

Kelly Degnan Condemns 'Coordinated' Violence at Tbilisi Pride Festival

By Liza Mchedlidze

US Ambassador to Georgia H.E. Kelly Degnan expressed her sadness at witnessing the actions of hateful individuals who resorted to violence and justified their actions in the name of God. Her response was in relation to the disturbance caused by violent groups during the Tbilisi Pride festival. Degnan further stated that the violence seemed to be coordinated, a fact that raises significant concern.

The ambassador highlighted that despite assurances from the Ministry of Internal Affairs officials that protesters would be prevented from reaching the festival and kept at a safe distance, this did not occur. The police allowed them to breach the cordon and cause damage to private property.

Degnan condemned individuals resorting to violence in order to disrupt a private event, particularly when they justified their actions in the name of God. She emphasized that while people may hold differing opinions, there is a shared agreement that Christian values encompass compassion, love, tolerance, and respect for all individuals, as everyone is believed to be made in the image of God.

The ambassador pointed out that a day prior to the incident, Ministry of Internal Affairs officials had assured that protesters would not be permitted in the area and that measures would be taken to maintain a safe distance from the festival. According to Degnan, these assurances were not fulfilled, and unruly



mobs were allowed to march through the streets of Tbilisi.

Degnan expressed deep concern regarding the allegedly coordinated violence against individuals on the streets of Tbilisi, noting that these are the same extremists witnessed in 2021. She highlighted their presence on social media platforms, where they openly promote violence and proudly align themselves with it, making threats to cause harm. The ambassador stated that the people of Tbilisi would feel safer

if those captured on video during the raid were arrested and held accountable for their actions.

"It was very sad to see hateful people resorting to violence to disrupt a private concert, especially when they claimed to be acting in the name of God. While people may not agree on many things, there is a shared belief that Christian values encompass compassion, love, tolerance, and respect for all individuals, as everyone is made in the image of God.

On the day before last week's

Saturday, Ministry of Internal Affairs officials claimed that protesters would not be allowed in the area and that they would be kept at a safe distance from the festival. However, none of these assurances were fulfilled. Unruly mobs were allowed to march for miles through the streets of Tbilisi, calling for violence. Not only did they breach the police perimeter, but they also entered the area and destroyed private property without facing retaliation from the police.

The allegedly coordinated violence against people happening in the streets of Tbilisi is very disturbing. These are the same extremists we saw in 2021, and they actively promote violence on platforms like Facebook. They openly make threats to break jaws, spill blood, and proudly align themselves with violence. The people captured on the videos of the raid should be arrested and held accountable. Everyone in Tbilisi would feel safer if this happens," said Degnan.

Public Defender's Office Launches an Investigation on MIA Employee Case

By Liza Mchedlidze

The public defender, Levan Ioseliani, stated that he was informed about the public statement of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia employee, in which Goga Razmadze revealed the alleged 'humiliating' pressure on him.

According to Ioseliani, Razmadze addressed him personally and the Public Defender's Office launched an investigation.

"He applied to the Public Defender's office, he also applied to me personally, and we have already started studying this case for over a week, and accordingly, the relevant department will investigate this issue, and

the public will then know what position the Public Defender will have regarding his statement. Nothing can be revealed in a week because it has its own procedure, it will take time to study this case. As far as I know, he is going to come to us and have an interview with the head of the relevant department," said Ioseliani.

Goga Razmadze, an employee of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, publicly talked about the problems in the Ministry and the degrading actions towards him in a lengthy Facebook post.

Razmadze said that she works in the Human Rights Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and everything has

changed in this department after Deputy Minister Aleksandre Darakhvelidze was appointed as curator.

He also wrote that when he sent his opinions on the problems in the department via e-mail to the deputy minister and the management of the department, on July 11 he was summoned to the general inspection of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Razmadze said that for three hours he was "interrogated about the case" by the Deputy Head of the General Inspection of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Davit Mindiashvili, under humiliating and insulting conditions.



The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Aleksandre Darakhvelidze Denies the Allegations of Mistreatment of MIA Employee



The Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, Aleksandre Darakhvelidze, has responded to allegations made by Ministry employee Goga Razmadze, who publicly accused Ministry officials of mistreatment and undue

pressure. Darakhvelidze has denied these allegations, referring to them as a "lie" and "absurd." "Goga Razmadze's statement is a complete lie and absurd. It is not based on any evidence or legal basis.

The Department of Human Rights has been established within the Ministry of Internal Affairs for five years, and we

have received numerous recommendations from international organizations to strengthen this department. To assess the current situation, including identifying weak and strong points, we requested the audit department

to study the functional workload. However, Goga Razmadze appears to be the only person uncomfortable with this process," Darakhvelidze said.

Movement Between Georgia and Armenia is Now Possible with a Biometric ID card

Movement between Georgia and Armenia is now possible with a biometric ID card, thanks to the agreement "On two-way visa-free movement of citizens between Georgia and the Republic of Armenia." This agreement was signed by Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili of Georgia and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian of the Republic of Armenia in Yerevan on January 12, 2023, and it has since come into effect.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia has clarified that the purpose of this agreement is to create more favorable conditions for mutual travel for citizens of both Georgia and Armenia. According to the agreement, citizens of both countries are entitled to travel from Geor-

gia to Armenia and vice versa using a biometric ID card.

This travel can take place through designated border-crossing points authorized for international travel, as stated by the Foreign Ministry of Georgia. The new agreement signed by the

Prime Ministers of Georgia and Armenia replaces the previous agreement, which was signed on May 19, 1993, and pertained to visa-free movement of citizens between the two countries within their respective territories.

Infographic in Georgian text with logos of Georgia and Armenia, detailing the biometric ID card agreement.

Uniting youth across borders: EU4Youth Alumni Network celebrates the end of a 10-month volunteer programme in Tbilisi

Between 5 and 8 July, a gathering of around 50 young people from the EU's Eastern partner countries took place in Tbilisi, Georgia, marking the final evaluation event of the EU4Youth Alumni Network's 2022-2023 cycle.

Co-facilitated by the Alumni's mentors and the Network's coordination team, this meeting was the culmination of the young participants' dedicated 10-month volunteer work for the programme.

"The final evaluation event was a great opportunity for Alumni from six countries to share their experiences and present the results of their voluntary activities," said Programme Coordinator, EU4Youth Coordination and



Support, Maxim Pijevskii.

In less than a year, these young people have worked hard to provide educational opportunities for disadvantaged youth in their regions. For instance, Xenia and Victor, two EU4Youth Alumni from the Republic of

Moldova, spearheaded an initiative named 'Civic Education and Opportunities for Disadvantaged Youth'.

According to Xenia, the significance of the 'Civic Education and Opportunities for Disadvantaged Youth' project extends be-

yond its role as a training programme: "It aims to inspire teenagers to be active and responsible citizens, which is essential for building and maintaining democracy. By empowering young people with knowledge and skills, the project contributes to the development of a stronger and more prosperous society."

During the final event of the EU4Youth Alumni Network, participants presented their initiatives to each other, which fostered an atmosphere of shared learning. Participants reflected on the knowledge and results

gained and discussed the sustainability and future of their projects.

Karen, an EU4Youth Alumni from Armenia, highlights the uniqueness of this event: "We were all from different countries, represented different cultures and traditions, and spoke different languages. But we spoke with the same voice, and that voice was the voice of helping and learning from each other."

With the conclusion of this event, the third cycle of the EU4Youth Alumni Network draws to a close. The Network's overarching goal is to establish connections between beneficiaries of EU mobility programmes and youth networks in the Eastern Partnership offering peer support and guidance to disadvantaged youth groups. In an intensive evaluation session, the Alumni provided feedback and recommendations to enhance the EU4Youth Alumni Network in the future.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Friday, July 14

Day Clear High: 31°C

Night Clear Low: 18°C

Saturday, July 15

Day Clear High: 32°C

Night Clear Low: 19°C

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