

## Nino Lomjaria: 'Ukraine Refugees Are at Risk of Being Left Without Housing'

By Liza Mchedlidze

According to Public Defender Nino Lomjaria, based on the appeals of Ukrainian citizens in Georgia and media reports, she was informed that Ukrainian citizens staying in hotels with state funding were warned to evacuate their homes in the coming days, putting these families at risk of being left without housing.

The ombudsman says that at the same time, the media is reporting that the Georgian government has decided to increase funding for social assistance to Ukrainians, which includes the cost of housing, which is really welcome.

However, as the Public Defender writes, no normative decision has been made on this funding, no official announcement has been posted on the website of any relevant state agency, and no representatives of the relevant agencies have any information on this particular issue. Especially since the IDPs from Ukraine do not know what will happen to them in the near future.

According to Nino Lomjaria, refugees from Ukraine do not know what will happen to them in the near future and do not have enough information about assistance programs.

"The Public Defender calls on the Georgian government and officials to take all necessary measures to make concrete decisions as soon as possible and to inform both the individual agencies and the IDPs from Ukraine about how, when and where they will be resettled," says the ombudsman.



### The News in Brief

PREPARED  
BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

#### Special Penitentiary Service Releases Statement, Addressing Ex-President Saakashvili's Health

The Special Penitentiary Service has released a statement regarding the third President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili stating that if necessary Mikheil Saakashvili will undergo all the necessary examinations and will be provided with appropriate treatment outside the institution in Georgia.

According to the statement, the convict Mikheil Saakashvili is under the 24-hour medical supervision of the doctors of the Medical Department of the Special Penitentiary Service, has already undergone laboratory examinations and proper medical examination by doctors of the relevant profile and his health condition is stable.

"The Special Penitentiary Service operates taking into account the health and safety risks of any prisoner. If necessary, the con-

victed Saakashvili will undergo all the necessary examinations and receive appropriate treatment outside the penitentiary institution in Georgia.

Special Penitentiary Service also addressed 'speculations' around ex president's health con-

dition, saying:

"We call on politically engaged entities to refrain from speculating on Mikheil Saakashvili's health, creating a perception that is markedly different from reality, and misleading the public," the statement reads.

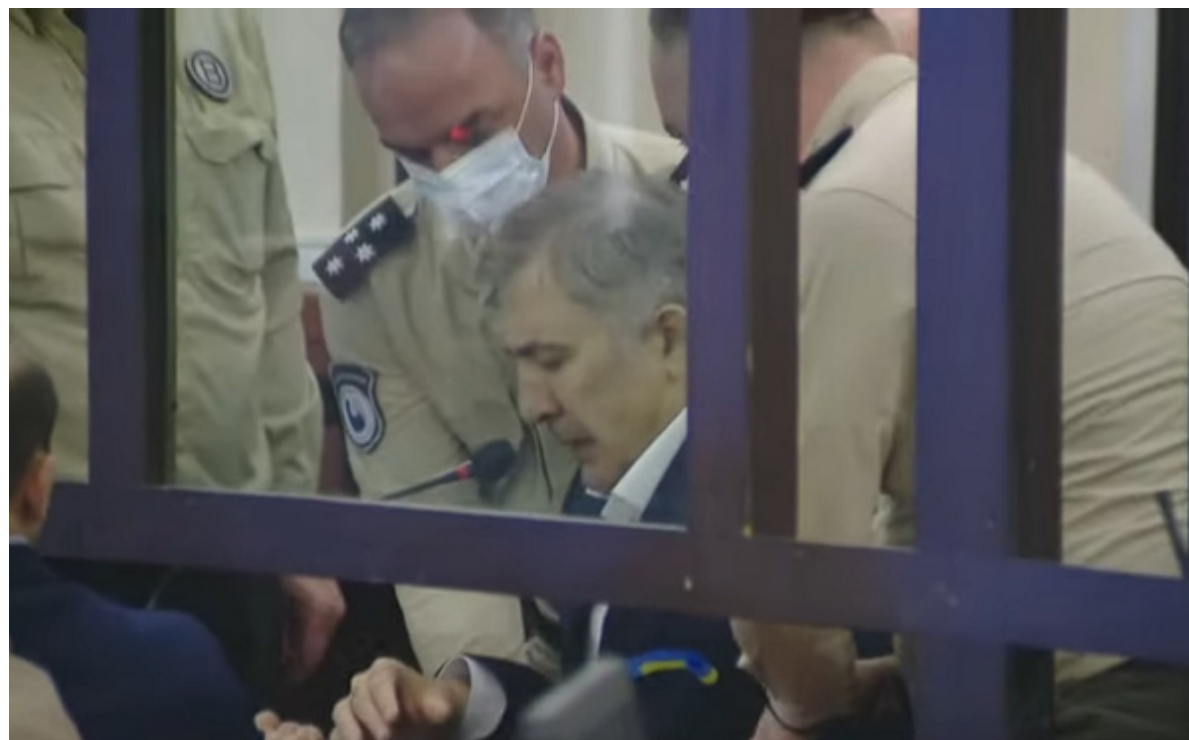
#### 'Reports of Saakashvili's Deteriorating Health Are Disturbing' Says President of Moldova

Moldovan President Maia Sandu has called reports of

Mikheil Saakashvili's deteriorating health troubling and said the ex-president should receive proper medical care.

"Worrying reports on @SaakashviliM's deteriorating health. Calling on our Georgian partners to provide former president w/ appropriate medical treatment & support his recovery. The right to health is a fundamental part of human rights & of our understanding of a life in dignity," Sandu wrote on Twitter.

On April 27, a council of doctors set up by the ombudsman prepared a report on Mikheil Saakashvili's health. According to the report, Mikheil Saakashvili has protein hunger. Saakashvili consumes about 1/4 of his daily calories and his health condition deteriorates daily. Doctors and family members are demanding the former president be transferred to an appropriate medical facility. Also, numerous politicians in and outside of Georgia are supporting Saakashvili's right of proper medical treatment.



# Georgian Dream Government Stands on Society's Fear of Russian Attack

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

A public opinion poll conducted by the International Republican Institute (IRI) in March 2022 illustrated the reality in the country well. The vast majority of the public considers Russia a threat, and the mainstay of the ruling Georgian Dream is the attitude of a large part of the public that the government is coping well with the threats coming from Russia.

The IRI survey showed that Georgian society would not openly support a pro-Russian force, as Russia was clearly perceived as a threat. The vast majority of the Georgian population (90%) thinks that Russia is the main political threat to the country, 83% consider Russia a serious economic threat, and 77% think that Russia's aggression against Georgia continues. At the same time, the number of people who support dialogue with Russia has significantly decreased. In a March 2022 poll, only 34% said they fully support dialogue with Russia, while about a year ago, in June 2021, 56% of the population fully supported dialogue with Russia. Instead, the number of people who strongly or partially oppose such

dialogue has increased. In March 2022, such a position was expressed by 36% of respondents. In June 2021, only 20% thought so. Given the fact that the Georgian Dream came to power ten years ago under the slogan of dialogue with Russia and the normalization of relations in this way, the growing disappointment of the public is obvious.

Russia is a clear threat to society and people are afraid of a new Russian attack. "Georgian Dream" has been constantly claiming after the Russian attack on Ukraine that the country has avoided a new Russian attack. It has long been the National Movement and other political forces that see the need for Georgia to join sanctions against Russia as a "war party" and accuse it of trying to open a "second front" for Russia in Georgia. Prime Minister Gharibashvili also said on April 27 that Saakashvili had arrived in Georgia for this very purpose and that if Saakashvili had been in power, he would have been the "second Mariupol" in Georgia.

Amid the ongoing war in Ukraine, which the public watches on television every day, the government's "anti-war" rhetoric is effective. From June

2021 to March 2022, the number of citizens who believe that the Georgian government has a positive attitude towards relations with Russia has increased from 23% to 47%. Consequently, this part of the society is probably looking at the opposition, which has been declared a "war party", with fear. The fact that Kakha Kaladze (53%), Salome Zurbashvili (52%), and Irakli Gharibashvili (47%) are leading in the rating of benevolence also speaks in favor of the government.

However, the second half of the population - 46% - should be considered a problem for the government, which negatively assesses the government's activities in terms of how the Georgian government handles relations with Russia.

The poll shows that the Georgian Dream is coping better with the situation than the opposition. According to the poll, "If the parliamentary elections were held next week", the "Georgian Dream" would again take the first place - it was supported by 31%. The United National Movement came in second with 16% of the vote, followed by Giorgi Gakharia's party for Georgia with 4%. Then comes a long line

of new or old parties - five with a 2% rating ("It's time - Elene Khoshtaria", "Strategy Builder - Giorgi Vashadze", "Labor Party", "For the People - Ana Dolidze" and "Lelo") and four parties with 1% support ("Patriots Alliance", "Conservative Movement - Alt-Info", "Girchi - More Freedom", "Citizens - Aleko Elisashvili").

These polls show that in the case of proportional elections (and this is how the next parliamentary elections should be held) and a low percentage threshold (the Georgian Dream has promised to reduce the threshold and the relevant constitutional initiative has been registered), the majority will win. It turns out.

The poll again found two leaders, the Georgian Dream, and the National Movement. The "third political force" that should replace them is still not seen. Despite the existence of many old or new parties, society does not see a "third force" in them. 71% of respondents say that Georgia is increasingly polarized, while 60% want to see new political parties in the upcoming elections, as existing political parties are not seeking an agreement.

Even this new political party,

which is gaining public support, is likely to be pro-Western. 54% of respondents consider Georgia to be the EU's main partner, 53% to the US, and 45% to Ukraine. 20-20% consider Turkey and Azerbaijan as such, only 4% consider Russia as Georgia's partner, and the same number - China. Against the background of such public sentiment, statements by the government against Ukraine, or actions that are considered as distancing from the West, will not work in favor of the government. The economic situation is an increasingly serious challenge for the government. 76% of respondents say that the economic situation of the country has significantly or more or less deteriorated over the past year.

As for the opposition's demand for early parliamentary elections, public opinion is also divided: 49% unequivocally or more or less support this demand, while 36% unequivocally or more or less oppose it. It should also be noted that the public mood is changing rapidly and the main thing is not the current results, but its development trends, which largely depend on the international situation caused by the Russia-Ukraine war.

A total of 22 Young European Ambassadors (YEAs) from EU NEIGHBOURS east, drawn from all six Eastern partner countries (including Ukraine) and from the EU, have been invited to take part in this year's EU Days on 7 May in Brussels, joining 13 YEAs from the Western Balkans and 16 EU Goodwill Ambassadors from the Southern Neighbourhood.

With the 2022 European Year of Youth putting the spotlight on young people, the Young European Ambassadors will be taking an active part in the various open spaces and events organised by the European Institutions, as well as networking with their young colleagues from the Southern Mediterranean and the Western Balkans. The EU NEIGHBOURS east team

will also use the opportunity of the YEAs' presence in Brussels from 3-8 May, and organise a number of side activities before the EU Open Day event takes place.

The YEAs' planned activities include networking and experience-sharing with the YEAs from the Western Balkans and the Goodwill Ambassadors from the Southern Neighbourhood, study visits to EU institutions, a visit to the College of Europe in Bruges, participation in live interviews and support for the information corner of DG NEAR, as well as actively promoting the EU Days event on individual social media accounts, and contributing to the production of communication content for the further promotion of the YEAs initiative and the EU's support to the Eastern Neighbourhood.

Every year, a series of public diplomacy activities take place in Brussels in the week leading up to 9 May - Europe Day - to celebrate peace and unity of Europe. The aim is to bring the EU closer to people, to inform and raise awareness about what the EU stands for, its values, structures,

## Young European Ambassadors gather in Brussels for EU Days



institutions, and its partnership, cooperation and support to different regions and countries across the world.

This year, Europe Day

is also an important moment to reaffirm the EU's attachment to peace, to showcase its unity and solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people, and

to stand up for universal values, like freedom and democracy in a rules-based global order.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

### Weather

Monday, May 9

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 18°C

Night Partly Cloudy

Low: 9°C

Tuesday, May 10

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 18°C

Night Partly Cloudy

Low: 18°C

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