

## Politics

**Tbilisi threatened by a massive landslide, experts say it is 'unavoidable'**

There is a massive earth fissure emerging from the Vashlijvari slope near the Lisi Lake

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**Head of Georgian Mission to the EU Natalie Sabanadze resigns**

Sabanadze served as the head of Georgian Mission to the EU for eight years

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## EU-backed talks between the ruling party and opposition fail to result in an agreement



By VERONIKA MALINBOYM

Christian Danielsson, an EU-appointed mediator who was visiting Georgia to facilitate a dialogue between

the ruling Georgian Dream party and the opposing bloc, left the country on March 19 after announcing that parties failed to agree. Danielsson, who arrived in Georgia on March 12, spent a week longer

than scheduled in an attempt to help the political parties resolve an ongoing political crisis, and the last round of talks that Danielsson mediated lasted for more than 9 hours.

In his statement regarding the end of the round of negotiations between the political parties and his departure to Brussels, Danielsson noted that the solving of the crisis would have helped Georgian parties to focus on some of the more pressing matters, including the country's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, security and the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. He also said that the parties did manage to agree on some of the points outlined in the agenda of the talks, however, failed to agree on some of the other, more major issues. Danielsson claimed that he will report back to the President of the European Council, Charles Michel on the conduct and the results of the negotiations.

Shortly after Danielsson made his official statement, both the ruling party and the opposing bloc began to accuse each other of jeopardizing the negotiations. The latter argue that the ruling party has purposely "disrupted the talks and closed the door to Europe", and promised to respond with a series of peaceful rallies. In turn, the ruling Georgian Dream party noted that the EU has already reiterated that the October 2020 Elections were both "free and competitive", thus, the opposition's demand for the repeat elections had no legal backing to it. Moreover, the ruling party noted that the release of the political prisoners, including Giorgi Rurua and Nika Melia is a matter that will be decided in court.

Leader of the ruling Georgian Dream party Irakli Kobakhidze said that the talks failed because the opposition raised two "illegitimate ultimatums" that go against "the interests of the justice and the state".



# Tbilisi threatened by a massive landslide, experts say it is ‘unavoidable’



Experts believe the reason behind the activation of the landslide is human intervention

Kaladze stated the allegations against the City Hall are false

By NIKA GAMTSEMLIDZE

On March 17, several photos spread online showing a massive earth fissure emerging from the Vashlijvari slope near Lisi Lake. Experts say that it is connected to the activation of landslide processes.

As specialists state, the process might have started more than several weeks ago. “From what we say on the ground we can say that this landslide did not start yesterday. We saw traces on the ground that there have been groups working there. There are markers, which

seem to be aimed to count the speed of the movement,” said an expert in the field, Lasha Sukhishvili.

The Director of the Institute of Earth Sciences at Ilia State University Tea Godoladze, who visited the site said that the observation shows that the cracks are about 10 meters deep, while the landmass amounts about half a million cubic meters. She said that it seems like the landslide is unavoidable and that it is probably a result of human intervention. She added that the City Hall has improperly planned the road construction, which

might have triggered the processes.

On the other hand, the Mayor of Tbilisi Kakha Kaladze addressed the allegations noting that the works of the City Hall have nothing to do with the activation of the landslide. He also said that the causes are unknown as of now and added that a group of German geoenvironmentalists is expected to arrive in Tbilisi on March 22 to learn more about the processes.

Deputy Mayor Irakli Bendeliani also talked about the ongoing events at a special briefing. As he said, the study of the landslide processes and their activation

is underway and should be concluded in the coming days.

He also noted that the team of the Tbilisi City Hall works very hard and conducts environmental assessments before the beginning of any construction processes in the city.

Potential consequences in case the mass falls are still unknown. Geologists believe that to find out, there is a need for extensive research and modeling. At the same time, the country is expecting German experts to learn more about the causes of the hazard.

By NIKA GAMTSEMLIDZE

Natalie Sabanadze, the head of the Georgian mission to the European Union, has resigned. As she writes on Facebook, her resignation statement has already been approved by the Foreign Minister.

Sabanadze has represented the country in Brussels for almost eight years. “It has been a great honour and a responsibility. It has been a mission full of successes as well as challenges and at times moral dilemmas. Time has come to move on,” wrote Sabanadze on her Facebook yesterday.

She also noted that the European future of the country is the

## Head of Georgian Mission to the EU Natalie Sabanadze resigns



Sabanadze announced her decision with a post on Facebook. Natalie Sabanadze became ambassador to the Kingdom of Belgium and Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and Head of Georgian Mission to the EU in May of 2013

Sabanadze nor the Minister of Foreign Affairs commented about the reasons for her resignation.

According to Mikheil Sarjveladze, Chairman of the Committee on Human Rights and Civil Integration, he does not know what Natalie Sabanadze’s resignation from the post of Head of the Georgian Mission to the EU is related to.

Sarjveladze stated the vacancy should be filled with staff that will make a cooperation with European structures even more effective.

Natalie Sabanadze became ambassador to the Kingdom of Belgium and Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and Head of Georgian Mission to the EU in May of 2013. Before that, she worked as the Head of Section, Eastern Europe, Caucasus, and Central Asia from 2011 to 2013. She was also OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, in the Netherlands.

cause that is worth fighting for, “it is not merely about the EU membership but is about living in freedom and dignity. I wish to thank my team in Brussels for their work and dedication. I owe them a lot,” noted Sabanadze.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also issued a statement. “In agreement with the leadership of the ministry, the ambassador decided to resign after the Association Council, which was held on March 16 this year,” reads the Foreign Ministry statement, adding meeting was successful.

Sabanadze did not talk about any specific reasons for her resignation. Many have speculated that it might be linked to the ongoing events and crisis in the country, however, neither

### Weather

Monday, March 22

Day Rain  
High: 11°C

Night Light Rain  
Low: 6°C

Tuesday, March 23

Day Light Rain  
High: 16°C

Night Light Rain  
Low: 9°C

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# Georgia's opposition issues a joint statement, announces large-scale rally in May



The opposition bloc, whose members still boycott the seats they won in Parliament during October 2020 Parliamentary Elections, demand the immediate release of political prisoners and the holding of repeat elections. Since November 2020, the dip corps have facilitated four rounds of negotiations between the ruling party and the opposition, however, no agreement was achieved.

On March 1, President of the European Council, Charles Michel relaunched the dialogue between the political parties of Georgia, and his efforts were later taken over by President Michel's appointed representative, Christian Danielsson. Danielsson arrived in Georgia on March 12 and left the country on March 19 after announcing that parties failed to find common ground.



By VERONIKA MALINBOYM

Shortly after the EU-mediated talks between the country's opposition and the ruling party failed to achieve any meaningful results, the opposing bloc released a joint statement, announcing an emergency mode. In his speech given in front of the Georgian Parliament building, Zaal Udumashvili, a member of the opposition United National Movement party, provided an overview of the opposition's new strategy and the next steps it is planning to take.

According to Udumashvili, on

May 15, a large-scale opposition rally will be held on Rustaveli Avenue, and before that, several other protests will be arranged both in the capital and in the regions:

"From this day onwards, the opposition will be working in an emergency regime, meaning that we will visit every city, every village, every family and will convince the Georgian people that our struggle is necessary and that the truth is on our side. During this period, several protests, both in Tbilisi and in the regions will take place. Finally, we will meet on May 15, here,

on Rustaveli Avenue. The opposition is now adopting a perpetual disobedience regime. It will be a harsh, perpetual protest, which, in the end, will bring us to victory and facilitate positive changes within the country."

The opposition claims that the ruling Georgian Dream party is to blame for the 'failed' EU-mediated talks, which ended as a result of the "Dream's destructive and anti-state actions". Udumashvili also added that by jeopardizing the process of negotiations, the ruling party "closed the door to Europe".

## Signing Ceremony of the Three Projects Within the GGP Grassroots Human Security Grant Program of the Embassy of Japan in Georgia



On March 17 the Signing Ceremony was held for three projects, funded by the Government of Japan, based on the goodwill of the Japanese people. The Signing Ceremony was attended by the Ambassador of Japan, H.E. Mr. **Imamura Akira** and representatives of the parliament of Georgia, regional and municipal governments, and the local NGOs.

The projects are funded within

the GGP Grassroots Human Security Grant Program of the Embassy of Japan and aim to boost development potential of the Kakheti region by improving healthcare services and ensuring economic and physical safety of local communities.

The three projects are:

1. Improving of Healthcare Provision in Tusheti Area, Akhmeta Municipality. Implementer: Tusheti Develop-

ment Foundation. Budget: 87,256 USD;

2. Establishing of Multipurpose Cheese Refrigeration Facility in Akhmeta Municipality. Implementer: NGO BRIDGE – Innovation and Development. Budget: 64,151USD;

3. Providing a Second-hand Fire Engine for Lagodekhi Municipality. Implementer: Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia Subordinated State Entity - Emergency Management Service. Budget: 77,633 USD;

In the Fiscal Year 2020-2021,

Embassy of Japan funded 12 projects within Grassroots Human Security Grant Assistance Program (GGP) small grants scheme worth over a million (1'142'467 USD) in almost every region of Georgia, concentrating on economically vulnerable settlements.