

## Georgian Prime Minister Emphasizes Government's Efforts for Long-Term Peace and EU Membership at CoE Summit

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

During his speech at the General Debate held within the framework of the Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe in Reykjavik, Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Gharibashvili stated that the Georgian government is taking all necessary measures to ensure long-term peace in the country.

During his speech, Irakli Gharibashvili discussed the issue of Russia's aggression in Ukraine, highlighting its significance as one of the major challenges confronting Europe. He emphasized that such aggression violates several international declarations, including the UN and Helsinki agreements. Gharibashvili expressed Georgia's unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, drawing upon the country's own firsthand experience of a full-scale war with Russia in 2008. This conflict resulted in significant loss of life and the occupation of 20% of Georgian territories.

"Today we are facing one of the most important challenges in Europe, which involves Russia's aggression in Ukraine, which violates the UN, Helsinki and other declarations. Georgia strongly supports the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, and we well remember the full-scale war we had with Russia in 2008. We had a very large deficit of 20% of lives. We, Georgians, know very well the price of war and the price of peace. After regaining our independence and going through several wars, we realize the consequences of war and therefore value peace more. Our govern-



ment, which is in power, is doing everything to ensure that there is continuous peace in the country," said Gharibashvili.

As per his statement, the Prime Minister highlighted that Georgia's future objective is to become a member of the European Union. He emphasized that this aspiration is a significant goal for both the country and its people. Additionally, the government is actively working towards fulfilling the 12 recommendations necessary to obtain candidate status.

During his address, Gharibashvili discussed the leg-

islative changes undertaken to reform the electoral and judicial systems in Georgia. He also touched upon the current state of media and freedom of expression, emphasizing that these issues are a part of their agenda. The Prime Minister expressed the commitment of the Georgian government to transparency and openness, considering them as their distinctive traits. Furthermore, he stated that Georgia leads in these aspects among Eastern European and Central Asian countries.

The Prime Minister emphasized that since coming to power in 2012, the Georgian govern-

ment has implemented an effective policy and taken dynamic actions that align with their vision. According to him, Georgia has become a model democracy in the entire region.

The Prime Minister spoke about the significant improvements that have been made in both the judicial and electoral systems as part of Georgia's development agenda. Gharibashvili said that the legislative changes were implemented to safeguard human rights in these areas.

"We have improved both the judicial system and the electoral system. It is part of our develop-

ment agenda. Legislative changes have been made in the judicial system and the electoral system to ensure the protection of human rights. Media rights and freedom of expression are also included in our agenda. Transparency and openness are our core values. Georgia is a leader in Eastern European and Central Asian countries in terms of these aspects. Overall, Georgia has become an exemplary democracy in the entire region, and we have received positive assessments at the international level regarding these aspects," said the Prime Minister.



## Parliament Chairman of Georgia Affirms Compliance with Imposed Sanctions

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia, Shalva Papuashvili responded to the statement made by Vedant Patel, the Deputy Spokesperson of the United States State Department, in which Patel expressed concern about direct flights with Russia. According to Papuashvili, none of the imposed sanctions have been violated thus far.

Papuashvili expressed his disappointment with the ambiguity surrounding certain statements and highlighted that the Georgian government, with a mandate from its citizens, is responsible for considering the issue from a national perspective. He further stressed the government's commitment to implementing international sanctions and mentioned that no

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.5347; Euro - 2.7446; GBP - 3.1542; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.1347; Swiss Franc - 2.8182

# Parliament Chairman of Georgia Affirms Compliance with Imposed Sanctions

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complaints have been received regarding their enforcement. He

urged for clear statements affirming the absence of sanctions violations and reiterated that the government of Georgia priori-

tizes national interests in addressing other matters.

"We have heard various assessments, and it is unfortunate to witness the ambiguity present in such statements. However, one thing remains clear: until now, no one, including foreign sources, has claimed any violations of the imposed sanctions. This fact emphasizes that none of the sanctions have been breached. When it comes to considering the issue from a different perspective, it is the Geor-

gian government that holds the authority, having received a mandate from its citizens to make state decisions.

Regarding the decision on the international level, it is our responsibility to ensure the implementation of the sanctions. We have not received any complaints regarding their enforcement. Therefore, it is crucial to clearly state that no sanctions are being violated instead of making vague statements. As for other matters, the govern-

ment of Georgia addresses them based on the national interests of the country," Papuashvili stated.

The chairman of the Parliament of Georgia has called on the European Union to make a fair and conscientious decision and allow Georgia to move to the next stage, as the country has fulfilled its obligations. He emphasized that Georgia should be at the same level as Ukraine and Moldova and that justice demands it.

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

### Parliament of Georgia Appoints Three Non-Judge Members to Supreme Council of Justice



The Parliament of Georgia conducted a voting process to select candidates for the five available non-judge positions in the Supreme Council of Justice, ultimately appointing three individuals as non-judge members of the council.

The support received by the chosen candidates remains uncertain due to the anonymous voting process. Additionally, two positions remain unfilled as a result of a faction of the opposition leaving the meeting hall in protest.

Tristan Benashvili, Giorgi

Gzobava, and Zurab Guraspashvili secured their positions as non-judge members of the Supreme Council of Justice, each receiving over 90 votes. Tristan Benashvili obtained 93 votes, Giorgi Gzobava received 91 votes, and Zurab Guraspashvili

acquired 93 votes.

For the election of a non-judge member of the Supreme Council of Justice, a minimum of 90 votes was required, necessitating a consensus between the majority and the opposition. The majority, which holds 84 votes, needed to secure additional support to meet the threshold.

Prior to the commencement of voting, 'Lelo' member Davit Usupashvili conveyed that the opposition's proposal was to engage in discussions with the majority and exchange their respective stances. However, this proposition was deemed unfeasible, and the voting process proceeded without any consultations taking place.

### US State Department Raises Concerns over Restoration of Direct Flights between Russia and Georgia

At a briefing held in the White House in Washington, Vedant Patel, the Principal Deputy Spokesperson at U.S. Department of State, was asked a ques-

tion about the restoration of direct flights between Russia and Georgia.

Patel emphasized that the United States is carefully observing this process and will act accordingly if the need arises. He highlighted that, at present, the global community as a whole is distancing itself from Russia, making it an inappropriate time to seek closer ties with Moscow.



According to Vedant Patel, the existence of direct flights between Georgia and Russia would raise significant concerns for not only the United States and other Western nations but also for companies operating

within Georgian airports.

"If there are direct flights between Georgia and Russia, it will be a matter of growing concern not only for the USA and other Western countries, but also for the companies that work in Georgian airports.

We have been very clear about our concerns about this, and we reiterate that we have taken steps to prevent Russian

aircraft from entering our airspace, as have many Western countries. So we will continue to monitor the situation closely and take additional steps if necessary," Patel said.

# EU regrets Georgia's decision to resume flights with Russia

The European Union regrets Georgia's decision to resume flights with Russia following Russia's decision to lift the air travel ban last week, the European Union Lead spokesperson for foreign affairs and security policy said at a press conference on 16 May.

Due to the illegal Russian war against Ukraine, the EU and a number of other countries have sanctioned Russian aviation, and



do not allow flights from, to or over Russia.

"This step raises concerns in terms of Georgia's EU path and its commitment to align with the EU in the foreign policy as per the EU-Georgia Association Agreement," said Peter Stano.

"Regrettably, Georgia's alignment rate with EU CFSP decisions and declarations has gone from a low 44% last year to only 31% so far this year."

The European Union also recalls that the UN's International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) has raised significant concerns over the safety of Russian aircrafts.

(eunighbourseast.eu)

## Weather

Thursday, May 18

Day Mostly Cloudy

High: 18°C

Night Showers

Low: 12°C

Friday, May 19

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 24°C

Night Showers

Low: 16°C

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# 1<sup>st</sup> Mediterranean Film Festival

The opening ceremony of the 1<sup>st</sup> Mediterranean Film Festival was held in the cinema "Amirani", which was held on the initiative of the Greek Embassy in Georgia and 5 other countries: France, Italy, Spain, Turkey and Israel. The festival opened with 6 short film collages

(each film from each country) and will continue until May 21, 2023 with daily screenings of each participating country. Admission is free for the public and tickets are available on a first-come-first-served basis at Amirani's box office.









**1st Mediterranean Film Festival**

**16 - 21.05**

**Opening**

featuring 6 short films from each country








<b>16</b> .05 19:00	<b>WHISPER IF I FORGET</b> ჩაჩუქრება თუ დაავიწყდა 18:00	<b>DELICIOUS</b> უპრობლემო 20:00	
<b>17</b> .05	<b>WEDDING DALL BLURAY</b> სამორჩინო ტოპონა BLURAY 18:00	<b>CHAMPIONS</b> ჩემპიონები 20:00	
<b>18</b> .05	<b>WELCOME VENICE</b> 18:00	<b>THE TAILOR</b> გაბრევი 20:00	
<b>19</b> .05	<b>PAPICHA</b> პაპიჩა 15:30	<b>UMBERTO D</b> უმბერტო დ. 17:30	<b>WHEN TOMATOES MET WAGNER</b> როდესაც პომიდორები შეხვდნენ ვაგნერს 19:30
<b>20</b> .05	<b>IN THE FAMILY</b> თავისში 15:30	<b>THE BEASTS</b> მხეცები 17:30	<b>ON THIS HAPPY NOTE</b> ამ ბედნიერ ნოტაზე 19:30
<b>21</b> .05			

Tickets are available on a first-come, first-served basis at the Amiran's box office









