

Georgian priest's attack on Mtavari Arkhi journalist sparks controversy



By VERONIKA MALINBOYM

A wave of controversy has hit Georgia after the recent incident in which Metropolitan Antony of Vani-Baghdati diocese verbally and physically attacked Mtavari Arkhi journalist Irakli Vachiberadze on May 7, when Vachiberadze visited the Vani-Baghdati

diocese to conduct an interview but was met with Metropolitan Antony who forbade him from entering. After releasing the footage of the attack, Mtavari Arkhi demanded that Metropolitan Antony is brought to justice.

"Violent incidents against our journalists have increased, and we believe that this is a deliberate campaign. It is unfortunate that representatives of the lower or higher hierarchy of the Georgian Orthodox Church are actively involved in this campaign. It responds to similar facts, but also justifies and thus encourages the aggression of the clergymen against journalists," the TV company said

in a statement.

A similar incentive has been voiced by a number of local NGOs. In its official statement, the Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics condemned the attack and called for the swift and efficient investigation of the incident. The organization's statement notes that it is imperative that such cases are not left uninvestigated, as by doing this, the state may both encourage further violent incidents and damage the overall media environment in Georgia:

"Every journalist should have the opportunity to carry out his or her professional activities freely. They should know

that all relevant incidents will be adequately and transparently investigated, and the perpetrators will be held accountable," the statement reads.

The Institute for Tolerance and Diversity stated that it's alarmed by the violence of the Georgian Orthodox clergymen and by the fact that the Georgian Patriarchy has not condemned or apologized for the incident:

"To this day, we have not seen the clergy of the Church comment on the violent incidents. The actions of influential clergy nurture and incite hatred and violence in society," the TDI statement explains.

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TOLERANCE & DIVERSITY INSTITUTE

European Union pays bail for Nika Melia

BY NIKA GAMTSEMLIDZE

The General Prosecutor's Office of Georgia has made a special statement regarding Nika Melia's case. According to the office, the proposal is still valid and once the payment is received, they will apply to the Court to change the measure of Melia's restraint.

The agency added that they would apply to the Court to change the measure of restraint after the amount allocated for the bail is reflected in the relevant account, or the document of transfer of the amount to the relevant account is submitted.

Regarding this, the Young Lawyers' Association stated that a document confirming the payment of bail has already been sent to the agency. According to the EU delegation to Georgia, a bail of € 40,000 was paid on May 8 to release Melia. This payment followed the agreement made by the political parties with the mediation of the European Union on April 19, 2021.

The European Union thanked two independent organizations that have agreed to provide significant support in this process. These organizations are the European Endowment for Democracy, which allocated the funds that were paid through the Georgian Young Lawyer's Association.

In particular, through GYLA's account, the money was transferred to the account



The bail of € 40,000 was paid through the GYLA's account by the European Endowment for Democracy



Nika Melia is accused of attempting to break into the Parliament building on June 20-21, 2019.

of the Tbilisi Enforcement Bureau on May 8, at about 3 p.m.

European Parliament member Viola von Cramon responded to the payment of € 40,000 bail for Nika Melia on Twitter. "Great! And good to see that all partners kept their promises - the EU included. The next step will be that Mr. Melia will leave prison very soon. This should then pave the way towards a regular parliamentary work for everyone in Georgia," wrote Cramon.

Nika Melia is accused of attempting to break into the parliament building on June 20-21, 2019, during an anti-occupation protest rally. He was charged with the article on the leadership of gang violence and participation in it.

On June 27, 2019, Melia was sentenced to electronic monitoring and a bail of € 30,000, which he paid, as a measure of restraint. On November 1, 2020, at a protest rally in front of the parliament, Melia publicly removed his electronic monitoring bracelet.

Afterward, Tbilisi City Court increased the bail by € 40,000, and Melia was given 50 days to pay it, which Melia didn't. As a result, the Court sent Melia to pre-trial detention.

After the EU-mediated agreement, it was agreed that Melia, as well as Giorgi Rurua, would leave prison.

BY VERONIKA MALINBOYM

Earlier last week, the World Health Organization approved the Sinopharm vaccine for emergency uses in all countries.

In his statement, WHO Assistant-Director General for Access to Health Products Dr. Mariangela Simao said that the vaccine produced by Beijing Bio-Institute of Biological Products Co Ltd has the potential to allow countries access the rapid vaccination process of the medical workers and other high-risk groups and urged the Sinopharm

WHO approves Sinopharm vaccine already used in Georgia

manufacturers to join the COVAX platform to contribute to the accessible vaccination for all countries around the world.

The first 100,000 doses of the Sinopharm vaccine have been delivered to Georgia earlier last month, and the vaccination with the Chinese jab began on May 4, just several days before the WHO's official approval.

Head of the Georgian Center for Disease Control Amiran Gamkrelidze has received the first shot of the Sinopharm vaccine live on Georgian TV, and, on May 8, it became known that the country will also receive an

additional 100,000 doses of the Sinopharm vaccine from the Red

Cross and with the help of International Federation of Red



Cross, Red Crescent societies and The Red Cross Society of China.

"Details will be known soon regarding when those 100,000 will become available", said Deputy Minister of Health of Georgia, Tamar Gabunia.

As of right now, any Georgian citizen aged over 18 can register for the vaccination in the country.

Over the last 24 hours, a total of 1,089 new cases of COVID-19 have been registered in Georgia, 1,489 patients have recovered, and 18 individuals have died.

The total number of confirmed coronavirus cases in the country has now reached 321,919 with 300,989 recoveries and 4,281 deaths. Today, 16,623 remain infected with COVID-19 in Georgia.

Weather

Monday, May 10

Day Partly Cloudy High: 15°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 5°C

Tuesday, May 11

Day Partly Cloudy High: 17°C

Night Clear Low: 8°C

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EU Ambassador Carl Hartzell speaks on the importance of Georgia-EU relations



The theme of Europe Day 2021 in Georgia is 'Stronger with the EU'

By NIKA GAMTSEMLIDZE

Yesterday, on May 9, EU-member countries celebrated Europe Day. The Ambassador of the European Union to Georgia, Carl Hartzell talked about the importance of the partnership with Georgia. As he said, successful and independent Georgia will benefit the population as well as the partners of

the country, including the whole region of the European Union.

"Today, we, as Europeans, know that this has been the right path to follow, that cooperation and partnership is indeed the benefit to all. We have been extending this philosophy also in our external relations, including with a close partner like Georgia," said Hartzell.

He also added that the part-

nership between the two countries is very important, and that he is proud that the EU stood by Georgia and assisted the country to successfully fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

Hartzell noted that the EU has been supporting the country financially, was providing support, and needed knowledge. He also added that the EU will continue supporting the country in

the future as well.

Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili wished the European Union a happy Europe Day. He noted that Georgia, from the day of its independence, has been aspiring to become part of Europe.

"Georgians are proud to be one of the creators of European culture. Since the restoration of independence, we have been striving for our natural environment - the European space. I believe that European Unity needs Georgia just as much as we need Europe," noted Georgian PM.

Garibashvili once again talked about the importance of the European Union Association Agreement signed in 2014 as

well as the visa-free travel. According to Garibashvili, Georgian-European relations have never been as strong as they are today.

He also added that Georgia will apply for full membership in the European Union in 2024.

Yesterday, on May 9, the European Union and its member countries marked Europe Day, which celebrates peace and unity in the region. Europe Day was also celebrated in Georgia with the theme 'Stronger with the EU'. While celebrating Europe Day, on the evening of May 9 and 10, landmarks around the country will be illuminated with the EU colours.



Georgian PM Irakli Garibashvili talked about the importance of Europe Day and Georgian-European relations

EU announces winning project for promotion of European businesses and economic interests in Georgia

The European Business Association Georgia has been selected to implement an EU-funded project on 'Promoting European business and economic interests in Georgia'.

The winning project will aim to encourage coordinated and pro-active actions by business, to support the implementation of the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), and to pursue the EU's economic diplomacy interests.

EU Ambassador Carl Hartzell congratulated EBA Georgia for their hard work and strong proposal, and thanked all the applicants for their interest and the quality of their proposals: "I encourage these applicants and other relevant organisations to seize the opportunity of upcoming invitations from EBA Georgia and to work together towards the creation of an inclusive platform. We look forward to your contribution to the project's implementation, in the interest of European businesses and EU-Georgia economic interests."

Photo: European Union

