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# Representative Danielsson submits proposition, negotiations continue for 7+ hours



Danielsson returned to Tbilisi on the night of March 27-28.

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The meeting between the opposition and the government, mediated by the Personal Representative of the President

of the Council of Europe, Christian Danielsson, began at 5 yesterday and as of 7 hours later, it's still going on.

Representatives of the opposition and the government are holding a joint meet-

ing with Christian Danielsson, Personal Representative of the President of the European Council Charles Michel.

The meeting is being held at the EU Office and is attended by EU Ambassa-

dor to Georgia Carl Hartzel and US Ambassador Kelly Degan.

Irakli Kobakhidze, Archil Talakvadze, and Shalva Papuashvili from the Georgian Dream are present at the talks, but they did not comment to the media before the meeting.

Danielsson also met with party representatives the previous day to prepare for the joint meeting. After the meeting, Danielsson said that on the 30th of March he would put on the table a text aimed at establishing a sustainable framework for the future as well as increasing confidence in the electoral process and the judiciary. According to the special representative, in the end, it is up to the parties to take responsibility and sign such a document. Danielsson stressed that if an agreement is reached, there will be only winners, and the main winner will be the Georgian people.

The media outlet "Publika" has obtained information about the content of the document submitted by the EU Special Representative, according to which information submitted by their source is the general idea of the text and not the exact wording.

Publika's source states that the document, proposed by Danielsson includes the following suggestions:

- The European Union is ready to pay the bail of the chairman of the "National Movement", Nika Melia, through one of the funds. reported that the document proposed y Daelso includes ext
- Giorgi Rurua should leave the



PM Garibashvili says early elections are not an option.

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By MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

# Political crisis in Georgia and Western vision of its overcoming

The political crisis continues in Georgia as the opposition parties and Georgian Dream are unable to reach an agreement. On the positive note, however, the western friends have explicitly reiterated Georgia as their strategic partner. The Council of Europe representative Christian Danielsson will revisit Georgia and seek to discuss the existing crisis. Prior to this visit, the Foreign Relations Committee of the US Senate discussed the situation in Georgia on March 23.

The reason for the interest of the West is to be explained by critical development of the politics in Georgia. According to the international partners, if there is no resolution to the crisis in Georgia, the country will lose the prospect of democratic development, the possibility of entry into NATO and take away from the European Union from the agenda. It is also observed that Russia has benefited from the crisis in Georgia and its continuation. Russia has dramatically strengthened the positions after the second war in the South Caucasus. If the Russian influence in Georgia will return the open or hidden pro-Russian forces to Georgia, it will be a great failure of the 30-year efforts of the West, the efforts to ensure Georgia's democratic development.

This is the reason for the western friends' concern. However, neither the European mediators nor those in the US haven't picked their side between the opposition and the government. The responsibility in the existing crisis is restricted

to both sides. Criticism of the government is multilateral - the quality of conducting elections, the court politics, the existence of political prisoners. Overall, the essence of these critical statements will be taken into one big problem - the country's democratic development is seriously delayed and urgently needs reforms. But in spite of the criticism, the Georgian government's statement has not been placed on the western course of the country. The main demand for the opposition is to enter the Parliament to continue working for the necessary reforms from the legislative body.

Judging from the statements

of the representatives of the government and the opposition, they have drawn diametrically opposite conclusions, as from the negotiations with Danielsson's mediation, as well as from statements made in the US Senate Committee. According to the representatives of the Georgian Dream, the failure of mediated talks is the opposition's fault. According to the statements of the opposition representatives, the Georgian government became an object of strong criticism and he must draw fruitful conclusions from this criticism.

The opposition in the boycott mode has two main requirements: releasing political prisoners,

and snap parliamentary elections. Then, the opposition agrees to enter the parliament to reform the electoral system and other issues. The government refuses to negotiate these requests, and states that the Georgian Dream is going to win the 2024 elections.

Snap elections are supposed to be a good solution from the political crisis created in a democratic country, but the Georgian Dream cannot take the idea of losing power. The chance of winning the snap elections is very low for Georgian Dream, especially with a proportional system. Recently published results of the NDI survey state that 23%

of respondents support the Georgian Dream party (the figure in December 2020 was 31%), the United National Movement - 7% (in December 2020 - 5%), and other parties - 7%. More than half of the respondents said that they do not support any parties or refused to answer. As a result of the more or less normally conducted elections, the Georgian Dream will lose the government, which is likely to move to the coalition of the opposition parties.

In front of the second round of negotiations with Danielsson's second round, it is hard to say what will happen - the opposition categorically refuses to enter Parliament, hoping that Georgian Dream will agree to implement democratic reforms. If, for example, in the neighboring Armenia, the snap parliamentary elections are held to deal with the crisis, why can't it be a solution in Georgia? Some have speculated that the ruling team is preparing for snap elections. Former Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia said he was not going to leave politics, which means that he is going to create his own political party.

It is clear that in case the second round of talks fail, the crisis will deepen, revealing the true nature of the opposing teams the international mediators.

(Translated from Georgian by Mariam Mchedlidze)



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prison with the so-called "Udo" mechanism, an electronic bracelet, in November.

- An amnesty to be issued for the participants of the June 20 case - both activists and law enforcers.

- The opposition to lead 5 committees in the parliament, including the budget, human rights, procedure, foreign affairs...

- Suspend the process of appointing judges.

- The recommendations of the Venice Commission on the issue of party funding should be taken into account.

- Appoint the Attorney General with the support of two-

thirds of the full membership of Parliament.

- The CEC chairman and staff should also be appointed with the support of two-thirds and his deputy should be a representative of the opposition.

The source says the document does not mention elections, which caused a delay in the mediation process. Recall that it's the second official visit of Charles Michel's representative to Georgia.

Gigi Ugulava, one of the leaders of the European Georgia party, spoke on Formula TV about the ongoing talks between the opposition and government

officials.

According to him, he and other members of the opposition do not know what document will be put on the table today, however, as Gigi Ugulava notes, he remains under the impression that the members of the Georgian Dream already have information about the content of this document.

"I get the impression from these movements (refers to the multiple meetings of GD with Danielsson), and from the information that came out, that this "draft" or proposal was already discussed with Georgia Dream and was passed by that party. If

this is confirmed, despite everyone's respect, it will not be possible to complete the mediation or anything," Ugulava said.

Recall that a special representative met separately with Georgian president Salome Zurbashvili, Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili as well as ruling Georgian Dream party representatives, as part of his returning visit to Tbilisi to mediate Georgia's political crisis talks.

After he met with the EU mediator, PM Garibashvili reiterated the GD's refusal to discuss holding snap elections, emphasizing that official represen-

tatives of the EU, the U.S. State Department and Senate, and the OSCE/ODIHR assessment" recognized the October 2020 general polls as legitimate. The Georgian PM also reaffirmed that there are no political prisoners in the country. GD Chair Kobakhidze said that there will be no snap elections, this is a given.

On the other hand, the opposition is underscoring that the goal of this process is de-escalating political crises and reaching real solutions, rather than just signing the agreement, thus they have formed their positions accordingly.

## Representative Danielsson submits proposition, negotiations continue for 7+ hours

### Weather

Wednesday, March 31

Day Mainly Cloudy  
High: 12°C

Night Partly Cloudy  
Low: 7°C

Thursday, April 1

Day Mostly Cloudy  
High: 13°C

Night Showers  
Low: 5°C

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Founded by Prof.

**Zaza Gachechiladze**  
**Tamar Gachechiladze**  
Publisher

Mob.: +995 599 565621; +995 577 760000  
E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge  
http://www.messenger.com.ge/

**Nino Metreveli**  
Commercial Director

**Mariam Mchedlidze**  
Editor-in-Chief

**Natalia Kochiashvili**  
Executive Editor

**Khatuna Gogichaishvili**  
Layout Designer, Photographer

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## Head of the Psychologists' Development Research Centre ready to post bail on Nika Melia's behalf

BY VERONIKA MALINBOYM

Head of Georgia's Psychologists' Development Research Centre Besik Bogveli made an inquiry with the country's Chief Prosecutor's Office on the possibility of him paying ₾ 40,000 bail on Nika Melia's behalf.

"I have done a lot of work before I came to this decision. For the whole night [they] were discussing 'whose' person I am, they were calling back and forth. I am a psychologist, can't a psychologist have a political stance? I was testing the system. Nika Melia, and any other politician, is, first of all, a citizen of Georgia, which is why I feel sympathetic towards him. I can see that the ongoing process is not very effective, and the country is faced with the risk of losing rationality", Bogveli explained.

Nika Melia's lawyer Giorgi Kondahishvili, in turn, said that Bogveli's decision to pay the bail is nothing but a 'performance' staged by the government:

"Today, the United National Movement office received a letter from the head of Georgia's

Psychologists' Development Research Centre Besik Bogveli, in which he stated that the organization in general, and Bogveli personally, is eager to pay the bail of ₾ 40,000 on Nika Melia's behalf. I would like to reinstate that Melia's position on the matter has not changed, and he considers it unacceptable. Moreover, what we are witnessing right now is nothing but a performance staged by the government", Kondahishvili said.

Kondahishvili added that posting bail on Melia's behalf is neither technically nor legally possible:

"We are asking the members of the Georgian Dream party – when you say that Nika Melia can post the bail and get out of prison, do you have any specific legal foundation based on which it can be done?"

Nika Melia was arrested on February 23 earlier this year for refusing to pay ₾ 40,000 of ₾ 70,000 of his bail, and for violating the conditions of his bail on which he was released in June 2020, following his arrest on charges of inciting violence during the June 2019 protests.



## Georgia: EU provides €7.15 million to modernise water supply and sanitation systems in Khashuri

29-03-2021

The EU-funded grant facility will help to modernise water supply and sanitation systems in Khashuri municipality. A grant financing agreement worth €7.15 million was signed on 26 March between the French Development Agency (AFD), the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia, and the French Embassy, in the presence of Carl Hartzell, the EU Ambassador to Georgia.

This grant agreement will support an AFD credit line with a total allocation of €65 million, which aims at rehabilitating, reconstructing, and expanding the water supply and sanitation infrastructure, and improving related services in the municipality of Khashuri.

Currently, water is only supplied in Khashuri and the neighbouring settlements for a few hours per day, while wastewater is discharged without treatment into a transboundary river, negatively affecting the environment, local livelihoods and the health of populations.

The EU-funded grant will be directed at financing part of the infrastructure investments, as well as supporting capacity building and expertise development to the United Water Supply Company of Georgia (UWSCG), the state-owned operator of water and wastewater infrastructure, which will implement the project.



Photo: European Union