

## Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Gharibashvili, Meets with President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev

By Liza Mchedlidze

During an official visit to Tbilisi, the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, met with the Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Gharibashvili, and after the meeting, they issued joint statements to the media.

"We had a conversation regarding trade and economic matters, during which we discussed cooperation in energy, transport, and logistics.

Azerbaijan is one of Georgia's major trade partners, consistently ranking in the top five every year. This year, trade has surged by 15%, and we also had an outstanding year last year. Additionally, there has been a notable increase in cargo transportation volume. Overall, I would like to emphasize our highly successful cooperation across various sectors, including energy, transport, logistics, and more. Our railways, in particular, have established a highly successful partnership," stated Gharibashvili.

According to the Prime Minister, they discussed the development prospects of the Middle Corridor. They are working in coordination with Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan to expedite the development of this corridor, which includes modernizing railways, expanding and constructing ports, and upgrading and developing roads.

"In this regard, I am aware that



Azerbaijan has commenced large-scale projects. In Georgia, we have also initiated work related to railway modernization, which is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2024, effectively doubling the railway's capacity. Additionally, we are soon commencing the construction of a new port, Anaklia Port. Upon the completion of its final phase, the port's capacity will reach 100 million tons.

Furthermore, the construc-

tion of the East-West Expressway is nearing completion. We are collaborating closely with Azerbaijan on all these projects. In just a few months, we will also reach a significant milestone in another project of historical and strategic importance—the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project, which is progressing very successfully and is set to conclude within the next few months.

So we have a very clear perspective, a far-sighted vision. We aim to establish a long-term partnership and friendship with Azerbaijan. I have faith in our shared vision," stated the Prime Minister.

According to Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijan is willing to participate in infrastructure projects that will further deepen and strengthen cooperation between Georgia and Azerbaijan.

"We have successfully executed numerous joint projects in the fields of energy and transport. Our utmost effort is directed towards ensuring energy security in various countries. Deepening cooperation is an integral part of our agenda. We are delighted to participate and fully committed to engaging in the discussed infrastructure projects, whether it be Anaklia port or any other initiatives," Aliyev said.

## President Aliyev Offers Bilateral and Trilateral Meetings in Georgia if Armenia Agrees

By Liza Mchedlidze

President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, stated after the meeting with Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili that Georgia's involvement in the peace process between Armenia

and Azerbaijan is "the most correct choice". This statement comes in the aftermath of a 24-hour military operation that occurred last month, during which Azerbaijan regained control of the separatist Nagorno-Karabakh region, leading to the

displacement of most of its 120,000 ethnic Armenians, who fled to Armenia.

Ilham Aliyev stated that if Armenia agrees to it, they are willing to begin bilateral or trilateral meetings in Georgia, organized through the relevant

agencies.

"Last month, we restored the sovereignty of the entire country, and today we must actively work on a peace agreement with Armenia. I hope that we will achieve this, and as a result, we will create a political environment and situation in the South Caucasus where trilateral cooperation will take place involving Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.

It will be a successful cooperation in energy, trade, investment, and many other areas. It is possible. We missed this opportunity, my friends, because Azerbaijan was occupied for years.

Of course, this situation did not allow us to take steps towards normalization, but the time has come to give ourselves a moment so as not to lose this opportunity. As you know, today several countries and international organizations are in the role of facilitators in the process of normalization. Georgia and Azerbaijan maintain a receptive position.

This is an unbiased position regarding the territorial integrity of our countries, and we welcome any assistance. How-

ever, my belief is that the most suitable option, considering historical aspects and geography, is to have Georgia's involvement in this situation. I appreciate the Prime Minister for his willingness to assist us in this matter and for offering his role as a facilitator.

This is a country that is ready, and we expect the same from Armenia. If Armenia gives its consent, we will immediately initiate bilateral and trilateral meetings here in Georgia, through the relevant agencies," Aliyev stated.

Gharibashvili reiterated his support for the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and once again expressed his willingness to involve Tbilisi in the peace process.

"We in Georgia have always maintained a neutral and impartial position. Even now, we are prepared to play our part in the process of establishing this mediation or friendly format. Tbilisi is always ready to participate in this process. All three countries in the South Caucasus should be able to decide the issues of the region and our future development on our own," Gharibashvili said.





# Georgian Political Drama: President's Impeachment Battle Threatens EU Aspirations and Constitutional Clarity

By MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

The impeachment process of President Salome Zurbashvili has become the main topic of Georgian politics and is widely discussed in the media and political spectrum. However, there are more unanswered questions and assumptions about this issue than there are convincing answers.

One thing that can be clearly said is that the impeachment process temporarily overshadowed other topics, for example, Partskhaladze, sanctioned by the US, who was also accused of cooperating with Russian intelligence.

At first, this information was followed by a big stir in the media, and it was also discussed that the Russian agency in the current government of Georgia would not end there. The issue of impeachment of the president overshadowed the other steps of the Georgian Dream today, first of all, the amendments to the law 'On Manifestations' adopted by the parliament in an accelerated manner in the first reading, which, according to the opposition, significantly restrict freedom of expression and were called "the second Russian law".

The impeachment process of the president clearly showed the flaws in the Constitution. The

subject of consideration in the Constitutional Court was the violation by the President of Georgia of Article 52, Clause 'A' of the Constitution, according to which the President of Georgia can exercise representative authority in foreign relations and negotiate with other states and international organizations only with the approval of the government.

In response, the president's representatives claim in court that Salome Zurbashvili did not exercise her authority based on Article 52 during her visits and was guided by Articles 49 and 78 of the Constitution. The first of these stipulates that the President of Georgia represents Georgia in foreign relations, and the second directly obliges the constitutional bodies to promote the European integration process.

The open conflict between the Georgian Dream and President Salome Zurbashvili began on August 30, when Zurbashvili started her foreign visits to support Georgia's EU membership candidate status. It also turned out that the government, that is, Prime Minister Gharibashvili, will forbid him from making all the planned visits until the end of 2023.

The current dispute in the Constitutional Court would not have started if it were clearly

written in the Constitution of Georgia that the President needs the approval of the government in case of signing any agreement.

Salome Zurbashvili, unlike the Georgian Dream government, today clearly embodies Georgia's aspiration towards the European Union, and her impeachment attempt is perceived negatively in the West. The impeachment process that has begun may prevent Georgia from being granted the status of a candidate for EU membership. According to the opposition, the Georgian Dream started the impeachment process precisely for this reason, to create an additional problem on the path of European integration.

They also point out that if they thought the president's visits were illegal, they could not escalate the issue so much and apply to the Constitutional Court not for impeachment, but for a clear explanation of the competencies of the government and the president in the disputed matter. The plan of the Georgian Dream in case of "successful completion" of the impeachment of the President is also being actively discussed. According to the current version of the constitution, Salome Zurbashvili is the last president elected by the people, and her term of office

ends in 2024.

The next president should be chosen by a special 300-member collegium - 150 parliamentarians and 150 local self-government representatives. Today it is difficult to say what will be the composition of the future parliament. In case of the impeachment of the president, the existing parliament will have to elect a new president, where the Georgian Dream dominates, and the dominance of the national party in the regions is even higher. In other words, the election of the president becomes an "internal affair" of the ruling party. At first, there was a version that Irakli Kobakhidze was being prepared as the new president instead of Zurbashvili, but it was soon overshadowed by a new version, according to which Bidzina Ivanishvili himself is going to be the president, who will enjoy high security if he receives the status of the president, although some consider Ivanishvili's "third turn" in politics suspicious.

6 out of 9 members of the Constitutional Court must support the impeachment of the President. As noted, the Constitutional Court is actually staffed by the Georgian Dream and it should not be difficult for the ruling party to make the desired decision from this body. After

that, the process returns to the parliament. The leaders of the Georgian Dream say that they do not have the 100 votes necessary for the impeachment of the president, and they need 12 more votes to reach this figure.

The representatives of the pro-Western opposition parties in the parliament say that they will not support the impeachment of Zurbashvili. The largest opposition party United National Movement is not going to enter the parliament during the voting at all, in order to exclude any doubts about the actions of its members. Nevertheless, there is a version that the Georgian Dream in the opposition, as a result of behind-the-scenes negotiations, mainly by 'independent' MPs, has obtained the necessary votes and will achieve the impeachment of Zurbashvili in the parliament.

In which scenario the events will develop, the nearest future will show. It is also noted that in case of any outcome of the impeachment epic of the president, the current ruling party will significantly damage its image, and President Zurbashvili will become an important political figure who embodies the Western orientation of the country. He could, if he wanted to, become the leader of any pre-election union.

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

### Georgian Leaders and Ministry of Foreign Affairs Express Solidarity with Israel and Condemn Recent Terrorist Attacks

In the wake of the recent escalation in Israel, Georgian leaders and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have expressed their solidarity with the State of Israel and condemned the terrorist attacks, emphasizing the loss of innocent lives and the need to combat terror and inhumanity in the modern world.

### Weather

Monday, October 9

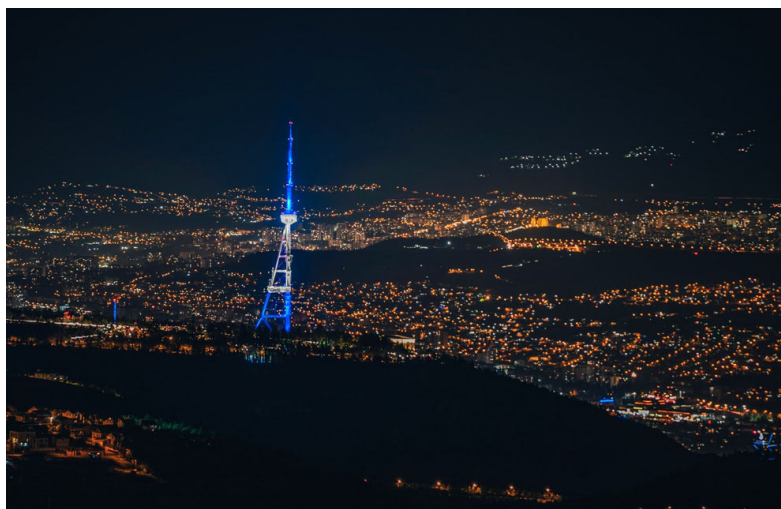
Day  Clear  
High: 22°C

Night  Partly Cloudy  
Low: 7°C

Tuesday, October 10

Day  Clear  
High: 16°C

Night  Mostly Cloudy  
Low: 8°C



"Deeply concerned with the recent escalation in Israel and the loss of innocent human lives. Georgia stands in full solidarity with the State of Israel in these difficult moments.

Terror and inhumanity should have no place in our modern world," President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili wrote.

"I strongly condemn the ter-

rible terrorist attack on the state of Israel and Israeli citizens, the loss of lives, and serious injuries to many. Heartfelt condolences to the Government and People of the State of Israel, wishing a speedy recovery to all those injured." Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili stated.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia also expressed its

solidarity with the government and people of Israel.

"We strongly condemn the heinous terrorist attack on the State of Israel, which claimed lives, and we express our solidarity with the government and

people of Israel. Our thoughts are with the families and loved ones of the victims of this horrific attack. We wish a speedy recovery to all the injured," the statement reads.

### Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia Condemns Russian Military Base in Occupied Abkhazia

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia has condemned the construction of a Russian military base in the occupied region of Abkhazia and has expressed support for the territorial integrity of Georgia.

"Estonia condemns the statement regarding Russia's intention to establish a naval base in occupied Abkhazia. This constitutes a serious violation of the 6-point ceasefire agreement of 2008 and may lead to further destabilization of the region. Estonia supports the territorial integrity of Georgia and its internationally recognized borders," the statement said.



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