

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Political leaders congratulate Ukraine on 31st Independence day

The President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili, congratulated Ukraine on its Independence Day. She also noted that the Ukrainian nation has shown the whole world it's a worthy struggle for independence.

"Happy #IndependenceDay to Ukraine!"

The Ukrainian nation has shown the world its admirable fight for its independence and freedom.

Georgia and Ukraine are close, brotherly nations with a similar struggle. We know the cost of independence. And we will always stand together. #SlavaUkraini" President of Georgia wrote on Twitter

'Droa' party leader Elene Khoshtaria also congratulated Ukraine on Independence Day and noted that this is the day of the whole free and civilized world.

According to her, Ukraine has become a symbol of the fight against evil for freedom and peace.

"Today is Ukraine's Independence Day, and 6 months have passed since Russia, a terrorist state, carried out aggression against the Ukrainian state. Today, Ukraine's Independence Day is the day of the entire free and civilized world because Ukraine has become a symbol of the fight against evil for freedom and peace. This is not only the day of Ukraine, it is the day of the whole free world and especially the day of Georgia because today Ukraine is fighting for my freedom and peace among them. We must honor all the dead, civilian or military, the 18 Georgian soldiers who defended our country on the land of Ukraine and sacrificed themselves to fight against evil," she said.

According to Khoshtaria, the government's attempt to disrupt



the support actions planned will not yield any results. In addition, she called the population to attend the planned marches in Batumi and Tbilisi.

"It is important to celebrate this day in Georgia today. Not only is the state not doing it, but it has taken shameful steps against the rally planned in Batumi, restricting the stage of the rally in Batumi and creating logistical problems. I am sure that this attempt will not yield any results and today at 8 o'clock people will gather at the alphabet tower in Batumi. Also, a procession is held at Republic Square in Tbilisi at 7 o'clock, and I hope that today we will

gather and meet in a dignified manner on this day," said Khoshtaria.

In connection with the Independence Day of Ukraine, pro-Ukraine rallies were planned in Tbilisi, Batumi, and other cities. Preparations for the rally in Batumi started 2 weeks ago. Ukrainian citizens and activists turned to the City Hall for technical support. According to them, the City Hall initially agreed to them, but later issued an ultimatum not to mention the war, Russia, and occupation at the rally, otherwise, they would not give them the necessary equipment.

'Lelo' party leader Badri

Japaridze also congratulated Ukraine on Independence day.

"The Ukrainian people are celebrating the 31st anniversary of their country's independence with a self-sacrificing fight against the aggressor - this is a unique occasion when the whole civilized world is united around the Ukrainian people, Badri Japaridze said this on Rustaveli Avenue, during the celebration rally of the Independence Day of Ukraine.

As Badri Japaridze pointed out, we are all obliged to honor the selfless struggle of Ukrainians, because the Ukraine-Russia war is also a fight for the freedom of Georgia.

"Ukrainian people celebrate the 31st anniversary of their country's independence with a selfless fight against the aggressor. The struggle of the Ukrainian people is an exemplary struggle for freedom, and values, to restore the territorial integrity of their country. They are also fighting for our freedom. So, the Ukrainian people deserve full support and support in this struggle. This is a unique case when the whole civilized world is united around the Ukrainian people. We are all obliged to honor the selfless struggle of Ukrainians, which is also the struggle for our freedom," said Badri Japaridze.

US has fully trusts ISFED, Kelly Degnan says

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE



US Ambassador Kelly Degnan stated that the United States has full trust in the 'Fair Elections' (ISFED).

According to Kelly Degnan, ISFED should have the opportunity to participate in the parliamentary working group on Electoral reform. According to the American ambassador, the recommendations of the European Commission envisage an inclusive process in which all interested parties, including civil organizations, should participate in the development of reforms.

Ambassador Degnan also recalled that international organizations were talking about significant violations regarding the 2020 and 2021 elections. According to

the US ambassador, the fact that the public has lost confidence in the results of these elections is not the responsibility of ISFED.

"The US fully trusts ISFED. It is a respected and experienced election monitoring organization. ISFED participated last summer in the Electoral Reform Working Group, chaired by the current Speaker of Parliament, which produced some very important, useful electoral legislation which was then passed by Parliament.

I think it is also important to remember to repeat the assessments made by the OSCE/ODIHR and international and local election monitoring organizations on the 2020-2021 elections. All of them spoke about serious violations: intimidation,

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.8192; Euro - 2.7972; GBP - 3.3199; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.6716; Swiss Franc - 2.9263

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

Georgia's distance from the West means getting closer to Russia

Russia's attack on Ukraine on February 24 was a particular turning point, after which the "Georgian Dream" increasingly distanced itself from the West and moved closer to Russia. Various versions have been put forward to explain why this happened. Each of them allows making certain conclusions to understand the situation.

According to one of the versions, the "Georgian Dream" that came to power in 2012, which represented completely different political groups gathered around the Russian oligarch Bidzina Ivanishvili, was a Russian project from the beginning, and what the Kremlin could not achieve through the war in 2008 - the replacement of Saakashvili's pro-Western government - was achieved through the elections. Initially, political leaders and groups with a western orientation were included in the "Georgian Dream", but gradually Ivanishvili removed them, or they removed themselves. Today, there is practically no one left in the "Georgian Dream" who has not made critical statements regarding the West.

At first, the coming to power of the "Georgian Dream" through elections was consid-

ered a critical success of Georgian democracy and it was met with great approval in the West. And Bidzina Ivanishvili made promises that she would surprise the world by creating an "unprecedented democracy" in Georgia.

However, if we look at recent Western assessments, Georgian democracy has serious setbacks, and the created political system was characterized by the opposition (meaning the resistance that "Georgian Dream" calls "radical") as oligarchic-authoritarian.

The government of "Georgian Dream" or Ivanishvili has been taking steps towards Russia for years and actually did everything to return the country to Russia's orbit, but at the same time talking about western orientation and applying for EU membership.

The vast majority of the population of Georgia and a significant part of the voters of the "Georgian Dream" support the Western orientation. It was easy for the "Georgian Dream" to talk about the Western orientation because it looked like a very

vague and distant perspective.

Russia's attack on Ukraine changed everything, Georgia would already have the status of a candidate for EU membership, like Moldova and Ukraine, if it were not for the actions of the "Georgian Dream", which, according to the opposition, took such extraordinary steps that they did not even think about granting the candidate status to Georgia.

All Georgian authorities have always been accountable to the West. On the one hand, this resulted from the officially recognized Western orientation of Georgia, on which there was a consensus both among the official circles and the general public and on the other hand, from the great support given to Georgia by the West.

Perhaps, in 2012, the "National Movement" was not very happy to admit defeat in the parliamentary elections, but it took into account the position and advice of the West.

In the beginning, "Georgian Dream" also behaved like this, as if it had to report to Charles Michel, who came to Tbilisi sev-

eral times and signed a document that provided for the implementation of reforms, but after 100 days, he demonstratively refused this document.

What could "Georgian Dream" hope for when it went to a direct confrontation with its Western friends? The answer is simple - Russia. Putin seemed invincible, the West could not oppose the seizure of Crimea, or the creation of separatist regimes in Donetsk and Luhansk, with the support of Moscow, Lukashenko suppressed strong opposition speeches.

Under such conditions, why should they comply with the demands of the "weak" West regarding the need for democratization?

Judging by the reaction of the Georgian authorities after Russia's attack on Ukraine, they were sure of Putin's quick victory, Georgia did not join the sanctions and actually blamed the Ukrainian authorities, who "couldn't avoid" the war with Russia.

But the subsequent development of events turned out to be an unpleasant surprise for Putin

and the circles focused on him. Maybe they sometimes think about the question of what will happen if Russia loses in Ukraine.

Maybe the "Georgian Dream" does not have much choice in today's situation. On the one hand, it shows that it is working to obtain the status of a candidate for EU membership, on the other hand, it remains among the "friendly countries" of Putin's Russia, although this "friendship" actually poses great threats to Georgia.

The 12 conditions put forward by the European Union mean the democratic modernization of the existing political system of Georgia. De-oligarchization, independent court, electoral reform, etc. The implementation of these demands actually means the dismantling of the system on which Bidzina Ivanishvili's shadow government is based. The opposition is sure that the "Georgian Dream" is not going to fulfill these demands either. And with a strong anti-Western campaign, it prepares the ground by rejecting the Western orientation.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

'It is very sad that the events have developed in this way', says Degnan on the sanctioning of TV companies

The US Ambassador to Georgia, Kelly Degnan, called the sanctioning of 'Mtavari Arkhi', 'Formula' and 'TV Pirveli' by the Communications Commission, an unfortunate development.

According to Degnan, the decision of the Communications Commission, which envisages

fining 'Mtavari Arkhi' and warning Formula and TV Pirveli for airing the clip 'Home to Europe', is a "sad development of events" and is actually a matter of protecting freedom of speech.

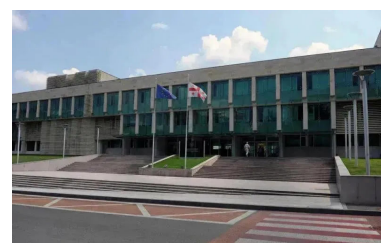
"It is very sad that events have developed in this way. This is a matter of freedom of speech and the right to express a critical opinion, including an opinion that criticizes the government. The freedom to criticize the government is the most important principle of a healthy democracy," Degnan said.

The Communications Commission issued a warning to

'Formula' and 'TV Pirveli', and fined 'Mtavari Arkhi' 118,688 GEL for airing the clip 'Home to Europe'. 'Georgian Dream' filed a lawsuit against the media companies. The Communications Commission satisfied GD's lawsuit.

US citizen illegally detained by the Russian occupiers is free, says State Security Service of Georgia

According to the information of the State Security Service of Georgia, Frank Yanez, a US citi-



zen illegally detained by Russian occupiers, is free and is in the territory controlled by the Georgian government.

According to the agency, the central government of Georgia actively used both the hotline mechanism and other tools available to the central government to request the immediate release

of the US citizen.

"Information was constantly provided to the co-chairs of the Geneva international discussions and international partners.

The central government continues to actively work to release illegally detained persons, both in the direction of occupied Tskhinvali and occupied Abkhazia.

Full responsibility for the destructive actions carried out in the occupied regions of Georgia and along the occupation line rests with the occupying power," reads the statement released by the Security Council.

US has fully trusts ISFED, Kelly Degnan says

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pressure on voters, carousel, use of administrative resources, and other violations that took place

Weather

Thursday, August 25

Day Clear
High: 32°C

Night Clear
Low: 18°C

Friday, August 26

Day Clear
High: 33°C

Night Clear
Low: 19°C

both in the weeks before the election and on the day of the election. By any assessment, these elections were not declared completely fair.

ISFED was not responsible for these violations. I think it is clear that they did not participate in the violations that caused the public to lose confidence in the election results.

As for the error that this orga-

nization had in calculating the results. As soon as they discovered this minor error, they immediately notified the public and made the information fully public. That is why we fully trust ISFED as a professional election observation organization. They were transparent about the error as soon as it was discovered. And that is why it is very important that ISFED and other civil orga-

nizations with experience in observing and holding elections have the opportunity to participate in the working groups for electoral reforms in Georgia. This is what the European Commission called for [Georgia] - an inclusive process that would ensure that all interested parties would have the opportunity to contribute to the improvement of Georgia's electoral system," the

US ambassador said.

On August 18, the ruling party 'Georgian Dream' did not invite Fair Elections (ISFED) to the meeting of the working group created on the revision of the electoral code.

The head of the group, Givi Mikanadze, named the "non-neutrality" of the organization as the reason for this. According to him, ISFED lost its neutrality when it demanded the resignation of Irakli Gharibashvili from the position of Prime Minister.

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