

## Ukrainian citizens will receive financial assistance, the housing program to be terminated, says Tbilisi City Hall



By LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

According to Tbilisi City Hall, Ukrainian citizens arriving in Georgia will receive financial assistance from July 15, and the housing program will be terminated starting July 31.

The monetary assistance will be determined at 300 GEL per family, and 45 GEL per additional person.

As the Tbilisi City Hall explains, in addition, international organizations (World Vision and

UNHCR) are considering an aid package of 235 GEL per person. According to the information disseminated by the Tbilisi City Hall, Tbilisi has already hosted more than 5,100 people, of which more than 2,300 are currently housed in 40 hotels of the capital.

"Due to the high interest of the public, we would like to respond to the information spread by the media regarding the aid program for the Ukrainian people. Unfortunately, the infor-

mation is spread incorrect and aims to misinform the public. As you know, Tbilisi City Hall launched a special program in the first days of the Russia-Ukraine war - Citizens of Ukraine who have entered Georgia, who apply to us with a request to be provided with housing, are accommodated by the capital's city hall in different hotels, with three meals a day. Within the framework of the program, Tbilisi has already hosted more than 5,100 people,

of which more than 2,300 people are staying in 40 hotels of the capital. For this reason, a total of 11 million GEL was spent from the budget, and at the end of the month the amount will reach approximately 14 million GEL. The mentioned program was started by Tbilisi City Hall in March of this year and will continue until August 1. In accordance with the decree #1254 of the Government of Georgia of July 13, 2022, citizens of Ukraine who entered Georgia due to the

ongoing hostilities in Ukraine will receive financial assistance from July 15 of this year - 300 GEL per family and 45 GEL per person.

In addition, international organizations (World Vision and UNHCR) are considering an aid package of 235 GEL per person. Based on the above, on July 31, 2022, the Tbilisi City Hall will stop the current program" reads the statement released by the Tbilisi City Hall.

## Saakashvili Welcomes Involvement of 'Very Authoritative' American Forensic, Medical Experts in his Case

By MESSENGER STAFF

Mikheil Saakashvili, Georgia's third president, claims that the United States of America saved Georgia in 2008.

Saakashvili asserts that Georgia would not exist today if it weren't for the 6th Fleet and the humanitarian military operation.

"When we talk about America, let's not forget that in 2008 it was America that stopped the war and saved the state of Georgia. If it were not for the 6th fleet and the humanitarian military operation, Georgia would not exist today. In addition, at the initiative of Joe Biden, 1 billion dollars were allocated, which saved the Georgian economy, Saakashvili wrote on Facebook.

"I welcome the involvement of very authoritative American forensic and medical experts in my court case. No matter what the court decides, the world will finally learn the real facts and the situation," Mikheil Saakashvili wrote.



# Candidate Status and 2% Threshold

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

Recently, many statements have been made by the speaking leaders of “Georgian Dream” to the West. Among them was the message of Irakli Kobakhidze - if Georgia gets the EU membership status, then “Georgian Dream” will hold the 2024 parliamentary elections with a 2% threshold. The opposition considered this statement as an attempt to trade with the European Union and incorrect. The European Union has not yet reacted.

On July 7, 2022, the chairman of “Georgian Dream” Irakli Kobakhidze linked the lowering of the electoral threshold to Georgia’s acceptance of the EU membership candidate status. Kobakhidze’s proposal sounded as follows: no later than one month after the European Union grants Georgia candidate status in December, the Parliament of Georgia will adopt a constitutional law in all three readings, according to which the 2024 and subsequent parliamentary elections will be held with a fully proportional system and a 2% threshold.

Proportional elections and the topic of the electoral threshold are traditional demands of the

opposition in Georgian politics. The point is that in majoritarian elections, it is always easier for the government to withdraw its candidate, and the existing 5% electoral threshold leads to the loss of a significant part of the votes received by small parties, which again benefits the political power in power. The last parliamentary elections of 2020 were held once, with a 1% threshold (120 deputies were elected proportionally, 30 were elected by majority rule). The opposition accused “Georgian Dream” of total falsification of the elections and refused to enter the parliament for a long time, but with the great efforts of the West, it was possible to reach an agreement between the government and the opposition, and finally, to bring the opposition into the parliament. It must be said that this was an important support for “Georgian Dream”. The basis of the agreement was the document signed on April 19, 2021 (the so-called “Charles Michel document”). The mentioned document provided for the electoral reform and provided for the “threshold from natural to 2%” during the elections.

“Georgian Dream” left the April 19 agreement in August 2021 and refused to fulfill it.

However, he announced that he would lower the electoral threshold. The Parliament adopted the changes in the first reading in September 2021, where the threshold was set at 2%. However, they did not accept it in the second and third reading.

As can be seen from the statement of Irakli Kobakhidze, they will not accept either. Lowering the threshold is vital for several parties entering the parliament as a result of the 2020 elections. They will struggle with the 2% threshold, and the 5% threshold will leave them without a parliament. If the 2020 elections were held under the conditions of the 5% threshold, only Georgian Dream and National Movement would get into the parliament. e. year “Polarization” will continue under the 5% threshold.

According to the constitution, the next parliamentary elections in 2024 should be held entirely with a proportional system and under the conditions of a 5% threshold. The representatives of “Kaarthu Dream” have already announced several times that they will win another victory in the 2024 elections. A few days ago, Irakli Kobakhidze also spoke about the upcoming victory. According to his statement,

“in 2024, society will once again reject the political forces that wanted war in the country and will support the force that avoided all this from the country.”

According to the statements of the opposition representatives, the reduction of the electoral threshold is provided for by the 12 conditions put forward by the European Union. It is true that the electoral threshold is not mentioned in these 12 points, but Charles Michel’s document is mentioned, in which, as already stated, the topic of the threshold was defined. “Georgian Dream” categorically rejects such an approach.

According to Irakli Kobakhidze, the topic of the threshold is not at all related to the 12 points of the European Union, and in most of the EU countries, the 5% threshold is in effect, and “it is the sovereign right of the state to determine the electoral threshold itself.” Reducing the barrier, so to speak, is the good will of “Georgian Dream” and the 13th commitment taken by its own will.

We know the position of the government and the opposition on this issue. But what will happen if an application is made by the European Union that Geor-

gia receives the status of EU member, but with a 2% threshold elections should be held early - in the spring of 2023? On the one hand, this will eliminate the flood of anti-Western propaganda that the West wants to involve Georgia in the war and that is why they did not give it the EU membership status.

Even if the European Union agrees to Kobakhidze’s proposal, there remains another option for the development of events, which is quite possible based on past experience. Suddenly, it turns out that another group of deputies will organize a “rebellion” in the official party, and enough votes for constitutional changes will no longer be gathered.

It is more likely that the European Union will not respond to this statement of Irakli Kobakhidze, and anti-Western letters will continue to be written by “Georgian Dream” and the deputies who left it. The main intrigue is Bidzina Ivanishvili and the prospect of her being put under sanctions. It is clear that this kind of development of events is not in the interests of “Georgian Dream”, but neither should the government give in, which makes the fulfillment of the 12 points real.

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

### Soso Gogashvili’s lawyer comments amid the detainment of former deputy head of the State Security Service of Georgia

The lawyer of Soso Gogashvili, the former deputy head of the State Security Service of Georgia, who left Georgian Dream party in 2020, Dimitri Ghonghadze publicly spoke about the situation regarding the detainment and the plans of Gogashvili. He said that former deputy head of SSSG has a certain plan and will start publishing materials step by step, which

will not only concern the elections, he will expose all branches of the government and the illegal actions they were committing.

According to the lawyer, the relevant information will probably be published by July 25. According to him, the investigation is probably being conducted under the articles of illegal purchase-storage-carrying of weapons, abuse of official authority and violation of personal information.

The lawyer also spoke about Soso Gogashvili’s health condition and assessed it as “satisfactory at this stage” adding that he is suffering from the pain of injuries sustained during his arrest.

“We are waiting for the charge, which we expect in a few hours. We have requested an autopsy on the injuries, which should be done today. He was aware of the ongoing investigation, but he did not expect to be arrested. According to the arrest protocol, the investigation is being conducted under three

charges - illegal purchase-storage-carrying of weapons, exceeding official authority and tampering with personal information. Most likely, this will regard the period of his tenure.”

Lawyer Ghonghadze states that Soso Gogashvili connects the illegal detention with his activism and the statement that he was going to publicly publish the evidence, which was related to the rigging of the elections over the years. He has a certain plan and will start gradually publishing the materials, which will not only concern the elections, he will expose all the branches of the government and the illegal actions they committed” Dimitri Ghonghadze.

For information, the former deputy head of the Security Service of Georgia, Soso Gogashvili, was arrested in his home as a result of a special operation.

According to the information of the State Security Service, Gogashvili was arrested in connection with the current case, however, they do not specify the details of the case.

### Irakli Gharibashvili: I welcome Azerbaijan-Armenia dialogue in Tbilisi

Irakli Gharibashvili, the prime minister of Georgia, posted on Twitter, “I welcome the Azerbaijan-Armenia dialogue in Tbilisi.”

The Head of Government observes that maintaining peace is crucial to the prosperity of our countries.

“Welcome Azerbaijan-Armenia dialogue in Tbilisi. Georgia remains committed to play its positive role/further host meetings in a dialogue format that contribute to peace and stability in our region. Peace is absolutely essential to the prosperity of our nations”, Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Gharibashvili tweeted.



## Weather

Monday, July 18

Day ☀️ Clear  
High: 37°C

Night 🌧️ Partly Cloudy  
Low: 21°C

Tuesday, July 19

Day 🌧️ Partly Cloudy  
High: 36°C

Night 🌧️ Partly Cloudy  
Low: 19°C

published by  
**The Messenger**

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*On the occasion of the National Day of the French Republic, the Ambassador of France to Georgia HE Diego Colas held a reception on July 14.*







