately, as Herczyński highlighted, the goal is to establish a fully independent and professional judicial system in Georgia to strengthen democracy in the country.

"How should we do this, what the procedure should be, we need to discuss this with our Georgian colleagues. We are ready to help you and share with you the experience that we, the European Commission, have already acquired in the process of working with other countries that are on the way to enlargement. Still, the goal is to have a fully independent, fully professional judicial system in Georgia in order to have a strong democracy in the country," Herczyński said.

EU Ambassador Advocates Checking Judges' Integrity in Georgia for Strengthening Democracy



The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Opposition MP Alleges Political Revenge in Access Restrictions to Mikheil Saakashvili



During a briefing, opposition MP Tamar Kordzaia stated that the prohibition of MPs from visiting Mikheil Saakashvili and the delay in scheduling a hearing on their complaint for months indicate that both Saakashvili and the opposition

are being targeted as victims of political revenge.

She alleged that all bodies involved, including the security service, the Ministry of Justice, the parliament, and the court, are complicit in preventing members of parliament from enter-

ing and visiting ex-president Saakashvili.

Kordzaia stated that for over a year, the Chairman of Parliament has prohibited members of Parliament from visiting Mikheil Saakashvili. She mentioned filing a complaint on April

14, 2023, believing it her duty to protect parliamentary authority through legal means. However, as of now, a court hearing on this matter has not been scheduled.

“The court, which is currently holding a conference of judges regarding their fairness and impartiality, has not held this session for over a year. I believe this chain of events clearly shows that Mikheil Saakashvili and the opposition are victims of political revenge, as all bodies—the security service, the Ministry of Justice, the Parliament, and the court—are involved in preventing me, as a member of parliament, from entering and visiting Mikheil Saakashvili. We have the constitutional right to do so, according to legislation, and these rights are being unjustifiably restricted by systematic disorder, deliberate, and planned illegality.” Kordzaia stated.

Central Election Commission Hosts Delegation from Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Election Administration of Georgia is hosting a delega-

tion from Bosnia and Herzegovina. This delegation, as confirmed by the Central Election Commission (CEC), consists



of representatives from the election administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Parliamentary Assembly, and other agencies.

“Heads and representatives of the structural units of the Central Election Commission will share information with the members of the delegation about legislative innovations, the use of electronic technologies in elec-

tions, and a large-scale campaign to inform voters. On the second day of the visit, they will discuss the activities of the elec-

tion systems, reform and training center, the State Services Development Agency, and the Personal Data Protection Service. This interaction will facilitate acquaintance among them.

The study visit of the delegation from Bosnia and Herzegovina to Georgia is being carried out under the auspices of the OSCE,” the information reads.

Machakheli Valley Embraces Renewable Energy

UNDP and Japan Introduce Affordable Green Solutions, Impacting 1,200 Lives

BATUMI. 27 March 2024 – Machakheli Valley is undergoing a transformative shift towards renewable energy with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of Japan. Over the past year, seventy-five solar panels and 200 solar water heaters have been installed in the villages, benefiting 1,200 residents and significantly reducing reliance on fuelwood for energy needs.

These initiatives promise tangible benefits for both the local communities and the environment. By transitioning to renewable energy, Machakheli Valley is poised to save up to 900 m3 of fuelwood annually, preserving 300 trees and mitigating 7 tons of CO2 emissions per year.

During a visit to Machakheli Valley on 26 March, Anna Chernyshova, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative in Geor-



gia, alongside Zaza Shavadze, Minister of Agriculture of the Ajara Autonomous Republic, and Zaza Diasamidze, Mayor of Khelvachauri Municipality, explored various villages within the Machakhela National Park support zone. Engaging directly with residents, they witnessed first-hand the impact of renewable

energy solutions on local communities.

“Machakheli Valley is a jewel of Georgia, boasting unique Colchic Forests and breathtaking natural beauty. Yet, it is also a delicate ecosystem that demands our protection. Our collaboration with the Japanese Government aims to safeguard

this natural treasure while providing sustainable energy solutions to local communities,” stated Anna Chernyshova.

The UNDP’s support in Machakheli Valley draws on a Japan-funded initiative focused on bolstering forest protection measures and promoting renewable energy. This 12-month,

US\$545,000 project, implemented in partnership with Georgia’s Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, the Ministry of Agriculture of the Ajara Autonomous Republic, and the administration of Khelvachauri Municipality, underscores a steadfast commitment to environmental

sustainability.

By engaging with central, regional, and municipal authorities, UNDP and Japan are fostering community ownership and participation in the sustainable management of forest resources. Particularly, efforts are directed towards empowering women and youth to play an active role in environmental conservation.

Moreover, this project aligns with Georgia’s commitment to the Paris Agreement, aiming to increase forest carbon-capturing capacity by 10 percent and reduce national greenhouse gas emissions by 30-35 percent by 2030, in comparison to 2015 and 1990 levels respectively.

Background Information:

The UNDP’s and Japan’s support for sustainable forest management in Georgia echoes the UNDP’s Climate Promise initiative assisting 120 countries and territories worldwide in achieving their climate objectives. Georgia stands as one of 23 countries where Climate Promise is funded by Japan, the largest supporter of this pioneering effort.

Weather

Thursday, March 28

Day Clear High: 18°C

Night Clear Low: 4°C

Friday, March 29

Day Clear High: 18°C

Night Mostly Cloudy Low: 9°C

published by

The Messenger

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All contributions should be submitted by e-mail.

The Messenger Georgia’s English language daily is an independent newspaper, and,

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On the occasion of 203rd Anniversary of the Independence Day of the Hellenic Republic, the Ambassador of the Hellenic Republic in Georgia H.E. Maria Theodorou held a reception on March 25.









