

UNM Urges International Community, Diplomatic Corps, NGOs to Ensure Saakashvili's Safety

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

The United National Movement has appealed to the international community, the diplomatic corps accredited in Georgia, international and local non-governmental organizations to take all possible measures to ensure the right to life and personal safety of the third president of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili. The statement reads that it has been 26 days since the ex-president went on a hunger strike and his health conditions are severe.

According to the UNM, the commission of highly qualified doctors concluded at a meeting on October 23, that Saakashvili should be transferred to a high-class, multi-profile civil clinic, and not to a prison hospital as the Georgian Dream government officials had offered. As the UNM says 'the president will be deprived of adequate treatment and his safety will be in danger if he is placed in the prison hospital.'

The Minister of Health Minister, Ekaterine Tikaradze announced yesterday that the prison hospital meets all the necessary conditions for Saakashvili, adding that he does not require placement at a civil clinic at this stage.

"I assure you that he will not face any vital risks. The patient is under constant monitoring. Therefore, all risks are minimized," Tikaradze noted.

On October 24, Public Defender's representatives checked the readiness of the Medical Facility of N18 prison and as the inspection revealed the situation in the



Georgian Justice Minister Rati Bregadze announced on Monday that the N18 prison infirmary is ready to admit former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili.

facility, in terms of medical care, does not fully comply with the recommendations issued by a multifunctional group of doctors.

According to the Public Defender's Of-

fice, even though the administration and medical staff of Medical Facility No. 18 state the clinic has the necessary resources to meet the medical needs of prisoners, the report issued by the group of

doctors refers to the need of implementing certain medical procedures, which, is impossible to be provided in this Facility.

The UNM has called on the Georgian people to not allow Saakashvili's transfer to the Gldani Prison Hospital as it would be 'equal to his murder'. The party urges the Georgian government to ensure the health and personal safety of the third president of Georgia. "Otherwise, you will get a harsh response from the Georgian society," reads the statement published by the UNM.



"The infrastructure and environment [of Facility No. 18] fail to exclude the risk of verbal aggression and noise, verbal abuse and psychological pressure by certain groups of prisoners," reads the Public Defender's report.

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 3.1428; Euro - 3.6519; GBP - 4.3427; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.4921; Swiss Franc - 3.4169

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

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INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF FREEDOM OF INFORMATION



“Due to the coronavirus pandemic the Georgian economy shrank by 6.2%, which is the largest decline since 1994. However, the ministry of finance predicts the economy to grow by 9.5% in 2021 and by 6% in 2022,” IDFI said.

The non-governmental organization Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) has published an overview of the bureaucratic expenditures of the 2022 budget. The document states that in the draft state budget number of employees is set at 112,712, in fact this figure does not include the staff lists of a number of LEPLs and A (A) IPs, and in reality, the number of employees in the public sector is up to 300,000.

The draft budget envisages 1.65 billion for the salaries of 112,712 employees, which is ₾ 17.1 million more than in 2021.

The analysis of administrative expenditures envisaged in the draft budget for 2022 shows that no significant changes are planned in terms of bureaucratic expenditures in 2022. Expected expenditures on goods and services are reduced by ₾ 255 million, which is mostly related to the reduction of pandemic control costs (quarantine services, etc.) and has little to do with the optimization of classical bureaucratic costs.

According to the institutions managing the state budget allocations, the reduction of labor costs is planned in only 5 agencies. The biggest decrease (₾ -21.1 million) is envisaged in the Central Election Commission of Georgia, which is due to the fact that 2022 is not an election year. The largest increase is planned for the Ministry of Defense of Georgia in 2022, where according to the draft budget for 2022, the sums allocated for salaries will increase by ₾ 6.2 million annually, as well as labor costs will increase by ₾ 5.8 million for the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

At the same time, it is noteworthy that despite the annual increase in labor costs, ensuring a fair and competitive remuneration system for civil servants remains a significant problem. IDFI believes that the main determinant of this is the existence of a non-optimal bureaucratic apparatus, without which it is impossible to bring bureaucratic expenditures in line with the economic challenges in the coun-

try, and, on the other hand, to maintain a competitive public service.

According to Giorgi Kakauridze, the Deputy Minister of Finance of Georgia, “the public sector has lost competitiveness with the private sector and salaries have been frozen for almost the last 5 years, as a result of which qualified personnel are trying to move from the public sector to the private sector.” The Ministry of Finance intends to take certain steps in this direction to increase wages in the public sector.

As a result, in the norms regulating the draft state budget for 2020, there was a record according to which, from January 1, 2024, in order to implement the annual salary remuneration mechanism, the Government of Georgia was instructed to approve the principles for developing the remuneration mechanism and the principles. This will be based on the amount of the average monthly nominal salary officially published by the National Statistics Office of Georgia.

In addition to remuneration, other administrative expenses are reflected in the state budget in the amount provided for in the article “Goods and Services”. This article, in addition to the classic bureaucratic costs (remuneration of part-time employees, business trip expenses, representation costs, vehicle maintenance / renewal costs, etc.),

also includes various costs related to the coronavirus pandemic (quarantine space services, medical costs, etc.). Consequently, due to the restrictions imposed by the Coronavirus pandemic situation in 2020, business trip, representation and other similar administrative costs naturally decreased, however, on the other hand, various additional costs of servicing quarantine-related quarantine areas and health care increased.

For example, in 2020, when

the pandemic caused the greatest damage to the country, expenditures on goods and services increased by ₾ 227 million. The main drivers of growth were the increase in medical expenses, other goods and services and the remuneration of part-time workers. Also, as expected, due to the impact of the pandemic, business trip and representation expenses decreased (-35.9 million), as well as a significant decrease in the costs of transport, equipment and weapons operation and

maintenance (-32.7 million).

According to the draft budget for 2022, ₾ 1.54 billion is allocated for goods and services, which is ₾ 255 million less than the amount allocated for the 2021 budget plan.

A significant reason for the decrease is the reduction of costs related to pandemic management, by 2022 the funds for the implementation of quarantine and other measures related to coronavirus are no longer allocated, in 2021 ₾ 21 million was allocated in this direction. Also, the budget for COVID-19 virus management in the field of health is ₾ 500 million, which is ₾ 310 million less than the 2021 plan. Given these circumstances, the 2022 reduction in expenditure on goods and services under the pandemic is related to the reduction in pandemic costs and is less related to the reduction of bureaucratic costs such as pay for part-time employees, business trip and representation costs, fleet upgrade storage costs and more.

The 2022 state budget draft, which was introduced on October 1, reduces the budget by ₾ 1 bln., which, according to the Georgian Dream government, is owing to the reduction of pandemic management costs.



IDFI notes that the state budget shortage for 2022 is expected to be 4.3%, which exceeds the 3% shortage margin defined by the Economic Freedom Act.

Weather

Wednesday, October 27

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 10°C

Night Mostly Cloudy

Low: 3°C

Thursday, October 28

Day Clear

High: 161°C

Night Clear

Low: 4°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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Signing Ceremony of the Project Within the GGP Grassroots Human Security Grant Program Of the Embassy of Japan in Georgia

On October 26, the Signing Ceremony was held for the project, 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 Mrs. Miyuki Imamura. Also, the Deputy Chairman of the Regional Policy and Self-Government Committee, Mr. Irakli Zarkua; Deputy Chairman of the Legal Issues Committee, Mr. Rati Ionatamishvili; Deputy Minister of

Health, Ms. Tamila Barkalaia; Deputy Head of Regional Liaison Department at the Government Administration of Georgia, Mr. Merab Gamkrelidze; Chair of NGO "Together for Real Changes", Ms. Nana Lomadze.

The project for "Rehabilitation of Social Care Center in Ambrolauri Municipality" is funded within the GGP Grassroots Human Security Grant Program of the Embassy of Japan and aims to provide vital social care services to persons with disabilities for promot-

ing independent living.

Within the project, a social care center will be rehabilitated in the village Sadmeli, Ambrolauri Municipality. On the one hand, this center will promote physical rehabilitation and self-realization of persons with disabilities, and, on the other hand, it will create an environment for learning, development and fun.

The implementer of the project is NGO "Together for Real Changes". Grant amount: 72,246 USD.

Since the independence of Georgia, Japan has provided 180 grants within the GGP Grassroots Human Security Program, totaling over 19 million USD, in addition to other grant schemes. The GGP program aims to support human security in Georgia in the following priority fields: environment protection, agriculture, infrastructure, healthcare and education. The major principles behind the GGP program are overcoming poverty, sustainable development, inclusiveness and participatory growth.



H.E. Imamura Akira



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