

President of Georgia Criticizes Russia's Decision to Resume Flights and Cancel Visas, Calling It a Provocative and Unacceptable Move

By Liza Mchedlidze

At a briefing in response to Russia's resumption of direct flights with Georgia and cancellation of the visa regime, Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili urged the government to take a clear stance and convene the Security Council to discuss the possibility of introducing 3-month visas.

According to the President of Georgia, Russia's decision to resume direct flights with Georgia and cancel the visa regime is a provocative and unacceptable move at an untimely moment. She questioned the purpose of this provocation, suggesting it could be an attempt to cover up Russia's recent failures in Bakhmut, Ukraine and inability to demonstrate strength.

Alternatively, According to her, it may be a response to the European Union's recent announcement of an 11th package of sanctions against Russia. Regardless, she believes the main objective of this provocation is to challenge the Georgian society and government, presenting a significant challenge to both.

The President said that this move will create tension between the parties involved, as it is clear that Russia is acting solely in its own interests.

Zourabichvili expressed her disappointment that the government has not yet realized or considered the historical examples demonstrating that the Russian government does not respond to concessions with concessions. Instead, they tend to make the situation even more difficult.

The President called on the government to take a clear stance and make their position known and urged the Security Council to convene publicly to discuss the establishment of 3-month visas, which are necessary even for internal challenges.

"Today, we all heard another provocative statement from Russia. The purpose



of this provocation is possibly to cover up their failure, collapse, in Bakhmut. I am not sure how to describe it, but I mean to refer to the situation where they are unable to demonstrate their power. This could be in response to the 11th package of sanctions announced by the European Union yesterday.

It could be many things, but the main issue for us is that this provocation challenges our society and our government faces a significant challenge. This will undoubtedly cause some tension, at least between the parties. Otherwise, I am sure

it will not cause tension in society. Instead, it will cause a reaction that understands very well that Russia is taking these steps based on its own interests.

It is regrettable that our government has not yet understood or considered the historical examples that demonstrate that the Russian government does not respond to concessions with concessions. Instead, it responds by making the situation more difficult. This is a permanent method of behavior, and the government should be aware of it. I have expressed

my position on Twitter. I believe it is inappropriate and untimely.

We do not need to remove visas or restore flights as long as Russia remains an aggressor to the whole world. Such a gesture by the occupier is untimely and unacceptable. I call on the government to make its position clear. It is time for what I have repeatedly requested - the Security Council to meet publicly and discuss the establishment of 3-month visas, which we need even based on internal challenges" Zourabichvili stated.

Georgian Opposition Leaders Express Concerns Over Russia's Decision on Visa-Free Travel and Lifting Flight Ban

By Liza Mchedlidze

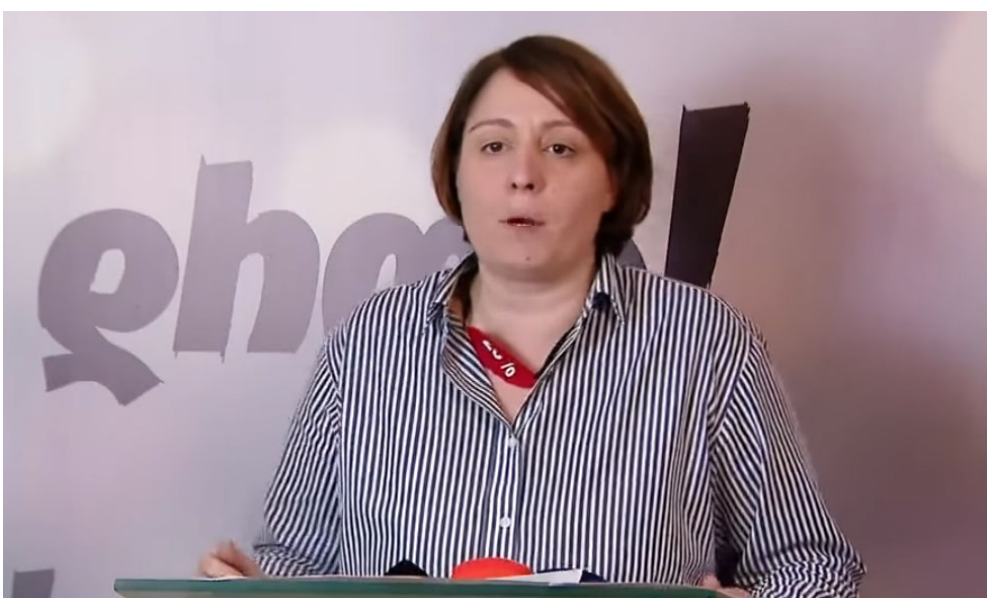
Elene Khoshtaria, the leader of the E droa political party, expressed her opposition to the restoration of flights and the visa-free regime with Russia, referring to it as an occupying, aggressive, and internationally recognized terrorist state. Khoshtaria further stated that allowing Russian airlines to operate in Georgia would be viewed as another direct act of sabotage against Ukraine and Georgia's European aspirations.

Khoshtaria highlighted the international legal implications of Russia's decision to restore flights and a visa-free regime with Georgia, stating that it goes against Georgia's national interests and international image. She emphasized that it also poses a direct threat to Ukraine

and Georgia's European perspective. Khoshtaria pointed out that since February 28, all Russian airlines have been sanctioned by the European Union. Any aircraft operated by a Russian airline or owned by a Russian natural or legal entity is sanctioned in Europe. Allowing Russian airlines to operate in Georgia would violate these sanctions and further risk Georgia's relationship with the EU.

Khoshtaria also referenced the US State Department's concern about the resumption of flights between Russia and Georgia, stating that Georgian airlines may also become subject to sanctions. She emphasized that this decision puts Georgia at risk of sanctions and is a disaster from technical, moral, political, and legal standpoints.

CONTINUED FROM Page 2



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CONTINUED FROM Page 1

The Droa leader said that the claim of over a million Georgian citizens living in Russia is false and is being used by the ruling party to justify its decision to restore flights and a visa-free regime with Russia. Khoshtaria accused Georgian Dream of committing treason and suggested that their actions may lead to repercussions for the citizens of Georgia.

Dekanoidze also addressed the issue of

Russia's cancellation of the visa regime with Georgia. According to Dekanoidze, Putin's decision is a reward for the anti-Western and anti-Ukrainian policy pursued by the Georgian authorities, particularly by the ruling party Georgian Dream and its leader Bidzina Ivanishvili. She warned that this policy is seen as going against civilization and the national interests of Georgia, which primarily involve the desire of 85% of Georgian citizens to integrate into the European

Union.

Dekanoidze further warned that any airline that complies with Putin's wish to resume flights between Russia and Georgia will only strengthen his message and further cement his influence. She stated that the Georgian authorities should be aware that agreeing to this could lead to sanctions, which have already been imposed on Russian airlines by the European Union since February 28 and could potentially be even stronger

in the future.

Gakharia, leader of For Georgia, also said that Russia's decision to lift the flight ban and cancel the visa regime for Georgian citizens is a result of the Georgian government's 'good behavior', which is frequently praised by Russian officials. Gakharia added that Ivanishvili's policies put Georgia in line with aggressors, jeopardizing the country's European integration aspirations and going against the will of the Georgian people.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Russia Cancels Visa Regime with Georgia and Resumes Direct Flights



The President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, has issued a decree revoking the visa-free travel option to Georgia. Additionally, Russian airlines are now permitted to operate direct flights to Georgia as the ban on such flights has been lifted by Putin.

Starting from May 15, Russia's visa requirements for Georgian citizens will be lifted as per the

decision made by Vladimir Putin. This means that Georgian nationals will be allowed to stay in Russia for up to 90 days without the need for a visa.

An order issued by Vladimir Putin has already been published, which pertains to the lifting of the ban on flights to Georgia for Russian airlines. The order declares the previous ban on flights to Georgia, which was instituted on June 21, 2019, as invalid.

Zakharova, the official spokesperson for the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has announced that the ministry has canceled its previous recommendation for Russian citizens to avoid traveling to Georgia.

Zakharova, the recent decisions made by the President of the Russian Federation to allow for visa-free travel of Georgian citizens to Russia and to restore flights between the two countries are consistent with Russia's ap-

proach to facilitating communication and contact between the citizens of Russia and Georgia, despite the current lack of diplomatic relations between the two nations.

Georgian Foreign Minister Welcomes Russia's Decision to Cancel Visa Regime for Georgian Citizens

In response to Russia's decision to cancel the visa regime for Georgian citizens, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Iliia Darchiashvili, stated that any responsible government would welcome a move that allows its citizens to fly directly.

Darchiashvili stated that the welfare of Georgian citizens residing abroad has always been a priority for the Georgian government, and this decision is no exception. He emphasized that over a million Georgians live in Russia, and the cancellation of the visa regime will ease their living conditions and allow them

to maintain closer contact with their loved ones and relatives in Georgia. From a humanitarian perspective, any responsible government would welcome such a

decision, he added. "We have said many times and we always say that our citizens living abroad are always our concern, including in this case. I want to say unequivocally that more than a million of our citi-



manitarian prism, is welcome by any responsible government. The decision will make living conditions easier for our citizens and will allow them to be able to communicate and commute with each other," said Darchiashvili.

A delegation from KfW Development Bank is visiting Georgia from May 10th to 12th, 2023.

The members of the delegation are Christiane Laibach (Member of KfW Executive Board for International Financing), Monika Beck (Member of the Management Board of DEG), Verena Köttker (Director of Group Communications Department of KfW), Veronica Garcia Del Arco (KfW Director for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia). The delegation will also be accompanied by German journalists of different media.

KfW has been active in Geor-

Delegation of the implementing organization KfW Development Bank comes to Georgia



gia on behalf of the federal government since 1993 and enjoys an excellent reputation.

The aim of the trip is to visit several projects in Georgia, which are financially supported by the Federal Republic of Germany through the KfW Development Bank, and the exchange with the Georgian partners.

Among other things, a meeting is planned together with the German Embassy in the Georgian State Electrosystem (GSE), where visitors will visit the control center for power lines and discuss topics such as energy independence, renewable energies and the potential of the Georgian electricity sector in the

European electricity network.

In addition, the delegation will hold talks with the representatives of the Agency of the Protected Areas (APA), the Ministry of Environment, the Caucasus Nature Fund and the WWF on the special role of Georgia in the region as a biodiversity hotspot.

There will also be an exchange with the Deputy Mayor of Tbilisi on urban mobility. The delegation members will get acquainted with the traffic planning and the traffic situation of Tbilisi.

Afterwards, guests will visit Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park.

Weather

Thursday, May 11

Day Mostly Cloudy

High: 19°C

Night Showers

Low: 13°C

Friday, May 12

Day Light Rain

High: 18°C

Night Showers

Low: 14°C

published by

The Messenger

43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi, 0108, Georgia

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