

Rally 'Home to Europe' to be Held all Over Georgia and Abroad



BY MESSENGER STAFF

Today, June 20, a rally 'Home to Europe' will be held in Tbilisi and the regions all over Georgia. It is scheduled to begin at 20:00 in front of the Parliament building on Rustaveli Avenue in Tbilisi.

'Shame' and other civil movements are the rally organizers. According to them, citizens gathered at the rally will be addressed by the representatives of the civil society, Ukrainian authorities, and EU officials.

At 21:00, the rally will begin marching to Europe Square, where the event will be concluded.

Shame representative Nodar Rukhadze highlighted the importance of the rally, saying that all Georgians will be awaited to join.

As he noted, the goal of this rally is for "European partners to see that the citizens of Georgia have made a European choice."

"The June 20 rally is the most important date. This is a symbolic gathering to show our European partners that, unlike the Georgian government, the citizens of Georgia have made a European choice and are ready to abide by that choice. On this day, we forget all the differences, all the party lines that divide us,

and unite around what unites us - it is a return to the Euro-Atlantic family, EU integration, a better future, freedom, peace, development, economic prosperity, and so on.

I would like to add that we are waiting for June 24, because on this day the European Union will make the final political decision on Georgia's candidate status, and this date is very important for us to defend our European choice and future once again after June 20," Rukhadze stated.

Similar gatherings will be held in other cities of Georgia - at 18:00 in Zugdidi, at 19:00 in Batumi, and at 15:00 in Kutaisi.

Georgians are gathering in other European cities as well - London, Prague, Hanover, Paris, Budapest, Berlin, Hamburg, Stuttgart, Reykjavik, Athens, and Brussels.



Direct Talks with Putin is 'Absolutely Necessary', says German Chancellor



BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told news agency dpa that it is "absolutely necessary" for leaders to talk directly to Russian President Vladimir Putin to end the war in Ukraine.

"It is absolutely necessary to speak to Putin, and I will con-

tinue to do so — as the French president will also,"

"There are some countries needed, and some leaders needed, that speak to him — and it is necessary that they are clear," Scholz told dpa.

Scholz and French President Emmanuel Macron have held several telephone conversations

with Putin since Russia's invasion in Ukraine began on Feb. 24, drawing some criticism to their decision.

Scholz has stated that they have to find a 'common approach' with Putin, and that he is optimistic about managing this particular situation.

He told the media that his message is that "you have to withdraw your troops and you have to find an agreement with Ukraine which is acceptable and right for the people of Ukraine."

The Chancellor also stated that he wants to use next week's meeting with fellow G-7 leaders in the Bavarian village of Elmau to discuss Ukraine's long-term prospects in support of the country:

"We will continue to support Ukraine for as long as necessary," "We want to make sure that Russian President Vladimir Putin's calculations do not work out."

Olaf Scholz called Putin's hopes in Ukraine war and his expectation of Europe's reaction an 'illusion':

"Putin obviously hopes that everything will fall into place once he has conquered enough land and the international community will return to business as usual," he added. "That is an illusion."

Georgia's EU Candidate Status, Potential Rejection and Consequences

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

On June 23-24, Georgia's EU candidate status will be confirmed or rejected. Both the government and the opposition are eagerly awaiting this decision. Several possible options are actively considered. In any case, no matter what the response from Brussels, the political situation in Georgia will become even tenser. However, the answer will define who will have the upper hand - pro-Western or pro-Russian forces.

Ukraine and Moldova are waiting for EU candidate status along with Georgia. In general, putting this issue on the agenda is a result of the war in Ukraine. Ukraine's heroic struggle against Russian aggression is a factor that makes it virtually impossible for the EU to refuse Kyiv. It is also a fact that out of these three countries, the current government of Georgia has

made the least effort to obtain the status of a candidate for EU membership. Given this fact, they do not rule out the possibility of separating Georgia from Ukraine and Moldova and postponing the decision on Georgia.

Some believe Georgia will receive the so-called 'potential candidate status'. According to this option, Georgia will be given a deadline to fulfill additional obligations, and then the Council of Europe will be ready to discuss the granting of candidate status to the country. This is the so-called 'Albanian version'.

Others are more likely to believe that because the EU is making a political decision, it will not separate the three post-Soviet countries that have applied for membership status. This is the view of former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, for example, who believes that all three countries will receive EU candidate status on the basis of reser-

ervations. But Georgia will have much more reservations than Ukraine and Moldova. In the case of Georgia, these reservations will include everything: a request for serious changes in the court, the prosecutor's office, the police, the electoral system; de-oligarchization, media freedom, practical guarantees of human rights, and other institutional changes.

The ruling Georgian Dream is in a strange situation. While announcing its candidacy for EU membership, the rhetoric of its officials is probably different from the rhetoric of the authorities of all the countries that have ever applied for EU membership. The speeches of the current Georgian authorities are of a sharply anti-Western and anti-European nature. For example, according to Irakli Kobakhidze, Chairman of the Georgian Dream, the European People's Party (EPP) is a European union

of criminal parties. According to him, the resolution adopted by the European Parliament on Georgia "has a straw price" and criticized the members of the European Parliament who adopted the resolution.

Georgian officials have strongly argued that the EU and the United States want to 'drag Georgia' into the war, and the state-run Imedi TV channel immediately aired a public opinion poll in which a majority of respondents agreed with the Georgian government's opposition to Georgia's involvement in the war. This biased poll was harshly criticized, with US Ambassador to Georgia Kelly Degan saying that no one in the West wants to 'see Georgia embroiled in a war'.

The issue of imposing sanctions on Bidzina Ivanishvili, as a Russian oligarch, has caused particular outrage among government officials. Authorities felt obliged to make one statement after another in defense of Ivanishvili.

Relations have soured between the Georgian Dream and President Salome Zurbishvili, who

has accused the Georgian Dream of not only not doing much but 'failing the case' of gaining a candidate status. The leaders of the Georgian Dream were also accused of not working properly to protect Bidzina Ivanishvili and failing to avoid mentioning sanctions against him.

The public was waiting for Salome Zurbishvili to speak up. The opposition expected the president to exercise her right to pardon Main Channel manager Nika Gvaramia, whose arrest raised many questions and intensified criticism towards Georgia in the West.

Zurbishvili is not considering such an option and the pro-Western opposition considers this fact as another proof that Zurbishvili will not oppose Bidzina Ivanishvili, and that she's only attempting to win the dissatisfied crowd over and distance it from the opposition.

The denial of EU candidate status to Georgia will reinforce the anti-Western rhetoric of government officials about 'unfair treatment' and further intensify pro-Russian forces. Accepting the status quo, with the reservation of the reforms to be carried out, will play the role of an action plan for the Western-oriented political forces, which will try to increase the pressure on the government for the European future.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Russian Occupation Forces Resume Illegal Borderization, State Security Service of Georgia Says

According to the State Security Service of Georgia, on the Russian-occupied territory near the village of Khurvaleti, the occupation forces built an illegal installation on June 18-19, 2022.

"Illegal so-called border crossing and illegal installations within it hinder free movement, complicate the daily life of the

Process of Admitting New Members to EU Should be Simplified, Says German Chancellor Olaf Scholz

In the interview with the DPA news agency, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said the process of gaining new membership in the EU should be simplified.

Scholz said that the processes need to be modernized, because in the future decisions will be impossible only with the consent of all countries:

"For that to happen, it's got to modernize its structures and decision-making processes. It won't be possible to decide everything that is decided by unanimous vote today by unanimous vote in the future."

Scholz said he hopes to raise the issue at the EU summit on June 23-24.

The 27 EU countries will decide on the candidate status of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine at this week's summit.

In order for a country to receive candidate status, all 27 EU countries need to support the issue in the European Council.

On June 17, the European Commission supported the granting of status to Ukraine and Moldova. As for Georgia, the Commission did not recommend the status.

World Refugee Day 2022: Everyone has the right to seek safety!

On June 19, to mark World Refugee Day, a Solidarity Walk was held at the Tbilisi Botanical Garden, organized jointly by the UN Refugee Agency in Georgia and the UN Resident Coordinator.

To support and show solidarity with millions forcibly displaced people around the world, the UNHCR Representative in Georgia, Ms. Kemlin Furley, UN Resident Coordinator to Georgia, Ms. Sabine Machl, together with UN Country Team, Ambassadors and representatives of various government agencies and international and non-governmental organizations, were participate in a solidarity walk along with the refugees living in Georgia.

On 20 June World Refugee Day is observed globally. On this day we honour refugees everywhere, paying respect to the resilience and courage of those who have fled conflict or persecution and are having to make new homes in foreign places. World Refugee Day is an occasion to build understanding for their plight and to celebrate empathy and public solidarity with refugees.

This is a day when we ask people to remember the importance of welcoming newcomers into their communities. Those who have been forced to flee bring with them their cultures, their unique experiences and their hope – all of which make any community stronger and more vibrant.

"In Georgia, as in the rest of Europe, the dramatic situation in Ukraine has produced an outpouring of kindness and support for those fleeing this horrible war. This year, World Refugee Day focuses on the right to seek safety. Everyone deserves to be safe, wherever they come from. We stand with refugees, whoever they are." - Kemlin Furley, the UNHCR Representative in Georgia.

Recently, the world marked a grim milestone: the number of people forced to flee conflict, war, persecution and human rights abuses crossed the 100 million mark for the first time on record. Behind this dramatic figure - more than 100 million women, men and children forced to flee are real stories of loss and trauma, as well as of courage and strength. Given the chance, refugees will continue to contribute to a stronger, safer and more vibrant world. We stand #WithRefugees! We hope you do too!

Tbilisi City has signed up to the global initiative "Cities with Refugees". Its beautiful botanical garden is the perfect place to celebrate the opportunities Georgia offers for safety and new beginnings.



The State Security Service released a statement saying that the occupation forces have resumed the process of illegal borderization near the village of Khurvaleti in Gori Municipality.

local population and damage the security environment on the ground. The occupation force bears full responsibility for the ongoing process", the statement reads.

The State Security Agency says the aforementioned issue will be raised sharply in the Geneva International Discussions and as part of a meeting of the Ergneti Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism.

Weather

Monday, June 20

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 30°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 19°C

Tuesday, June 21

Day Clear
High: 32°C

Night Clear
Low: 19°C

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