

## Zourabichvili: Upcoming Elections Offer Georgia a Chance to Break Free from One-Party Rule

By Liza Mchedlidze

In an interview with RFI, President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili remarked that over the 30 years of Georgia's independence, the country has not fully escaped the influence of a one-party system.

According to her, despite having relatively democratic and free elections, there has been a trend of returning to a single-party structure with each new regime, consolidating control over various institutions.

Zourabichvili stated that the upcoming election is an opportunity for Georgia to break free from this pattern and move towards a more democratic model. She emphasized the need for a coalition-based system rather than a single party claiming universal dominance and exclusive power.

"Throughout its 30 years of independence, Georgia has never fully escaped the grip of the one-party system. Despite relatively democratic and free elections, which were generally viewed more positively than negatively, with each successive regime, we found ourselves returning more and more to a single-party structure that extended its control over various institutions. The upcoming elections represent an



opportunity to break free from this system and transition to a more democratic model — characterized by a coalition rather than a single party claiming universal dominance and assuming exclusive power," stated Zourabichvili.

The interviewer asked the President of Georgia if she believed Georgia could meet the European Union's expectations. These expectations include the 'Georgian Dream' government stopping the avoidance of sanctions against Russia, adhering

to the rule of law, and reducing the influence of powerful oligarchs, including the party's founder, Bidzina Ivanishvili. The question posed by RFI was whether she thinks Georgia can free itself from these forces.

"RFI: The European Union

expects the 'Georgian Dream' government to cease circumventing European sanctions against Russia, adhere to the rule of law, and implement deoligarchization — a term referring to powerful oligarch billionaires, notably the former prime minister, Bidzina Ivanishvili, who founded the 'Georgian Dream' party. Do you believe Georgia can liberate itself from such forces?

**President Zourabichvili:**

Yes, yes and we are entering this phase. I believe this has been taken into account by the decision-makers in the Commission. We are now in the pre-election phase, with significant elections scheduled for October 2024.

The status, which we hope to obtain in December, will motivate the population to mobilize for elections instead of packing their suitcases and emigrating. This is a risk of disillusionment in post-Soviet countries like ours, where people may believe there is no hope left.

Now that hope is back, we will prepare, and Europe needs to closely follow with observers, paying special attention and engagement, including economic support, so that everyone feels that we are not alone in this election year." (RFI Interview, [Nov 11, 2023])

## Tina Bokuchava Urges Immediate Parliamentary Response to Murder in Occupied Kirbali by Russian Forces

By Liza Mchedlidze



Tina Bokuchava, a leader of the United National Movement, stated that it is imperative that the Parliament of Georgia respond to the murder of a Georgian citizen committed by the Russian occupation regime in occupied Kirbali. Bokuchava mentioned that UNM has drafted a corresponding resolution, which, according to her, is supported by the entire opposition.

Bokuchava urges the government to take specific actions, such as including the names of the criminals in the Otkhozoria-Tatunashvili list and implementing this list, which was adopted by the parliament in 2018. She criticized the current government for not using this list internationally to punish criminals.

The United National Movement furthermore calls on the government to adopt a unified national vision of the occupation, aiming for Georgia to implement a policy of de-occupation and peace.

"On November 6, Russian occupation forces killed Georgian citizen Tamaz Ginturi and kidnapped Levan Dotiashvili in the village of Kirbali. It is imperative for the Parliament of Georgia to respond to this, being the main legislative body of the country.

We have drafted a resolution that enjoys support across the entire spectrum of the opposition. This is to ensure that Georgia's highest legislative body promptly addresses this crime committed by the Russian occupation forces.

We call on the government to immediately include the names of these criminals in the Othozoria-Tatunashvili list and to implement the Othozoria-Tatunashvili list, which was adopted by this parliament in 2018. Unfortunately, the current government has not utilized it, even in the international arena, to hold these criminals accountable.

Additionally, we urge the government to adopt a common national vision of the occupation, allowing Georgia to implement a policy of de-occupation and peace," said Bokuchava.

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.6989; Euro - 2.8819; GBP - 3.2964; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.9315; Swiss Franc - 2.9954

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

# Russia, Turkey, and Iran Forge Regional Security Alliance, Georgia Opts Out

Russia, Turkey, and Iran are planning to create a regional security platform in the South Caucasus, in which the involvement of the USA and the European Union is excluded from the beginning. On October 23, the second meeting of this platform was held in Tehran. Georgia did not participate in either this or the first meeting held in this format for a simple reason - it is against the interests of Georgia.

Georgia's non-participation annoys Moscow, trying to get it involved. The idea of the 3+3 format belongs to the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. During his stay in Baku in December 2020, after the defeat of Armenia in the second Karabakh war, he proposed creating a platform of 6 nations. This plan was preceded by the cessation of hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan, mediated by Turkey and Russia.

In addition to the countries of the South Caucasus - Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, the big bordering states - Turkey, Russia, and Iran were to be included in the format of 6 nations. These countries were to cooperate to establish stability and peace in the region. It should be noted that Erdogan put forward the idea of creating a similar platform even after the Russia-Georgia war in 2008, but then

Iran's participation was excluded.

The 2008 Turkish project to achieve Caucasian stability did not lead to any further steps, because Russia declared the occupied regions of Georgia as 'independent' states and continues to occupy Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region under this cover.

In 2020, President Erdogan transformed the 3+2 format into a 3+3 format, included Iran in it, and again excluded the participation of the European Union and the USA from the affairs of the region. The new format, unlike the previous one, was continued and the first meeting was held in Moscow on December 10, 2021, which actually turned out to be a 2+3 meeting, as the representative of Georgia did not attend it. Nevertheless, the flag of Georgia was raised in the meeting room of the parties, which was immediately condemned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia.

The main reason for Georgia's non-participation is that Russia does not recognize the territorial integrity of the Georgian state and continues to occupy its territories.

For Georgia and, in principle, for Armenia, another format

would be acceptable: 3+3+2 - with the involvement of the European Union and the USA, however, in the conditions of the war in Ukraine and after the escalation of the situation in the Middle East, the creation of such a format should be considered out of the question.

The 'first wave' of 3+3 format in 2021, did not lead to peace and stability in the South Caucasus. Russia continued to occupy two regions of Georgia, and Azerbaijan conducted a military operation in Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2023 and restored territorial integrity. This was followed by the leaving of the entire Armenian population from Nagorno-Karabakh. It was after this geopolitical change in the South Caucasus that it was announced that the second meeting of the 3+3 format would be held in Tehran.

It should be noted that shortly before this meeting, Prime Minister Gharibashvili offered Ilham Aliyev, who arrived in Tbilisi, to mediate in reaching a peace agreement with Armenia, to resolve regional affairs by the countries of the region. Ilham Aliyev agreed to it, while Pashinyan rejected it on the grounds that there was already

a European format for negotiations.

However, on October 23, Armenia participated in the 3+3 format held in Tehran, where Europe was excluded and one number was still redundant - Georgia did not participate in it again, and the Foreign Ministry of Georgia announced this in advance. Participation in the said meeting in 2023 in the mentioned format was even more unacceptable for Georgia. After the 2021 meeting, Russia attacked Ukraine, the Israel-Hamas conflict broke out in the Middle East, in which the West sees the hand of Iran. Georgia's inclusion in it would be a clearly anti-Western move, which could become an additional obstacle for Georgia to receive the status of a candidate for EU membership.

Russia is very interested in Georgia's inclusion in the mentioned format. In January 2022, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov reiterated that Russia would be happy if the next meeting in the 3+3 format would be held with the participation of Georgia. In March 2023, Lavrov said that official Tbilisi was still considering whether to join the 3+3 format. After the meeting in Tehran,

Lavrov expressed his belief that in the near future the 3+3 format will be able to work fully, including Georgia, because "the current authorities in Tbilisi, as it has been proven many times, act primarily in the national interest."

As for national interests, Georgia does not need the mentioned 3+3 format. Without any additional formats, Georgia has good relations with Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Iran. After the war started by Russia in Ukraine, the 3+3 format took on a clearly anti-Western nature. At the end of the meeting held in Tehran, Sergey Lavrov condemned "the attempt of the European Union and, to some extent, the United States" to interfere in the border delimitation process between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The joint declaration of foreign ministers held in Tehran emphasized "the importance of peaceful settlement of disputes, respect for sovereignty, political independence, territorial integrity... and non-interference in internal affairs." How Russia 'respects' Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty is clear, and Lavrov's statement that "the door remains open for Georgia" is all the more cynical.

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

### Russian Occupying Forces Opened Fire After Radio Order to Detain, Says Levan Dotiashvili

Levan Dotiashvili, who witnessed the murder of Tamaz Ginturi by Russian occupying forces and was subsequently abducted by them, told journalists that he "saw everything."

According to Dotiashvili, the representatives of the occupation regime initially did not attempt to arrest them; they demanded to stop the car. Afterward, as Dotiashvili describes it, they

"talked and neutralized the situation."

"When I got into the car, Tamaz stayed and talked to them. I couldn't hear what he was saying. Then [Ginturi] calmly got into the car; it seems that they were ordered via the



According to Dotiashvili, after the 'neutralized situation', the Russian military suddenly started shooting. He himself witnessed Tamaz Ginturi being shot in the back.

Dotiashvili mentioned that following the shooting, the car stopped. He called an ambulance using Ginturi's phone, and then the Russian security forces took him into the forest. According to him, he was subjected to physical abuse on the way. Dotiashvili added that he saw Ginturi's killer, although identifying the individual will be difficult for him.

### Prime Minister Gharibashvili Addresses Ongoing Global Crises at Paris Peace Forum

During the Paris Peace Forum, Prime Minister Gharibashvili expressed deep concern about ongoing global wars and crises, particularly

referencing the conflict between Hamas and Israel. He condemned terrorism and emphasized the need for countries to seek resolution through negotiation if war fails to address the

the current crisis between Hamas and Israel. Georgia strongly condemns terrorism and terrorist attacks on civilians. As I mentioned earlier, countries need to find a resolution. If a so-



issue.

"Once again, I want to express our deep concern about the ongoing wars and crises worldwide. The question mentioned

lution cannot be achieved through war, negotiations should be pursued. This is my final position regarding this situation," said Gharibashvili.

## Weather

Monday, November 13

Day Partly Cloudy  
High: 22°C

Night Partly Cloudy  
Low: 8°C

Tuesday, November 14

Day Partly Cloudy  
High: 19°C

Night Mostly Cloudy  
Low: 10°C

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