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# Nika Melia to remain in custody, as per the decision of the Tbilisi City Court



Judge Nino Chakhnashvili

By VERONIKA MALINBOYM

The leader of the opposition United National Movement party, Nika Melia, was refused bail earlier today, as per the decision of Judge Nino Chakhnashvili of the Tbilisi City Court. During the court hearing on April 13, Nika Melia made a number of

statements, including the one which led Judge Chakhnashvili to dismiss Nika Melia from the courtroom due to him calling her a "slave [of the regime]". Melia stated that conditions required to let him get out of the custody are "unacceptable and humiliating": "If I were released today, wouldn't it demonstrate publicly to the foreign

partners, that Ivanishvili's allies let their political opponent walk free based on a political decision?!" Melia noted in response to the ruling of the Tbilisi City Court, according to which, he will remain in custody. Leader of the United National Movement added that in case of him being released today, representatives of

the ruling party would not have been able to say that they compromised on his case, and now it is time for the opposition to make compromises in return: "Thus, any conditions that are now being offered in exchange for my freedom are both unacceptable and humiliating for me", Melia added.

Melia was arrested earlier this year, on February 23, in a special operation carried out by the SWAT team at the headquarters of the United National Movement. His arrest has led to series of rallies, in which the country's opposition bloc referred to Melia as being a political prisoner and demanded his immediate arrest. The release of Nika Melia has been discussed as part of the agenda of the several rounds of EU-mediated negotiations between the ruling government and the opposition bloc, however, no concrete agreements have yet been made.

Nika Melia was charged with violating the conditions of his bail, as he both took off the electronic tracking bracelet and refused to post a bail of \$40,000 within 50 weeks of the sentencing. On February 16, Georgian Parliament suspended Melia's MP status and MP immunity and allowed the Prosecutor's Office to request his arrest. On February 17, Tbilisi City Court satisfied the request of the Prosecutor's Office and ruled in favor of Melia's arrest.



# Is the Euro-Atlantic route Georgia's true priority?

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

After Danielson's failed mediation, Georgian politics found itself in a deeper crisis, compounded by growing frustration and a critical attitude towards the country from Western friends. Doubts were also expressed about the seriousness of the Georgian government's statement on Euro-Atlantic integration.

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A clear confirmation of the 'seriousness' of the statement would be to reach an agreement with European mediation, but, it is hard to determine when is it going to be possible. However, there is another way to confirm the seriousness of the Euro-Atlantic integration application - to make a clear statement in support of Ukraine by the Georgian authorities.

The situation in eastern Ukraine has sharply deteriorated since the end of March.

According to the head of the General Staff of Ukraine Ruslan Khomchak, Russia is increasing its military presence along the borders of Ukraine. Russian troops are also mobilized in the previously occupied Crimea.

"It is difficult to talk about Russia's intentions," said John Kirby, a spokesman for the Pentagon. A number of experts do not rule out that hostilities will resume and Russia will try to expand the separatist enclave to the point of securing a land connection with Crimea. Russia even denies involvement in the conflict and sees the ongoing confrontation in eastern Ukraine as a struggle between the Ukrainian central government and the Donetsk-Lugansk separatist forces.

After a phone conversation with US President Joe Biden on April 2, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said that "Ukraine will not be left alone against Russian aggression." According to him, the only way to end the war in Donbas is NATO. "Giving MAP to Ukraine will be a real signal for Russia," Zelensky said in a telephone conversation with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg.

The United States supports

Ukraine's aspirations to join NATO and calls on Russia to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and to stop escalating tensions. Unwavering support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty has been expressed by the European Union and NATO.

Ukraine's aspiration to NATO was immediately followed by a reaction from Russia. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the decision to join NATO would only exacerbate the domestic crisis as millions of people in breakaway republics oppose joining NATO. The Russian army is moving on its territory and this should not bother other countries, because "the Russian Federation does not pose a threat to other states."

When the West clearly expresses its support for Ukraine in the face of possible Russian aggression, the same support for Ukraine is expected from Georgia. Ukraine is Georgia's strategic partner and, also, Georgia is as much affected by Russia as Ukraine.

Former Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves has criticized the Georgian government for its inadequate support for Ukraine. His state-

ment was quite harsh. "When Russia invaded Georgia in 2008, not only did I speak out, but I was in the middle of a hot war. I am very surprised. "How do you expect Russia to condemn the occupation of your territories by the international community when you do not speak up about a threat against Ukraine?"

Georgian Dream, traditionally, pursues a policy of "non-irritation" and avoids harsh statements due to Russia's unceremonious actions in the occupied territories of Georgia. According to the opposition bloc, this reveals the true face of the current government and the real policies pursued by them.

After the statement of the former President of Estonia, European Georgia's Giga Bokeria expressed explained that Georgia has a moral obligation and it is in its national interest to support the Ukrainian people. When the issue of aggression against Ukraine is on the agenda of world politics, Georgia, with the support of Ukraine, should remind everyone that Georgia is also an object of aggression by Russia.

The statement of the former President of Estonia

angered the Georgian authorities and this accusation was considered wrong. On April 7, Georgian Foreign Minister Davit Zalkaniani spoke by telephone with his Ukrainian counterpart Dmitry Kuleba. "We are grateful for Georgia's strong solidarity and readiness to work together for international consolidation towards Ukraine," is noted in the statement of the Ukrainian Minister. Nikoloz Samkharadze, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Georgian Parliament, also spoke about Georgia's support for Ukraine and noted that the Committee will receive a statement in support of Ukraine.

The former President of Estonia also called on the Georgian authorities to make such a statement, leaving no doubt about Georgia's position.

As for the position of the people, a new study by the International Republican Institute was recently published, according to which 69% of respondents consider the United States to be Georgia's most important political partner, followed by the European Union (54%) and Ukraine (23%).

## Council of Europe anti-corruption body GRECO says Georgia has implemented 7 out of 16 recommendations on preventing corruption among MPs, judges and prosecutors

Strasbourg, 12.04.2021 – Over the past two years, Georgia has implemented two more recommendations issued by GRECO in 2016, on the prevention of corruption in respect of members of parliament, judges and prosecutors, said the

Council of Europe anti-corruption group GRECO in a new compliance report published today. All in all, seven out of 16 recommendations have been implemented satisfactorily or dealt with in a satisfactory manner, another seven have been partly implemented and two have still not been implemented.

Today's report is already a second one analysing the implementation of the 2016 recommendations. The first such re-

port published in 2019 concluded that five recommendations had been implemented, and the remaining 11 were still outstanding. These outstanding recommendations are the subject of the report published today.

With respect to members of Parliament, the regulations on transparency of the legislative process on the side of the parliament have been greatly enhanced, with a more visible publication of draft legislation,

amendments thereto and information on the work of committees, but rules should also be adopted to allow for meaningful consultations to take place. Furthermore, training of MPs on the Code of Conduct has taken place, but further practical measures for the implementation of the Code (such as confidential counselling and monitoring) still have to become fully operational. The implementation of these measures has to some extent been

hampered by political developments following the 2020 parliamentary elections. Finally, a clear requirement or rules are still required for MPs to declare conflicts of interest when they occur (*ad hoc*).

As far as judges are concerned, changes to the legislation on the recruitment of judges have improved the criteria on which decisions on recruitment

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### Weather

Wednesday, April 14

Day  Rain  
High: 18°C

Night  Clear  
Low: 6°C

Thursday, April 15

Day  Clear  
High: 21°C

Night  Mostly Cloudy  
Low: 9°C

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## Georgian citizens seek employment abroad



The first group for employment in Germany leaves Georgia today.

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

For the purpose of employment in Germany, the first group of 20 people is leaving Georgia today. Giorgi Bunturi, Head of the Labor Migration Division of the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labor, Health and Social Affairs, announced yesterday. According to the official, currently, about 98,000 people are registered for legal employment in Germany. "That sounds like a lot - the number is quite large, but in reality, there are far

fewer job seekers. This was shown by the practice at the interview stage," he said.

As Bunturi informed, "the selection and interview process is active and a list of a number of people has already been sent to Germany; Relevant work permits have also been obtained for the part and the first group will leave for work in Germany tomorrow." He specified that the whole group will work with an employer in agriculture.

France will allow Georgian citizens to find legal employment in the country by the end of 2021. According to the Head

of the Labor Migration Division, the agreement has been signed, which has already entered into force. Bunturi said it is for France to decide how quickly they will fulfill their obligations in order for the legal employment program to be launched in the country.

"At this stage, relevant consultations are underway with the French side to move to the implementation stage. Develop an appropriate scheme under which our citizens will be able to find temporary legal employment in France. Consultations are underway and

we hope that the French direction will be activated by the end of the year," he commented emphasizing that this process depends on the French side.

There are a total of 50 professions that can be employed in France. The required professions include bartenders, hotel services, as well as representatives of the construction sector, cooks, etc. The opportunities will be presented to people of different professions in terms of both professional and higher education.



Along with Germany and Israel, France will allow Georgian citizens to find legal employment in the country by the end of 2021.

## Council of Europe anti-corruption body GRECO says Georgia has implemented 7 out of 16 recommendations on preventing corruption among MPs, judges and prosecutors

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are to be based, as well as the reasoning and the possibility of review of such decisions. It is noted, however, as demonstrated by the appointment process to the Supreme Court, that apparent good intentions on paper are still too easily trumped by other considerations. GRECO therefore urges the authorities to take further measures to enhance public trust in the recruitment processes of judges, be it to the Supreme Court or common courts, in particular in respect

of the decision-making of the High Council of Justice. That said, positive steps have been taken as regards disciplinary proceedings (even if some remaining amendments would still need to be made to fully implement the recommendation in question), in particular by more clearly defining disciplinary offences, and in developing an update of the Rules of Judicial Ethics, which is, however, still to be adopted. Finally, as regards judges, GRECO regrets that the limitation of the broad immunity of judges is still under consideration and concludes

that its recommendation that the immunity of judges be limited to activities relating to their participation in judicial decision-making ("functional immunity") remains not implemented.

Regarding prosecutors, positive measures have been taken for the practical implementation of the Code of Ethics and welcome improvements have been made to the rules on the recruitment and promotion of prosecutors. GRECO concluded that two of its recommendations in these areas have been implemented. However, in spite of improvements made to the disciplinary

regime applicable to prosecutors, further amendments are clearly necessary, in particular by defining sanctionable conduct more precisely. GRECO also concluded that its recommendation on widening the scope of application of the asset declaration regime under the Law on Conflict of Interest and Corruption to cover all prosecutors, remains not implemented.

GRECO asks the Head of delegation of Georgia to submit additional information on the nine outstanding recommendations by 31 March 2022 at the latest.

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The Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) is a Council of Europe body that aims to improve the capacity of its members to fight corruption by monitoring their compliance with anti-corruption standards. It helps states to identify deficiencies in national anti-corruption policies, prompting the necessary legislative, institutional and practical reforms. Currently it comprises the 47 Council of Europe member states, Belarus, Kazakhstan and the United States of America.