

PM Gharibashvili Publishes Open Letter, Addresses 'Deoligarchization Campaign'

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Gharibashvili has announced on 12th of July that the 'campaign of so-called deoligarchisation', which he claimed was organised by 'internal or external political opponents', involved a completely unsubstantiated accusation against former PM Bidzina Ivanishvili and was aimed at discrediting the current governance system in the country.

In an extensive letter published on his personal Facebook page, PM Gharibashvili noted that talk of Ivanishvili continuing to manage the current government is a 'complete farce and absurdity'.

"Since they have no evidence of Bidzina Ivanishvili's involvement in politics, they point to the fact that I and several key members of our political team entered politics under his leadership as the main 'proof' of the so-called 'oligarchic rule'", Gharibashvili said.

In the open letter the Head of the Government noted he had had a close relationship with Bidzina Ivanishvili as the former Director of the charity foundation Cartu - established by the latter - adding our families periodically communicate with each other in the wake of his work on the position.

He recalled that when Ivanishvili announced his entry into politics in 2011, he did not hesitate to join him, though well aware of the risks associated with this decision - "not only because of my attitude towards

Bidzina Ivanishvili, but also taking into account the country's interests, I decided to actively participate in the struggle for the democratic transition without a second thought".

Gharibashvili stressed it was particularly offensive to him when internal or external political opponents put forward the charge of the need for deoligarchisation in the country.

"According to constitutional theory and practice, the political leader of the country in a parliamentary republic is the PM, having the responsibility before the people to perform functions independently of any excessive influence. When someone claims that the Prime Minister is part of a farce and is actually run by a person who decided to quit politics in January last year, it offends not only me but the state as well", the PM wrote.

Gharibashvili also said the ruling Georgian Dream team had a 'special attitude' towards Ivanishvili as he was not only the founder of the political team but had also brought about a 'democratic change' in the country.

"When he quit politics, he left us with the right values and the rules of the game to govern the state. These values and rules of the game include the love for the country and the respect for the law. However, we do not follow these values and rules of the game as a legacy imposed by the former leader of the team. These values are vitally important and organic to our entire political team", he said.

The Government head added



that key positions of the ministers of defence, foreign affairs, justice, finance and health are today held by people Bidzina Ivanishvili has not even met or knows, and talking about Ivanishvili governing and controlling the Government and the Parliament in such circumstances is 'a complete farce and absurdity'.

"If someone believes we did not impose sanctions against Russia and did not get involved in the war (amid Russian invasion in Ukraine) on Bidzina Ivanishvili's direct orders, they are very wrong. We do not need anyone's advice or orders on this issue. Our team made decisions on

these issues independently and with complete unanimity", he said.

The Prime Minister also emphasised the ruling team did not make neither 'operational' nor 'key' decisions on the orders of the former leader of the party.

"In this situation, the authors of the deoligarchization campaign should kindly explain, what they mean when they talk about oligarchs and deoligarchization," the PM stressed, adding that if the problem is the very existence of Ivanishvili in general, or the values that he left - the love for the country and the respect for the law, then the opponents

must admit this.

Gharibashvili also said the political environment left behind by Ivanishvili and the experience of the Georgian public were 2 factors that 'do not leave any chance of success to our political opponents'.

"In such conditions, I would advise the United National Movement and its internal and external partners to adapt to the current situation - the peace, stability and double-digit economic growth. They should understand that no matter how much they may want it, they cannot involve Georgia in the war", he concluded.



Public Defender Says Everything Must Be Done to Issue Positive Opinion Regarding Granting Georgia Candidate Status

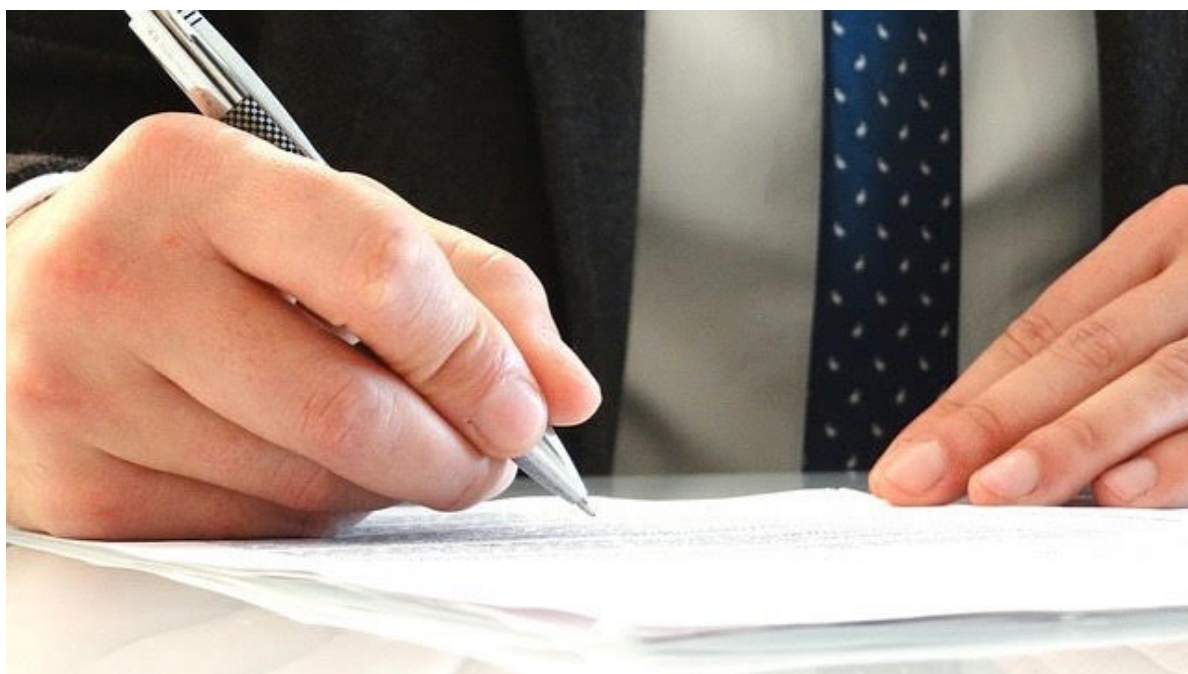
By MESSENGER STAFF

Public Defender Nino Lomjaria told reporters, "We must take use of all occasions and platforms to demonstrate to the EU that the democratic reform agenda is back in our country. I am prepared to engage in this process whenever appropriate."

"Georgia, the Georgian political community, both the ruling power and the opposition, the civil sector, we all must do everything in order for the European Commission to issue a positive opinion regarding the granting of candidate status at the end of the year. This plan is presented, of course, I have skepticism, naturally based on the statements and decisions that we see, but I believe that we must use all opportunities and formats to show the EU that the democratic reform agenda is back in this country and we are ready to fight for democratic changes. I don't think that the European Union only needs to see the process, they expect that as a result of this process, important steps will be taken on important issues such as: justice, anti-corruption, law enforcement agencies, elections. Therefore, we should, of course, observe the process and see how ready the government is for this.

My office and I, as a constitutional body, are ready to participate in this process where necessary," Lomjaria said.

NGOs Express Readiness to Engage in Fulfillment of EC-Proposed Recommendations



The NGOs believe that their case studies, reports, visions, and opinions developed as a result of observation will significantly contribute to the proper management of reforms and changes.

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

Georgian non-governmental organizations have published a joint statement to confirm readiness to involve in the timely and complete fulfillment of the 12-point recommendations proposed by the European Commission as the precondition for granting Georgia the EU candidate status. The NGOs note that the EU candidate status is a de-

cisive and priority issue for Georgia, saying the government, opposition, and civic sector should direct their efforts to reach this goal.

As the statement notes, the signatory organizations appealed to the Chairperson of the Parliament of Georgia to arrange a working meeting as soon as possible with civil organizations in order to exchange views on the format of involvement of civil

society in the process and the procedure for further work.

“We believe that today, at a turning point for the country, the only priority is to obtain the status of a member state of the European Union at the end of the year. With the view to achieving the goal, it is necessary to implement the recommendations set by the European Commission in a timely and comprehensive manner,” the statement reads.

As the NGOs note, while some differing views may emerge along the path to the goal, some of the priorities highlighted in the recommendations ‘leave no room for further interpretation’. The statement pointed out the tenth priority mentioned in the European Commission’s recommendations, which requires the effective participation of civil society in the decision-making process at all levels. The NGOs state that for many years they have been working on the issues mentioned in the recommendations of the European Commission, thus, they believe that the case studies, reports, visions, and opinions developed as a result of observation will significantly contribute to the proper manage-

ment of reforms and changes.

The joint statement is signed by Democracy Index – Georgia, Democracy Research Institute (DRI), Georgian Court Watch, Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association (GYLA) and Media Ombudsman.

For the record, European Council decided on June 23 to grant EU candidate status to Georgia once the priorities outlined in the 12-point recommendations are addressed. A Parliamentary working group has already been created that will review judicial reforms, which is one of the preconditions outlined by the European Union for granting Georgia the membership candidate status.



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Rural development contributes to Georgia’s EU integration

EU and UNDP support Georgia’s partnership with Latvia and Estonia to accelerate rural development reform

Tbilisi, 12 July 2022 – As Georgia strives for EU membership, agriculture and rural development are among the areas where institutional reform will drive the country forward. The European Union (EU) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) assist Georgia’s Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture and its Rural Development Agency to deliver on needed reforms and partner with

relevant institutions in the EU Member States, including Latvia and Estonia.

With their vast experience in agricultural and rural development, the Baltic countries can provide the expertise needed to align Georgia’s institutional, legal and administrative systems with the EU Common Agricultural Policy, European legislation that paves the way for fair and green rural development and seeks to ensure a sustainable future for farmers and rural communities. Its key areas are focused on fostering competitive agriculture and forestry, sustainable management of natural resources, climate action, rural employment, and balanced territorial development of rural economies and communi-

ties.

Government officials from three countries discussed this far-reaching cooperation on 27 June – 2 July when representatives of Georgia’s Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture visited Estonia and Latvia. During the visit, Georgia’s Rural Development Agency and Latvia’s Rural Support Service signed a Memorandum of Understanding to reinforce their partnership and lay the ground for joint initiatives.

“Georgia has moved a long way in the last decade by endorsing rural development programmes, reforming institutional frameworks and piloting rural development approaches, such as LEADER and Community-Led Local Development.

Partnership with Estonia and Latvia will help accelerate these reforms, align Georgia’s rural development policies with the European legislation, and create new opportunities for rural communities,” said **George Khanishvili**, First Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia.

“The European Union assists Georgia to reform and modernise its rural development. Institutional and policy reforms create a solid ground for practical measures to keep rural economies alive, promote green growth and ensure prosperity for rural communities,” said **Ketevan Khutsishvili**, Programme Manager for Rural Development, Civil Protection

and Crisis Management of the Delegation of the European Union to Georgia.

“In Georgia, where over 40 percent of the population live outside the big cities, sustainable rural development has a decisive role in eradicating poverty, reducing inequality and addressing environmental threats. Our goal is to ensure that rural communities receive the much-needed attention from decision-makers, the private sector, and educational and academic institutions to build vibrant rural economies that work for them and their country,” UNDP Resident Representative **Nick Beresford** said.

The EU and UNDP support for rural development in Georgia draws on the EUR179.5 million EU-funded European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (ENPARD) implemented since 2013. More information is available on the website: <https://eu4georgia.eu/enpard>

Weather

Wednesday, July 13

Day ☀ Clear
High: 36°C

Night 🌙 Clear
Low: 20°C

Thursday, July 14

Day ☀ Clear
High: 35°C

Night 🌙 Clear
Low: 20°C

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