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## #stayhome Stay home, Stay safe #staysafe

### Okruashvili was sentenced to 5 years in prison in June 20-21 case



Irakli Okruashvili, leader of the political movement Victorious Georgia and former Minister of Defense under the gov't of United National movement has been arrested on July 25<sup>th</sup> in connection with the events of June 20<sup>th</sup>. Photo: 1tv.ge

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

On April 13<sup>th</sup>, Tbilisi city Court sentenced Irakli Okruashvili, the leader of the opposition party Victorious Georgia, to 5 years in prison.

The investigation accuses Okruashvili of crimes under Article 225, Parts 1 and 2 of the Criminal Code of Georgia on June 20-21 events, which includes organising, leading or participating in mass violence. The court acquitted Okruashvili of leading group violence, but found him guilty of participating in group violence.

According to Vazha Todua, the prosecutor in the case of convict Okruashvili, oppositioner was leading a group of 30 people on the night of June 20-21. He said that after the announcement of the verdict, the testimonies of the mentioned witnesses and the materials of the case are confirmed.

Todua claims that the prosecution's position depended on the evidence examined in court, 'thus proving his participation and his leadership.' He also emphasizes that numerous witnesses, including police officers confirmed that Okruashvili was leading a group of about 30 people, urging them to break the police cordon and enter the building of Parliament; there are numerous videos provided, where Okruashvili says 'let's go'

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The March 8<sup>th</sup> agreement between the government and the opposition, which the US Embassy urges to uphold, along with a change in the electoral system, calls for an end to political persecution and the release of political prisoners.



# Waiting for the peak

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

The scale of the epidemic is expected to enter its peak period in the first half of May; the peak will define the main events of the country's socio-economic situation. The government is expecting a sharp increase in the number of patients and has already announced that mildly sick patients will be treated at home. Meanwhile, the Georgian government appealed to NATO's Euro-Atlantic Response Coordination Center (EADRCC) for help and called for equipment to fight the epidemic. On average, Georgia can handle up to 10,000 patients, but since there are about 15,000 beds in the country's hospitals, more patients can be treated. The scale of the epidemic is far from these marginal capabilities of the country's medical sector, and doctors hope the country will survive such a large-scale increase.

On April 8<sup>th</sup>, the Minister of Health Ekaterine Tikaradze explained the capabilities of the Georgian healthcare system - up to 700 respiratory devices, with

the possibility to manage up to 3,500 moderate and severely infected patients, as well as quarantine zones for more than 5,000 patients.

One of the main concerns of the government today is the upcoming Orthodox Easter. In previous years, the government attended the Easter service with almost the entire staff, but now, the ministers are sending messages that they are not going to attend the liturgy at home and that they will pray at home. However, they do not directly ask the parishioners to do the same and do not call on the church to close the temples. According to the established tradition, the gathering of large numbers of people in churches and cemeteries is considered a serious threat in terms of the spread of the virus.

So far, the epidemic has spread and the government is trying to limit the scale and speed of its spread by imposing new restrictions. Agrarian markets were closed in the cities, leaving many more unemployed. Generally, self-employed people who depended on their daily income, found themselves in the most dif-

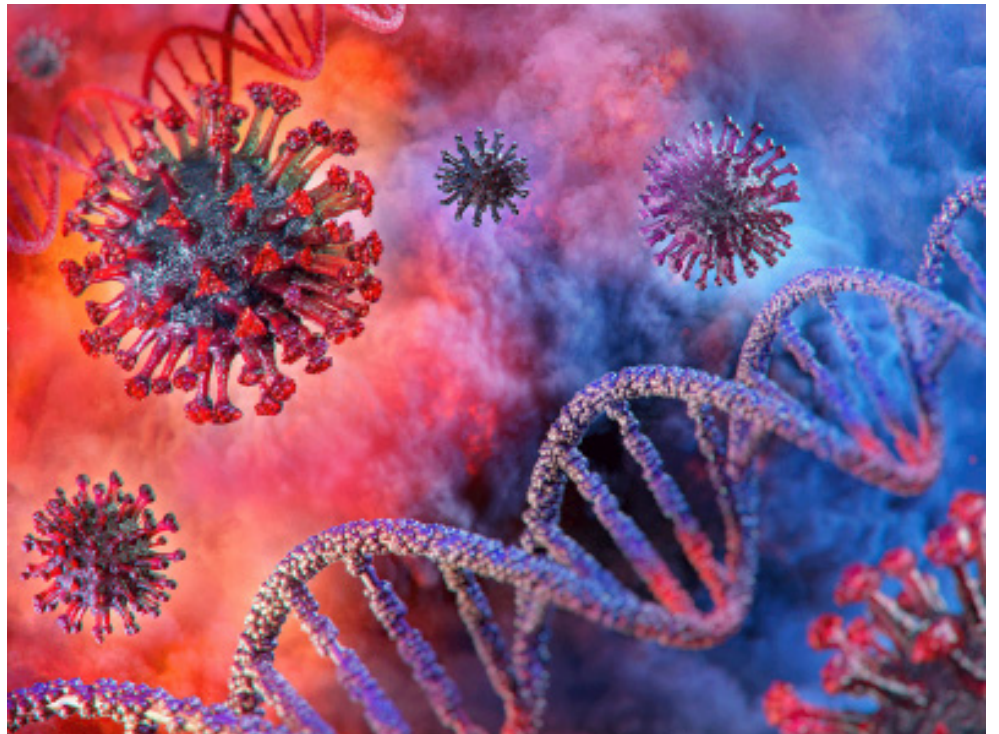
icult situation. The service sector has stopped, non-food products have been traded, and now agrarian markets have been closed. Social problems are on the rise, and after a while, they become inevitable.

The opposition's solidarity with the government in overcoming economic problems is noteworthy. On April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 22 opposition parties issued a joint statement, urging foreign governments and international organisations to provide financial assistance to the Georgian government to overcome the economic problems caused by the epidemic.

The April 8<sup>th</sup> statement from the authorities read that the state of emergency in the country could

continue after April 21<sup>st</sup> and that everything would depend on the situation in the country at the time of the outbreak. As the peak of the epidemic is anticipated in late April and the first half of May, it is expected that the state of emergency will be extended. But here the issue of constitutional changes between the government and the opposition

difficult situation and the news programs are full of video footage of it. Under such conditions, former President Mikheil Saakashvili says he can carry out several flights and return up to a thousand people for free. Authorities have denied the allegations in a statement issued Friday stating "similar, baseless allegations concerning Iran's



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during the parliament attack. However, the court considered the evidence insufficient.

According to the prosecutor, after handing over the reasoned verdict, the Prosecutor's Office will appeal the court decision.

Okruashvili's lawyer, Mamuka Chabashvili, also plans to appeal the City Court's decision to the higher level of judiciary, since the defense doesn't share it.

As Mamuka Chabashvili stated after the trial, the court acquitted Irakli Okruashvili in the part of the group violence leadership, however, he found him guilty of participating in the group violence.

Chabashvili calls the decision political, reiterating that the

accusation consisted of two parts and Okruashvili was found guilty of participating in group violence, whilst there were hundreds of people involved and Okruashvili was sentenced to 5 years in prison. He also repeated policemen's words that there was a mass of people pushing the cordon, including Okruashvili, and emphasized that no evidence or witnesses confirm that Okruashvili physically touched anyone, or some form of violence was caused by his shouting.

"Dozens of people were brought to court every day during the rallies and were either fined or sentenced to several days of administrative detention, because of analogous jostles," Chabashvili said, adding that, naturally, they plan to appeal, but they don't have high expectations, because when the politics is ahead of Law, other circumstances should probably solve the issue.

According to Davit Matikashvili, a member of the

parliamentary majority, Okruashvili's attempt to invade the parliament is well-known to the public and the court just confirmed it. As Matikashvili stated, today, the government does not interfere in the court case.

On the other hand, Grigol Vashadze, the Chairman of the United National Movement, calls the court's decision on Irakli Okruashvili's case political. As he stated, there is no evidence of Irakli Okruashvili's guilt in the case.

"Nothing works in the country except the Chinchaladze-Murusidze court. It is an absolutely political, finger-pointing affair. There is no evidence, no video, no photo, no witness. Such shameful processes must end in Georgia," he announced, adding that if they don't find a solution, they will get a proper answer after pandemic ends.

The US Embassy in Georgia also commented on the issue, saying that the case of Okruashvili overshadows the impartiality of the proceedings.

The statement, released on April 14<sup>th</sup>, reads that the timing and circumstances of Okruashvili's arrest raised concerns about political interference and the selective use of justice.

"The case casts a shadow over the impartial application of justice - a concern the March 8<sup>th</sup> Joint Statement was intended to

arises as a result of a great struggle. Change in the electoral system must take effect before the 2020 parliamentary elections. However, in case of prolonging the state of emergency, there is no time left. The opposition has not yet commented on the matter, and the government has said it will accept constitutional changes.

There is another demand by the United Opposition to release the detained political leaders after the events of June 20<sup>th</sup>. The opposition said an agreement had been reached. In such a situation, on April 8<sup>th</sup>, it was reported that the trial of Irakli Okruashvili, arrested in connection with the June 20<sup>th</sup>, would be expedited. He has been sent to prison for five years for a 15 year-old case. The opposition says the government is using a panic caused by the Coronavirus epidemic to retaliate against political opponents.

The issue of returning Georgian citizens living abroad is still acute. Some of them are in a very

intelligence have been made more than once. In response, Saakashvili said that it would be better for the 'head of the bunker', Bidzina Ivanishvili, to transfer the money, who neither appeared nor commented after the outbreak.

The subject of the discussion was the report published by the Public Defender Nino Lomjaria on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019, on the protection of human rights. The events of June 20-21 were again in the spotlight of the media and the opposition. According to the report, it is not clear who issued the order to use the rubber bullets, which physically harmed many protesters. The opposition thinks that Bidzina Ivanishvili's confidant could have issued such an order. Gakharia, the Prime Minister, said he was responsible for everything that happened then and that the government had a legitimate right to use force.

(Translated by Mariam Mchedlidze)

dispel," says the release, urging all signatories to uphold the letter and spirit of the March 8 agreement.

Okruashvili has also been charged for another case. The investigation accuses him of abusing the authority of Amiran (Buta) Robakidze and his entourage on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2004. At

that time, Okruashvili was the Minister of Internal Affairs of Georgia. Former Prosecutor General Zurab Adeishvili has been charged together with Okruashvili in the case. The next court hearing of the case of Okruashvili, accused in the case of Robakidze, will be held on April 15<sup>th</sup> in the City Court.

## Weather

Wednesday, April 15

Day Partly Cloudy  
High: 22°C

Night Partly Cloudy  
Low: 6°C

Thursday, April 16

Day Partly Cloudy  
High: 17°C

Night Partly Cloudy  
Low: 6°C

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By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

## Forecasts for Georgian economy

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused radical changes all over the world. The economies are expected to shrink and field experts' prognoses are not hopeful. Given the expectations of the mass crisis, it's interesting what predictions for Georgian economy promise.

The World Bank regional director, Sebastian Molineus, has recently released the Spring 2020 Economic Update for the Europe and Central Asia region video address, where he talks about the impacts of the crisis on Georgian economy. Firstly, he praised the government's efforts to battle the virus, yet noted that significant changes are expected for the economy in Georgia. Travel ban will affect tourism, while internal restraint mechanisms will reduce local demand, resulting in GDP fall.

According to the World Bank forecast, in 2020 GDP is expected to fall between -0.2% and 2% and the process of economic recovery will only begin by 2021. Molineus pointed out the importance of fiscally reasonable measures taken by the government and creation of capital buffers that allow for an active response to the crisis.

As for the 2020 Georgian fiscal deficit (a shortfall in a government's income compared with its spending) the forecast is for it to be around 5.2% of the gross domestic product. In addition, the significance of quick and firm measures to protect affected families and companies was underlined. The statement was also hopeful for the economic recovery plan, currently under development. Molineus said the World Bank strongly supports Georgia during the current pandemic as it always has since the first days of independence, reiterating the official motto of Georgia - 'Power is in Unity.'



The World Bank projects economic growth in the Europe and Central Asia region to fall into a recession in 2020 decreasing to between -4.4 and -2.8% before rebounding in 2021. Photo:DDNews

In cooperation with the government, the World Bank has identified 3 different intervention projects to help the Georgian population: Supporting the healthcare system and promoting it through targeted social assistance, which has been most affected by the crisis; Ensuring a broad social protection system that will be able to support the population of Georgia in the coming months and; Actively supporting economic recovery, through assisting the private sector, which has been hit hard by the crisis.

The World Bank is allocating about \$160 billion to support developing countries amid the Coronavirus pandemic over the next 15 months.

Galt & Taggart, investment banking and investment management services company has released its forecast in March, saying that Georgian economic growth may drop to between -6% to 2.1% this year due to the new coronavirus crisis, depending how the crisis plays out.

Research focused on 3 possible scenarios (optimistic, mild and pessimistic), according to which

Georgian economic growth could differ based on the length of the crisis.

In the event the economic downturn extends from March to May and recovery begins in June, G&T predicts 2.1% growth, and gives the likelihood of this happening a 10% probability.

Should there be recovery in June-September and downturn yet again from October, G&T predicts that growth will equal -2.7%, with a probability of 50%.

Should the economic downturn continue past March, G&T says, with 40% probability, that growth will come out to -6% for the year.

Due to the crisis it expects foreign investments to decrease from \$100 million to \$400 million, while it discusses possible decline in remittances from \$200 million to \$300 million. Georgian exports may decrease from \$200 million to \$1 billion this year, while Georgian tourism could decrease from \$1.2 billion to \$2.8 billion.

Hotels, restaurants, shopping centers, entertainment and transport will likely have al-

ready seen an immediate negative effect, the financial sector, construction, real estate, trade, manufacturing and education will have a delayed negative effect, while healthcare, pharmacy, e-commerce, agriculture, communications and local tourism may experience positive trends.

According to the preliminary figures released by the National Statistics Office, Geostat, on April 13<sup>th</sup>, exports from Georgia decreased by 5.9% year-on-year to \$778.2 million, and imports were down by 1.4% y/y to \$2 billion in January-March, with the trade gap standing at \$1.2 billion.

As for the total figures for the first quarter, in January-March 2020, Georgia's foreign trade turnover decreased by 2.7%, compared to the same period last year, reaching \$2.8 billion.

A detailed report on Geostat will be published on April 21, 2020, and it will be known which reduction of exports / re-exports has led to a complete reduction in exports.

International rating agency Fitch forecasts a recession and a 3.2% economic decline in Geor-

gia in 2020. According to Fitch, the economic shock caused by COVID-19 and the fall in oil prices has made Georgia's economy more vulnerable, which has worsened the credit rating of the largest banks (TBC, Bank of Georgia, Liberty Bank) and replaced it with 'negative' instead of 'stable.'

Prior to the change in credit rating, TBC Bank's rating was 'BB Minus,' and the rating was 'stable,' with an updated estimate that it is still "BB Minus", and the rating expectation is 'negative,' Liberty Bank's rating was 'B +' and its rating was 'stable,' but now the bank's credit rating is 'negative.' The Bank of Georgia had a similar assessment, with the updated rating of BB Minus and the credit rating expectation being 'negative.'

Terrabank's rating remained 'plus,' but in his case, the credit rating was changed and 'stable' was replaced by 'negative.' A similar change has taken place with Basisbank. The expectations of ProCredit Bank rating remained unchanged and it is still 'BB +' stable.

According to Fitch's forecast, a 3.2% economic decline is expected in Georgia.

"We expect slower economic activity (especially in the tourism sector), as well as a depreciation of the lari (the lari depreciated by 16% against the US dollar in March and 55% of bank loans are denominated in foreign currency), as well as declining real household incomes" - says the international rating agency.

It's interesting that Standard and Poor's, a financial services company, has pushed Georgia's economic outlook from positive to stable. Standard and Poor's is expecting a recession in Georgia. However, according to his own forecast, the economy in Georgia will be restored in 2021-2022.

At the same time, S&P notes that the \$2 billion economic aid package presented by the Georgian government will only partially alleviate the stress on the economy and households.

Given the developments mentioned above, chairman of the parliament's finance and budget committee, Irakli Kovzanadze speaks of the first quarter of the 2020 state budget being completed, yet warns of the problems with the budget execution in the second quarter.

The revenue part of the budget for the first quarter of 2020 increased by GEL 271 million. Kovzanadze said that the plan to exceed the tax revenue alone amounted to GEL 160 million, but due to the shock caused by COVID-19, there has been a significant decrease in tax revenues since April. As for the expenses, GEL 235 million was spent from the state budget, as the state of emergency allows the government to cover these expenses.

Kovzanadze also noted, that both in terms of tax revenues and total revenues, the budget deficit will increase, which in the 2020 state budget is planned to be 2.5% of GDP.



Considering the situation created due to the Coronavirus, the government will present an updated version of the state budget to the parliament in May.



# Jacob Marr - Country of Liquid Sun



death has taken this useful man away from us. With great respect, he was buried in the grave of his first wife, Fagunda..." (Ekvtime Takaishvili, Correspondence)

"Ekvtime asked me to tell in details everything I knew about Jacob. And I did," Niko Marr wrote. Based upon his notes, we learned that Jacob Patrick Montegue Marr was the son of Jacob. He was also referred to as Yakov Montel. "My father was an old Scotsman and mother was a young Gurian woman..." we read in Niko Marr's autobiography.

The birth of a child to a Scotsman who was about 85 years and a young Gurian woman is one of the legends that is related to Jacob Marr's name and is traced through Niko Marr's autobiography. The Marr name has been mentioned in the history of Scotland as a count, dating to 1012, and a baron, from the thirteenth

In 1822, an English traveler Mr. Marr had arrived in our Georgia during the period of the last ruler of Gurialand as he liked Guria very much he wanted and decided to stay here forever. His profession was agronomy and his work would bear fruit on the rich soil of Guria and be beneficial for us. The ruler, Mamia upon seeing the Englishman's useful advice on the improvement of the economy, suggested several households for him with the relevant estate but Marr, as an honest man with pure conscience, calmly refused it and answered him thus "My conscience and reasonable mind don't allow hawing men like me as slaves. I am very concerned and recall it with regret that my compatriots Englishmen, shed blood for turning people into slaves in America..." (Ekvtime Takaishvili, Correspondence)

"...Marr was highly respected throughout Guria and everybody knew him as an honest and useful man. The Kutaisi farm and boulevard were under his care. Based upon his activities, a beautiful garden which, in the course of time, began to look very much like a field, was restored by his efforts. He tried to cultivate plants from other countries which would be useful for us and he spent a lot of time looking for the right soil. We Gurians, cannot forget this man who showed us many examples from the world of agronomy that could be applied in our challenging and sophisticated life and who raised our skills to monitor farming economy. He spent his last old years in Ozurgeti with the Prince Grigol Gurieli. At the age of 95 years,



century. Jacob, Niko Marr's father, had none of those titles but still he was referred to as a descendant of a noble family. He was the youngest son in the family and, according to the majoristic system that was observed in England, a father's

property went to his oldest son or oldest man the family. Jacob's father kept his oldest son in the family and gave an amount equal to his share to his younger son, David. Jacob began to travel. Whilst in Spain, he married a local woman, Fagunda (Fagunda) Antonio. He then learned that foreign traders had great privileges as concerned Russia and the development of its trade. For this reason, he went to Odessa where they had two children, a son, Ivane, and a daughter, Mariam, who was married in Tbilisi and became known as Madam Fabre, directing a girl's boarding school and teaching foreign languages. In 1871, Madam Fabre moved from Tbilisi to Paris and did not return to Georgia.

Whilst in Odessa, Jacob Marr discovered that Russian and foreign citizens who began a wholesale trade business in Georgia would be granted special privileges based upon the Tsar's Decree of 8 October 12821, as a means of developing trade and industry in Georgia and be exempted from taxes for a period of ten years with their security also being ensured by military protection.

Jacob and his family moved to Tbilisi and began their activi-

ties but the police were informed that Jacob Patrick Montegue Marr, the same as Jacob Montel Marr, was selling imported fabrics and as well as seeds. The Head of the Caucasian Staff of Russian Army, Veliaminov, called Marr and prohibited his retail trade whilst warning him that he only had the right to provide wholesale of goods to local traders. Marr did not like the warning and so he moved his family to Guria which was not part of Georgia at that time. The Ruler of Guria, Mamia Gurieli V (1810-1826), gave shelter to Marr for which the grateful English guest of Guria built a beautiful tropical garden for his host which included olive, magnolia, rubber and other exotic trees as well as the Odessa grape variety.

As concerns the Odessa grape, Ekvtime Takaishvili said: "This [grape] is Izabella. Marr himself cultivated it in Odessa and as it was brought to our country from there, it was called 'Odessa'..."

In Guria, Marr tried to exchange fabrics to local grapes and make wine according to European methods and send it abroad. He cultivated tea plants in Mamia Gurieli's garden and at the estate of Prince Mikheil Eristavi in Gora-Berezhouli near Chokhatauri. "The first successful attempt at the cultivation of

tea in Guria belongs to my father," wrote Niko Marr. Marr reconstructed the house with the help of the government and left his wife Fagunda there whilst he went to Kutaisi and worked as the head of a farm in



Choma. The year was 1844 and Vorontsov had been appointed as the Tsar's Governor in Caucasia. Marr knew him from Britain and with Vorontsov's support, he initiated historical activities related to the cultivation, acclimatisation and expanding of sub-tropical crops in West Georgia in which he invested a great deal of time and energy.

On 15 May 1863, Marr, as a participant of the exhibition of 1862, was awarded a bronze medal for his contribution and merits in the development of agriculture in Caucasia alongside a special diploma signed by the Tsar's governor.

Ivane and his sons decided to distribute the inheritance in the village without his father's consent. The elder Marr, offended by the action, insisted to be mar-

ried again. The noble Sharashidze family, living closely, brought up an orphaned peasant girl of Maghularia ori-

gin, Aghati, who was about 24-25 years old at that time and who was divorced but childless. The family was interested in finding subsistence for the young woman and married her off-as if she were a member of the noble Sharashidzes family-to Jacob Marr. As Ekvtime Takaishvili wrote, Marr did not marry

Aghati at once. "First he took her as a servant to look after him, and then documented her as a wife," he explained.

In his application of 15 April 1871 in Ozurgeti we read: I, Jacob Marr, am from a noble English family... I work in agriculture in Caucasia. I have a son of seven years, Nikoloz, and I am no longer able to bring him up. Please enroll him in the school at government's expense... The Tsar's governor considered his services to Georgia and endorsed the application to enroll the child in the Kutaisi Boarding School.

After this, Marr lived for only another three years. His merits were properly appreciated and he was buried with great respect. As indicated in Niko Marr's autobiography, however, he and his

mother were left without anyone to look after them and were soon thereafter evicted from their home by one of their relatives.



Нико Марр с матерью | Niko Marr with his mother



Нико Марр | N. Marr

ried again. The noble Sharashidze family, living closely, brought up an orphaned peasant girl of Maghularia ori-

mother were left without anyone to look after them and were soon thereafter evicted from their home by one of their relatives.