

OPINION & ANALYSIS

Georgia requests US help in high-profile murder case involving Giorgi Rurua



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David Katsarava to be interrogated on the case of stirring up ethnical strife



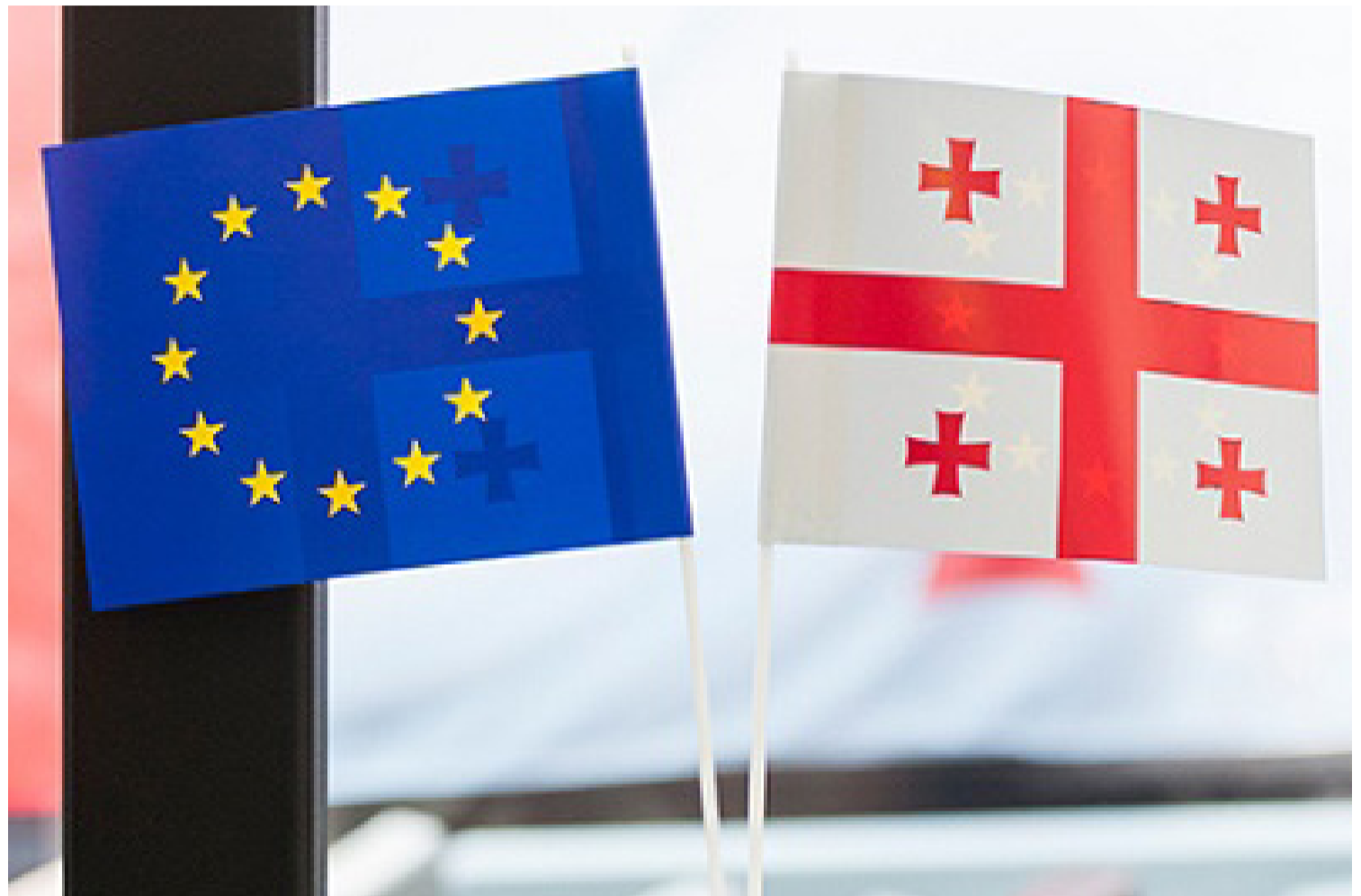
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ECONOMICS

Dollar is returning to ₾3

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EU launches three new projects to support vulnerable groups affected by the COVID-19



► Three new projects are part of the first assistance package of the EU for Georgia in terms of overcoming the crisis caused by the Pandemic.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

The EU assists Georgia to commence three new projects, which intends to overcome the problems caused by COVID-19 pandemic in internally displaced and disabled people, and the victims of domestic violence. The project will be implemented by EU's partner local public organisations: Women's Information Center, Coalition For Independent Living and The IDP Women Association Consent.

As the EU ambassador to Georgia, Carl Hartzell said, the EU has been by Georgia's side since day one of the recent crisis and will continue to do so.

"The well-being of persons especially vulnerable to the pandemic will remain a particular focus area as we develop our Covid-19 related assistance to Georgia. We have mobilised resources as quickly as possible, and today I am happy to announce three important new projects supporting victims of domestic violence, internally displaced persons, and persons with disabilities. The projects will be implemented country wide by experienced and dedicated civil society organisations with whom we look forward to working closely in the coming months." Noted Hartzell.

The first project, conducted by Women's Information Center aims to enhance support to help the victims of domestic violence. Mass isolation and curfew, which took place due to the virus outbreak, generally increases the risk of domestic violence. The project will assist women legally and psychologically via the internet or telephone, will inform them about the services available for the victims of domes-



► The EU Ambassador to Georgia, Carl Hartzell.

tic violence, and will work in cooperation with local authorities to develop reaction plans. The project covers the regions of Shida Kartli and Samegrelo and will include internally displaced persons and the community affected as a result of conflicts.

The second project led by the Coalition For Independent Living serves the purpose to support disabled people in times of COVID-19 crisis. As a result of enacting preventive measures against the pandemic, obtaining several crucial state services has been temporarily restricted. A lot of Disabled people require support for the affordability of food, medicine and other products and services of primary needs. In addition, there is scarcely enough specific information regarding COVID-19 for these people. The project provides support to the disabled persons in the regions of Adjara, Guria, Samegrelo- Zemo Svaneti, Imereti, and Shida Kartli and will deliver information and various services to persons with disabilities.

The third project headed by The IDP Women Association "Consent" intends to increase the resilience and safety of internally displaced persons and the communities affected by the conflicts. IDPs are usually economically vulnerable. Commonly, shops and Pharmacies are far from their settlements. Restricting economical activities and other Quarantine measures have affected them negatively. The project will operate in the settlements of IDPs in Samegrelo, Imereti, Shida Kartli, Kvemo Kartli and Racha-Lechkhumi, and will provide them with humanitarian assistance, training, psychological and medical help to facilitate improving their conditions.

Georgia requests US help in high-profile murder case involving Giorgi Rurua



► Tamar Toradze says that in the 90's Giorgi Rurua led a criminal gang that brutally killed her family members. Photo: exclusivenews.ge.

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The Georgian Chief Prosecutor's Office has requested help from the US to investigate a high-profile murder case of the Toradze family that took place back in 1992, and allegedly involved the current co-founder of the opposition-minded TV channel Mtavari Arkhi, Giorgi Rurua.

As part of the ongoing investigation into the murder of Toradze's family members, the

Prosecutor General's Office has applied to the relevant authorities of the United States for legal assistance and issued a statement on June 2.

Georgia says that it needs the US support to interrogate US citizen Tamar Toradze, the only survivor of the Toradze family. She accuses Rurua of killing 7 of her family members (5 killed, 2 still missing).

Toradze demanded the investigation into the Toradze murder

case in May 2020, sending an open letter to US senator Jim Risch who called Rurua 'a political prisoner.'

In the letter Toradze tells the senators that 'Giorgi Rurua is not a media owner or a political prisoner, he is a cold blooded murderer,' publishing the details of the case and reasons why Rurua has remained unpunished for years. She also posted a video on Facebook on May 17 addressing President, the Government and

the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia demanding the investigation of the murder.

Rurua was detained in November 2019 during a protest rally in front of the Parliament. He is accused of illegally buying, storing and carrying firearms, a charge that he dismisses. He is the brother of deceased United National Movement official Nikoloz Rurua.

The united opposition, which made an agreement with the ruling Georgian Dream on March 8, 2019 on how to hold upcoming elections in autumn, demands the release of 'political prisoner' Rurua, stating that if he remains in prison, they will not vote for the constitutional changes.

Giorgi Rurua's trial continued

on the 3rd of June at the Tbilisi City Court, where the prosecution witnesses were interrogated.

Dimitri Sadzaglishvili, Rurua's lawyer, says his client is ready to answer questions from the prosecutor's office about the Toradzes' case. According to him, Giorgi Rurua has not been investigated in this case:

"No one has communicated with us on this issue. Obviously, if there are any questions and official adjustments are made by the investigative bodies, it is clear that we will definitely answer all the questions," Sadzaglishvili told reporters. He noted that the accusation of Giorgi Rurua in the case of the Toradzes was part of a dirty campaign organized by the government against him.



► Georgian Chief Prosecutor's Office

David Katsarava to be interrogated on the case of stirring up ethnical strife

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

David Katsarava, the President of the Georgian National Canoe Federation and the leader of the anti-occupation movement is being interrogated on the case of stirring up ethnical strife with the status of a witness by the State Security Service of Georgia. On May 30th, it was officially announced that the security department of State Security Service of Georgia (SSSG) launched an investigation under the article of racial discrimination.

A significant part of Davit Gareja monastery complex's

territory (covers 2,5 kilometers), which once fully belonged to Georgia, is now located on the border (450km) of Azerbaijan and Georgia. David Katsarava and his fellow members of the anti-occupation movement often go near the border and protest against Azerbaijan's side as well as the Georgian government.

According to the State Security Service of Georgia, there are groups and individuals who are trying to arouse contention between ethnic Georgians and Azerbaijanis in the regions of Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti. As the authority states, these individuals mention such accumulated issues in negative contexts, incorrect interpretation of which might cause dispute between ethnic Azerbaijanis and Georgians in the areas where ethnical minorities are tightly



► David Katsarava, the leader of anti-occupation movement

settled. particularly these people invade in the matters of SSG's competence and endeavor to use the issues occurred in Kakheti and Shida Kartli to stir up national hostility'

Katsarava claims that there

are no signs of racial discrimination in their activities and they have not created the background of radical proclamations.

"I was the first one summoned to be interrogated in the case of stirring up ethnical discord. The

subject of Davit Gareja is freshly fabricated by the SSSG in order to stop the anti-occupational movement 'the power is in unity', which has been patrolling the occupation line for three years now and has been active about Davit Gareja. They hide from us the number of kidnapped people, as well as the activities of Russia, and all this is a result of 'The politics of not teasing Russia' conducted by the Georgian government," said Katsarava.

On the 20th of August, 2019, the Leader of the anti-occupation movement Davit Katsarava was charged with violence as he had had a clash at the occupation line with the local villagers, who accused him of staging false provocations. However, Katsarava refers to the case as 'politically motivated' and 'sown with white threads.'

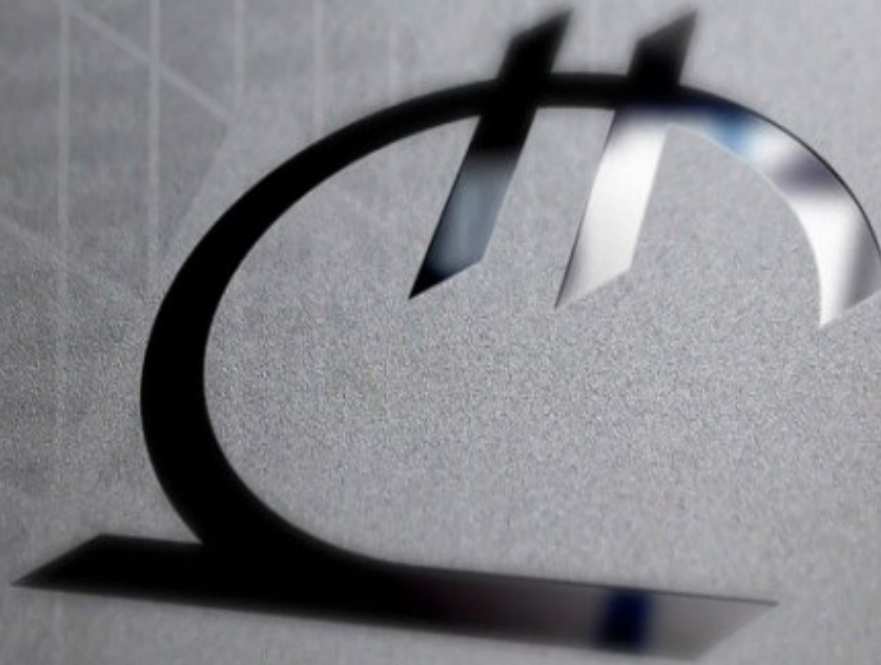
THURSDAY		JUNE 4	
Day	☀️	Mostly Sunny	High: 31°C
Night	☁️	Thunderstorms	Low: 15°C
FRIDAY		JUNE 5	
Day	☀️	Mostly Sunny	High: 27°C
Night	☁️	Partly Cloudy	Low: 15°C

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Dollar is returning to ₾3



► Annual Inflation 6.5% in May.

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The Georgian national currency has strengthened as a result of the June 3 trad. The change in the exchange rate against the US \$ was 3.56 tetri, as a result of which the official exchange rate of \$1 against the new exchange rate became ₾3.0416. In total, the lari has strengthened by 13.5 tetri against the dollar since June 1.

The lari also strengthened against the euro today, the change in the exchange rate was 2.79 tetri, as a result of which the value of €1 became ₾3.4087.

As for the pound sterling, the strengthening was 3.77 tetri, with the new exchange rate worth ₾3.8294 per £.

It's interesting what factors could have led to the strengthening of the national currency in the period of crisis in the country caused by the pandemic and given that foreign exchange inflows have been significantly reduced.

As Otar Nadaraia, TBC's chief economist, told BM.Ge, the exchange rate of the lari is majorly affected by how the dollar is against other currencies: "Recently, the dollar has lost ground to the euro, as well as the Turkish lira and the ruble, and the lari is being heavily influenced by how the dollar is against these currencies," he explained.

Another factor that Nadaraia

mentioned, is the expectations, which, according to him, are not really positive, but better than they were, since oil prices are rising and the opening of the economy creates positive expectations.

Vakhtang Butskhrikidze, General Director of TBC Bank, believes that the strengthening of the GEL was caused by the new economic activity.

Nadaraia recalled the statistics of April, when the economy shrank by 16.6%, calling it unfortunate, yet saying that 'it could have been even worse against the background of the challenge we have.'

He also spoke of the volume of remittances, which, according to the TBC capital weekly indicators, decreased in April by 42.3%, but has significantly

improved in May. According to the economist, all in all, it is too early to talk about great optimism, because the situation around us in the countries around us is not good yet. "However, in terms of opening up the economy, we have a small room for positivity," he added.

Nadaria doesn't think at the moment, that the international

donor funds were decisive in the lari's strengthening trend in the last days, however, the expectation is, that the donors' money, which will flow, will be enough to compensate for the external shock and not to get a sharp depreciation of the lari," he said.

According to the basic scenario of TBC Capital, a 4.5-5.5% decrease in the economy is expected in 2020. After a sharp drop in the second quarter of 2020, a gradual recovery and an increase of 4-5% in 2021 is expected.

Natia Turnava, the Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development. Turnava responded to the trend of strengthening the lari in recent days, explaining that Several factors affect the strengthening of the lari.

"One is our balanced macroeconomic policy, the balanced monetary and monetary leverage we use, and this is normal. It must be said that slowing down economic activity also plays a role," she said, adding that this is a balancing process that will ultimately have a positive impact, as it will have a positive effect on the prices of imported goods and will ultimately help return inflation to its target.

Note that the National Statistics Office (Geostat) reported annual inflation in May - 6.5%. As Geostat explains, it was driven by price changes in food and non-alcoholic beverages, and transport services.



► TBC's chief economist says there's a room for positivity amid the opening of the economy.