

President Zourabichvili Presents Annual Report In Parliament

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili presented her annual report to the Parliament on Monday. The session was also attended by a representative of the Ukrainian Embassy in Georgia, Andrei Kasanov. President started her speech by reaffirming support towards Ukraine.

"I want you to know that here, we express a unanimous aspiration of the whole of Georgia. We all, assembled here today, express the support of the state institutions, all political forces and our citizens," the President noted, adding that Georgians have the best understanding of the 'Russian imperialism' and therefore, "Georgians are to best share the pain of Ukraine".

Underlining that Georgia and Ukraine share a common path and history, the president remarked that "no one could make us deviate from the historical European path we have chosen".

During her address, the Georgian President also called on her Ukrainian colleague Volodymyr Zelenskyy to return Ukraine's Ambassador to Georgia.

Zourabichvili strongly criticized both the opposition and ruling party in her report. According to her, while Georgian people should get prepared for every possible scenario as the country is "running out of time", there are still quarrels, discords, hostility, confrontation, and polarization witnessed in the country.

"You need to realize that our society is more sober, aware,



"Such self-sacrificing fight entails only our respect, solidarity and support. Georgia stands and always stood by the side of Ukraine and the Ukrainian people!", President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili stated.

brave, and untied than you. Today, I see the wakening signs of national unity in our people, though no such signs are evident in you. Do you not understand the degree of responsibility imposed on you towards our people?" Zourabichvili addressed the MPs, adding that both the

position and opposition commits sins against the country.

According to the President, the majority, instead of striving for unity, declares every dissent position as a betrayal or war-supporter, while the opposition declares any statement of the government as strongly pro-Rus-

sian. As she noted, this situation causes division within the country, weakens, misleads, and scares the society.

As she stressed, the government commits sins when it does not dare to express the position, which is dictated by the history and dignity of Georgia, stressing that the arguments of fear and precaution cannot justify not raising voices and not standing where the conscience and national identity dictates. She also criticized the government for discussing the main decisions without the engagement of the state institutions.

As for the opposition, Zourabichvili stated that they try to undermine Georgia and damage its image before the international partners. According to her, the opposition sins when it urges that allegedly the government and therefore, the country deviated from the pro-Western path. "Such politically motivated attach damages not only to the Government but the country and pours water on the mill of an enemy!" the President noted. She also stressed that the opposition appeals for radical measures and tries to achieve its political agenda by using the international situation.

"However, I agree with both – with the Government in the

fact that we need to be careful, and with the opposition in the fact that we can also demonstrate courage", the President stated.

Zourabichvili also mentioned in her speech that the government restricted her working visits to Paris, Brussels, Berlin, and Warsaw. According to her, considering the situation, she annulled all official formats and used her personal contacts to transform the working visits into personal meetings. "I believe that this approach and such restrictions are damageable for our country, especially in such a complicated region," she noted.

The President welcomed the Prime Minister's statement on Georgia's EU membership application and the resolution on the country's accession to the Union that is being worked on by the legislative body and called on MP's to adopt the resolution unanimously. According to her, Georgia needs to develop a uniform plan which will be a manifestation of national unity. She called on the government and the opposition parties to do their utmost to make the formation of a uniform position possible on the EU membership and not to use any issue in regards with Ukraine for their 'narrow political interests'.



According to the President, the constant quarrels between the government and opposition weakens, misleads, and scares the society.

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 3.2308; Euro - 3.5487; GBP - 4.2278; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.4885; Swiss Franc - 3.4740

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

2008 Georgia-Russia War: ICC Files Arrest Warrants for De-facto Tskhinvali Officials

The International Criminal Court in Hague has issued arrest warrants against three de facto officials of Georgia's Russian-occupied breakaway Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) region in a case of torture and ill-treatment of Georgian civilians during the 2008 Russia-Georgia war.

The prosecutor of ICC, Karim Khan filed an application for warrants of arrest of 3 South Ossetian officials with reasonable grounds to believe that they bear criminal responsibility for the war crimes committed in and around S. Ossetia, during August 8-27, 2008, in particular unlawful confinement, torture, inhumane treatment, violation of personal dignity, hostage-taking and unlawful transfer.

The addresses of the decision are - Lt.-Gen Mikhail Mindzaev, De-facto Minister of Internal Affairs of Tskhinvali (2005 - October 31, 2008); Gamlet Guchmazov, who held the position of the Head of the Preliminary Detention Facility of the de facto Ministry of Internal Affairs of Tskhinvali region during the war; David Sanakoev, Presidential Representative for Human Rights of Tskhinvali region, also

served as Ombudsman during the 2008 war.

"My application for these warrants of arrest focuses specifically on unlawful confinement, ill-treatment, hostage taking and subsequent unlawful transfer of ethnic Georgian civilians in the context of an occupation by the Russian Federation."

Khan announced the investigation had further established the guilt of Vyacheslav Borisov, a Major General in the Russian Armed Forces and Deputy Commander of the Airborne Forces, citing he was believed to have intentionally contributed to the execution of some of these crimes and is now deceased.

"Going forward, I count on the support by all States, especially States Parties to the Rome Statute, to ensure they are brought to trial before the International Criminal Court," Prosecutor emphasized.

According to the ICC, almost immediately after Georgian forces were driven out of S. Ossetia, Russian forces and -



"One more victory for Georgia", the Justice Ministry hailed the decision by the prosecutor of the ICC.

primarily - S. Ossetian forces began capturing Georgian civilians, mostly the elderly and sick who were unable or unwilling to abandon their homes and flee the fighting. They were not given a valid reason for their capture and detention, nor were they afforded any kind of procedural right. "The evidence shows that many of these people were unlawfully confined in unsanitary and unsafe conditions, insulted, beaten, tortured and humiliated".

"My Office has made findings of similar patterns of conduct during its preliminary examination of the Situation in Ukraine. I remain profoundly concerned about ongoing allegations of international crimes occurring amidst active hostilities in Ukraine today," the ICC prosecutor underlined.



Recall that Georgia, as a state party to the Rome Statute through which the ICC was established, was obligated to fully cooperate with ICC, while this doesn't apply to Russia, since it is not an ICC member.

The Georgian Justice Ministry reported that they had been providing the court with "comprehensive information and evidence necessary for proper investigation" in coordination with the country's Government and the Prosecutor's Office, calling the recent decision of the Tribunal a 'logical continuation of the historic victory of a 2021 European Court of Human Rights ruling in Strasbourg'.

Ministry said that this decision once again confirms that the serious violations committed against the population of Georgia during the August war will be attributed to specific representatives of the Russian Federation and the separatist regimes and pledged to continue working with the court in order to enforce international justice for other

crimes committed against the Georgian people during the conflict and to "fully cooperate" with the court to bring the offenders to justice.

In 2021 the ECHR released its ruling on a separate case, pursued by Georgia against Russia in the case of the 2008 war, stating Russia had violated 6 articles of the European Convention on Human Rights during the conflict and carried out ethnic cleansing of Georgians, obliging the country to pay Georgia €10,000,000 for non-pecuniary damage suffered by a group of at least 1,500 Georgian nationals.

For background information, ICC authorized its prosecutor to open investigation into war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed in the lead up to, during, and after the August, 2008 war. Decision was welcomed by Georgia and criticized by Russia.

In October 2015 ICC Prosecutor requested opening of the investigation and identified the crimes, which they "reasonably believe" fall under the jurisdiction of the ICC: "Killings, forcible displacements and persecution of ethnic Georgian civilians, and destruction and pillaging of their property, by South Ossetian forces (with possible participation by Russian forces); Intentionally directing attacks against Georgian peacekeepers by South Ossetian forces; and against Russian peacekeepers by Georgian forces."

President Enters Parliament with Charge d'Affaires of the Ambassador of Ukraine, Caused Chairman Mdinardze's Dissatisfaction

BY THE MESSENGER STAFF

Salome Zurabishvili entered the hall of the Parliament, where she gave her annual report, together with the Charge d'Affaires of the Ambassador of Ukraine.

This fact caused the dissatisfaction of the chairman of the Georgian Dream faction, Mamuka Mdinardze.

Before the president's speech, he asked for a speech and said, "There has been some embarrassment about the mission representative, with whom I'm sorry, I want to show solidarity and respect. But when we do not see the institute's respect, it's bad."

Later, in his speech, Mdinardze clarified his previ-

ous statement:

"I had a somewhat reprimanding tone about the procedure, saying to the media that careless, the word is the main thing - to carelessly bring a respected Ukrainian representative into the courtroom, carelessly write a letter to the Georgian parliament and I think it is disrespectful to the institute. Sorry, you know my attitude, it should definitely be mentioned.

"This word of 'negligence' has been omitted by some members of the media, and it is as if we have complained that you entered the Georgian parliament with a representative of Ukraine. They are doing it now that you are calling for unity," Mdinardze said.

The President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, recalled the Ambassador from Georgia on March 1. He cited Georgia's 'immoral position' in preventing Georgian volunteers from traveling to Ukraine and joining sanctions as the reason.

Weather

Tuesday, March 15

Day Light Snow
High: 4°C
Night Partly Cloudy
Low: -2°C

Wednesday, March 16

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 6°C
Night Snow Showers
Low: -3°C

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