

## Rally Held at Freedom Square Demanding the Release of Mikheil Saakashvili

THE PROTEST WAS ORGANIZED BY UNM



► Thousands of people gathered at Freedom Square demanding the release of Georgia's third president.

BY NIKA GAMTSEMLIDZE

A rally in support of the release of Mikheil Saakashvili - Free Misha - was held in Tbilisi yesterday, on October 14. People from different parts of the country gathered in the center of Tbilisi, at Freedom Square to demand the release of Mikheil Saakashvili.

The convoys of UNM supporters who left for Tbilisi from the regions were met with protest on the roads and insulted by ruling-party supporter activists. As seen in the released videos, activists threw brooms at the cars and cursed at the opposition party supporters.

Due to the rally of the UNM supporters, the traffic on Rustaveli Avenue - from the Republic Square to the Freedom Square - was temporarily restricted.

Nika Gvaramia read the ex-president's letter at the rally demanding Saakashvili's release. According to the ex-president, Mikheil Saakashvili, it is vital for the country that the parties stop humiliating each other, spreading hatred, rather, everyone should start forgiving each other.

Numerous people addressed the protesters. One of them was the Mayoral candidate of the UNM for Zugdidi, Anzor Melia. He called Saakashvili "a hero", who "established the country".

Near Freedom Square, where the rally was held, various units of the Interior



► Numerous people addressed the protesters and talked about the need of freeing Saakashvili.

Ministry, including representatives of the Special Task Department, were mobilized to maintain public order and security. Buses carrying law enforcement officers were parked near the Parliament.

The rally started at 18:00 yesterday and thousands of people attended it. People from Tbilisi as well as from the regions of the country gathered in the center of the city to protest the arrest of Georgia's third president.

People gathered at the rally were saying that Saakashvili should not have been arrested and they demanded immediate release of him. In addition, people who addressed the protesters called on everyone to participate in the second round of the elections, which will be held on October 30.

Saakashvili was arrested on October 1. He went on a hunger strike the same day. On October 10, his doctor, Nikoloz Kipshidze, said that the ex-president's

condition had worsened. The next day, Saakashvili's lawyer, Nika Gvaramia, said that the ex-president's health condition was satisfactory and that it was not worth complaining about.

Saakashvili has been convicted in cases of beating Valeri Gelashvili and Sandro Girgvliani in a three-instance court and has been sentenced to 6 years in prison. The decisions made by the court in these cases are final and cannot be appealed.

EXCHANGE RATES: US DOLLAR - 3.1383 | EURO - 3.6291 | GBP - 4.2775 | 100 RUSSIAN RUBLE - 4.3689 | SWISS FRANC - 3.3836 |

# 54<sup>th</sup> round of the Geneva International Discussions

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Release of illegally detained Georgian citizens, de-facto annexation of the occupied territories and the humanitarian situation on the ground were the issues discussed at the 54th round of the Geneva International Discussions on October 13.

As reported, the co-chairs of the discussions welcomed the lifting of restrictions at the Enguri bridge and Saberio-Pakhulani crossing points and called for freedom of movement to be fully restored, in particular at the Odzisi crossing point.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, during the talks, the Georgian delegation criticized the recent steps taken by Moscow towards the de facto annexation of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region, including the implementation of a program for the creation of a single socio-economic space, the signing of the so-called dual citizenship agreement, and attempted unilateral delimitation-demarcation of the section of the occupied territories



► The next round of talks will be held on December 7-8, 2021.



► As Georgia's Foreign Ministry has reported, during the discussions, significant attention was given to the process of creeping occupation near the village of Chorchani, "which creates the risk of an escalation on the ground."

of the Russian-Georgian state border.

According to the Russian Foreign Ministry, the situation along the Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-South Ossetian borders remains relatively stable and in order to strengthen security in the region, the Russian side offers to start the process of delimitation of the border between Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia with their further demarcation. "Sokhumi and Tskhinvali actively support Moscow in this," the Russian Foreign Ministry notes.

One of the main topics of discussion was Russia's non-fulfilment of the EU-brokered ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008. It is stressed in the Georgian Foreign ministry's statement that Russia extensively militarizes the occupied territories, implements illegal military exercises, and erects barbed wires and various artificial barriers on the occupation line. The ministry reports that significant attention was given to the process of creeping occupation near the village of Chorchani, "which creates

the risk of an escalation on the ground."

According to the Georgian Foreign Ministry, due to the destructive position of the representatives of Russia and its occupation regimes, the discussions failed to address one of the most important issues on the agenda, which is the safe and dignified return of IDPs and refugees displaced as a result of ethnic cleansing from the occupied territories. "As soon as the issue was raised, participants from Moscow, Sokhumi and Tskhinvali tried to politicize the issue and left the discussion," Foreign Ministry reports.

The Geneva International Discussions was established based on the August 12, 2008 ceasefire agreement to address the consequences of the Russia-Georgia war. The discussion brings together the central government of Georgia, the de-facto representatives of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region (South Ossetia), Russia, the US, the UN, the OSCE and the EU. The next round of talks will be held on December 7-8, 2021.

# Zurabishvili meets UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The President of Georgia Salome Zurbashvili met with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet in Geneva on 14th of October, after she finished her official visit to Austria. The High Commissioner expressed her sorrow over the tragedy in Batumi and expressed condolences to the President of Georgia and the Georgian people. According to the President's press service, the sides discussed the human rights situation in Georgia. The president briefed the High Commissioner on the human rights situation in the occupied territories of Georgia and spoke regarding the illegal detention of Georgian citizens by the occupation regime, in particular the cases of Irakli Bebuia, Genadi Bestaev and Gela Gochoshvili.

The fact of banning Georgian language teaching in Gali district was mentioned as a sign of ethnic discrimination. The conversation also focused on the self-govern-



► Michelle Bachelet is a Chilean politician who has served as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights since 2018.



► The President calls on the population to be vaccinated.

ment elections in Georgia and the deep polarization of the political environment, which is intensified and increased by fake news.

The President of Georgia stressed the insufficient involvement of women in local elections. The meeting also discussed the importance of world solidarity and vaccination in defeating the pandemic. The President spoke of the importance of the population living in the occupied territories to have full access to Covid-19 pandemic of fighting mechanisms. The president met with the Director General of the World

Health Organization in Geneva.

According to the president's press service, the need to increase the rate of vaccination in Georgia, the availability of medical and therapeutic measures of Covid-19, the importance of strengthening and developing digital technologies and telemedicine in healthcare were discussed during the meeting.

The Director General of the WHO says that today we have unequivocal evidence that vaccination protects against the development of serious diseases and fatal consequences. Gabri-

elius noted that Georgia and WHO have a history of successful cooperation and expressed readiness for future support. After the meeting with the WHO Director-General during her comments with the media, President Zurbashvili called on the population to be vaccinated.

"I think it is very important today to remind our people from here, from Geneva and the World Health Organization, that vaccination is necessary. The pandemic will disappear nowhere, so it is better that we take all the necessary measures and it starts

with vaccination." 4,212 new cases were reported in Georgia in the last 24 hours. This means that the pandemic is continuing and there may be some increase. Vaccination is essential for everyone and especially for people working in the healthcare sector and schools, for teachers and others. "If we want children to continue (and we all want that very much) to go to schools and not be forced to introduce new regulations, it is essential that we all be responsible and vaccinate and wear facemasks," said the President of Georgia.

FRIDAY		OCTOBER 15	
Day		A few clouds	High: 23°C
Night		Partly cloudy	Low: 13°C
SATURDAY		OCTOBER 16	
Day		Sunshine	High: 23°C
Night		Rain	Low: 13°C

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# PRE COP26 Conference in Tbilisi

The Embassy of the United Kingdom and the Embassy of Italy in Georgia, together with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia organised an event focused on the fight against climate change. In addition to qualified representatives of civil society and the academic world, Georgian authorities and the local diplomatic community participated in the event, both in person and online.

Welcoming remarks were provided by H.E. the Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Levan Davitashvili, Her Majesty's Ambassador to Georgia, Mark Clayton, the United Kingdom's Regional COP26 Ambassador, David Moran, and the Ambassador of Italy in Georgia, Enrico Valvo. The hosts presented the respective commitments in the global fight against climate change, with a view to the 26<sup>th</sup> UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) to be held in Glasgow on 31 Oc-

tober – 12 November 2021.

For his part, Minister Davitashvili presented the commitment of Georgia in the fight against climate change, stressing the importance attached to COP26, which is highlighted by the fact Georgia will be participating in the conference at the highest level, with a Delegation led by the Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Garibashvili.

From the British side, Ambassadors Moran and Clayton presented the historic opportunity represented by COP26, in terms of agreeing binding international targets to tackle global climate change. In Glasgow, there will be a unique chance to go even further than the decision taken at the Paris Summit in 2015, and all participants, including Georgia, have an important role.

As stressed by the Ambassador Valvo, 2021 will be a key year in the fight against climate change. This is why Italy is especially proud to be able to focus on such

key priorities as the G-20 Presidency and as a Partner of the United Kingdom within COP26.

Following the welcome remarks, 2 thematic panel discussions were held, the first being entitled: #SecurEnvironment: Climate & Security across the Euro-Atlantic Area and Beyond.

Prestigious speakers, representing both Georgian civil service and the think tank community, animated an interactive discussion about the consequences of environmental pollution and climate change under the lens of economy, security, civil sector and resilience.

The President of the Italian think tank Ce.S.I Roma, Prof. Andrea Margelletti - whose participation in person has been supported by the Italian Embassy - has focused on the work underway within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in this respect, affecting both Allied Countries and Partners, including Georgia.

The title of the 2<sup>nd</sup> panel was 'Georgia's approach to tackling climate change and embracing green growth opportunities'.

The effects of climate change in Georgia have been discussed in its implications for both the public and private sector strategies, competitiveness, and risk management. Opportunities in Georgia, and Tbilisi's current plans and policies to face these have been also addressed.

The key issue of youth engagement in the fight against climate change has been presented by a Georgian young climate activist, Elene Samukashvili. She delivered an inspiring speech about the Georgian youth engagement in this respect, sharing her experience related to participation to the #Youth4Climate event, held in Milan on 28-30 September, 2021 and organised by Italy within the preparatory process of COP 26. In her speech, she brought forward actual proposals aimed at the preservation of the planet for younger and future generations.

