

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Kakha Kaladze Criticizes Postponement of Noble Partner 2024

Georgian Dream Secretary General Kakha Kaladze voiced strong dissatisfaction regarding the postponement of Noble Partner 2024, emphasizing the government's firm stance on mutual cooperation and friendship. Addressing journalists, Kaladze reiterated the party's longstanding position that international relations must be based on mutual respect and reciprocity rather than unilateral actions.

"We are deeply disappointed by the postponement of Noble Partner 2024. The Georgian government has consistently stated its readiness for cooperation and friendship with our international partners. This relationship should be a two-way street, where both sides benefit and work towards common goals," Kaladze stated.

He rejected any suggestions that the Georgian government has veered from its course of democratic governance and European integration. "It is simply untrue to claim that Georgia has taken undemocratic or non-European steps. Since 2012, under the leadership of Georgian Dream, we have made substantial progress towards European integration, implementing reforms and strengthening democratic institutions," Kaladze affirmed.

Kaladze emphasized the



country's sovereignty and autonomy. "Georgia is and will always be an independent, sovereign state. Our ancestors fought tirelessly and sacrificed greatly for our freedom. No external entity has the right to dictate terms or decisions that could jeopardize our nation's stability or the well-

being of our citizens," he asserted.

Kaladze also criticized past international pressures and calls for sanctions, citing them as examples of unwarranted interference in Georgia's internal affairs. "We reject any attempts to undermine our sovereignty or to

impose conditions that are not in the best interests of Georgia and its people," he added.

Tbilisi Mayor reaffirmed the Georgian Dream's commitment to deepening international relations based on mutual respect and cooperation. "It is imperative that we reset and continue

our cooperation with our international partners on equal terms. We remain committed to strengthening our ties with the international community while upholding the principles of sovereignty and independence that define our nation," he stated.

Mamuka Mdinardze Criticizes US Decision to Postpone Noble Partner 2024

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Mamuka Mdinardze, the executive secretary of the

Georgian Dream party, has strongly condemned the United States' decision to indefinitely postpone the Noble Partner 2024

military exercises, labeling it as "incomprehensible" given Georgia's track record in democracy and reforms.



"This decision by the USA to postpone Noble Partner 2024 for an unknown period of time is simply incomprehensible," Mdinardze asserted during a press conference. "Georgia has consistently demonstrated its commitment to democratic principles and has made significant strides in reforms. Therefore, it is disappointing to see such a decision being made."

Mdinardze criticized what he sees as a trend of shifting responsibility onto parties not involved in the decision-making process. "There is a new trend where the blame is placed on parties that did not make the decision. This is simply wrong," he stated emphatically.

He further argued for the need to rebuild and normalize relations with the United States, emphasizing the importance of Georgia's strategic partnership with its main ally. "Our main strategic partner should reconsider sanctions that affect Georgian citizens, particularly regarding visa difficulties," Mdinardze explained. "It is unfair that countries with much less interaction have more open visa policies than Georgia. This inconsistency needs to be addressed."

Highlighting Georgia's posi-

tion as a leader in democracy and reforms among European Union candidate countries, Mdinardze expressed optimism that such decisions could be reversed in the near future. "Georgia has consistently been ahead of other EU candidate countries in terms of democratic development and reforms. I believe that with time, these decisions will be reconsidered based on specific factors," he said optimistically.

Mdinardze denied any accusations or misinformation regarding Georgian Dream's stance towards the United States. "No member of our party or government has ever criticized the European Union or the United States, nor have we labeled the US as a global war party or blamed it for any 'second front'," he stated firmly. "I challenge anyone to provide evidence of such claims."

Mdinardze reiterated Georgian Dream's commitment to constructive international relations and expressed hope for a resolution to the current diplomatic challenges with the United States. He emphasized the need for mutual respect and cooperation between the two nations to achieve shared goals and interests in the future.

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.7399; Euro - 2.9670; GBP - 3.5123; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.1014; Swiss Franc - 3.0566

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

Georgian Politics Faces Leadership Crisis Amidst Upcoming Elections

For several years now, there has been talk about the absence of charismatic leaders dominating Georgian politics, and this is considered very beneficial for the development of parties and ideologies. However, if we take a closer look, today's Georgian politics not only lacks strong charismatic leaders but is also experiencing a general crisis of political leadership. This applies to both the opposition and the ruling Georgian Dream party.

Throughout almost the entire post-Soviet period, charismatic leaders have dominated Georgian politics, succeeding one another. Georgia's first three presidents, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Eduard Shevardnadze, and Mikheil Saakashvili, were all charismatic leaders, just as the current leader in power, Bidzina Ivanishvili, is today.

It is possible that Mikheil Saakashvili, who is currently in prison, and Bidzina Ivanishvili, who has returned to politics for the third time, are the most prominent figures in Georgian politics today. However, they no longer dominate the political scene with their ratings. Along with the decline in the popularity of the existing charismatic leaders, no new charismatic leader has truly emerged on the political stage.

It is evident that Georgian politics does not lack parties and individuals aspiring for leadership; quite the opposite, there is

an abundance of them. However, their popularity is not high. This applies to both the opposition and the ruling government. A notable incident occurred on July 2 during the celebratory reception for Georgian footballers returning from the European Championship - the gathered crowd greeted the Prime Minister with expressions of dissatisfaction and did not allow him to speak.

His lectures at Tbilisi State University were also linked to protest actions. It is clear that the negative sentiment against the Prime Minister was fueled by his anti-Western statements. Meanwhile, "Georgian Dream" is expected to publish its electoral list ahead of the parliamentary elections on October 26, and it is customary for the acting Prime Minister to head the list. There is talk in the media that among the current faces of "Georgian Dream," the most popular is the Mayor of Tbilisi, Kakha Kaladze, and it is not ruled out that he might be at the top of the list.

Kobakhidze's lectures at Tbilisi State University were also associated with protest actions. It is clear that the negative sentiment against the Prime Minister was caused by his anti-Western statements. Meanwhile, Georgian Dream is

expected to publish its electoral list ahead of the parliamentary elections on October 26, and, according to tradition, it should be headed by the acting Prime Minister. There is talk in the media that among the current faces of Georgian Dream, the most popular is the Mayor of Tbilisi, Kakha Kaladze, and it is not ruled out that he might be at the top of the list.

Georgian Dream has only one real leader - Bidzina Ivanishvili, upon whom the ruling party is heavily reliant. Ivanishvili's word is decisive in forming the government or Georgian Dream's electoral list. It does not matter that Ivanishvili has announced his departure from and return to politics several times over the past 12 years.

Ivanishvili himself entered Georgian politics as a charismatic leader with broad promises. His party has been in power since 2012, and as the number of unfulfilled promises increased, his popularity and ratings decreased proportionally. On July 2, even Ivanishvili would not have dared to speak in front of the spontaneously gathered crowd that came to meet the footballers. Since returning to politics, Ivanishvili has only publicly spoken on April 29 of this year, and that was in front of a

specially mobilised audience across Georgia.

Ivanishvili himself entered Georgian politics as a charismatic leader with broad promises. His party has been in power since 2012, and as the number of unfulfilled promises increased, his popularity and ratings decreased proportionally. On July 2, even Ivanishvili would not have dared to speak in front of the spontaneously gathered crowd that came to meet the footballers. Since returning to politics, Ivanishvili has only publicly spoken on April 29 of this year, and that was in front of a specially mobilised audience from across Georgia.

The majority of current opposition leaders have been involved in politics for many years, establishing their credibility and gaining the trust and support of a significant portion of the electorate. During the recent protests under the backdrop of the Russian law, opposition politicians refrained from actively participating, while those outside the political sphere organised and led protests.

There is no leader in the pro-Western opposition who can unite the entire opposition. It should be noted that the imprisoned Mikheil Saakashvili offers the entire pro-Western opposition to come out with a single electoral

list on behalf of the "National Movement", but a significant part of the opposition parties refuses such a union precisely because they do not want to be associated with Mikheil Saakashvili and the "National Movement".

It so happened that President Salome Zurbashvili was entrusted with a unique unifying function in the pro-Western opposition. Zurbashvili was elected president with the support of Georgian Dream and Bidzina Ivanishvili personally, but in the background of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the strengthening of criticism of the West by Georgian Dream, Salome Zurbashvili turned out to be the figure in the Georgian government who became the defender and flag bearer of the country's pro-Western course.

But in a certain part of the opposition, distrust of Salome Zurbashvili remains due to her earlier statements.

There is less and less time left before the parliamentary elections on October 26, and we should not expect new political leaders and new political subjects to appear who can overcome the 5% threshold. Most likely, new faces will appear in the lists of already existing parties. How much this will increase their rating is another matter.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

US National Security Council Official Expresses Concern over Georgian Government's Strategic Direction



Michael Carpenter, Senior Director for Europe at the U.S. National Security Council, expressed concern over the recent strategic direction of the Georgian government, urging a change in course. His remarks were shared by journalist Alex Raufoglu on X.

"Frankly, when we see harassment of civil society, when we see laws being passed that limit the space for fundamental freedoms in Georgia, that's not

compatible with the values that undergird the NATO alliance. Nor, frankly, do we think it's compatible with your Atlantic integration writ large, including the EU," Carpenter stated.

Carpenter highlighted that the Georgian government has been moving in the wrong direction regarding its Euro-Atlantic integration prospects over the past few months. He emphasized the longstanding US support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, noting the US participation in over 60 rounds of the Geneva International Discussions to support Georgia.

"It is with some concern and sadness, frankly, that we see this move in the other direction. So we hope to see a change in strategic direction for the Georgian government," Carpenter said.

US Embassy Fosters Opportunities for Georgian Businesses in American Market

The United States Embassy



in Georgia announced initiatives to help Georgian entrepreneurs enter the American market. "Often, only a window of opportunity is enough for success - we create such an opportunity for Georgian people who have unique ideas and businesses. We help them enter the American market," the embassy's statement read.

Under the leadership of Ambassador Robin Dunnigan, forty-five Georgian businessmen attended SelectUSA, the largest investment summit promoting foreign direct investment in the United States. During the summit, attendees engaged in meetings with investors and high-ranking US government officials to discuss business opportunities in the USA. Georgian business ideas were also presented.

"This visit is an important step in deepening the economic ties between our countries. The United States remains committed to this economic partnership," the embassy's statement reads.

New Political Platform Unity for the Salvation of Georgia Launched



A new political platform, Unity for the Salvation of Georgia, has been founded. Tina Bokuchava, chairwoman of the United National Movement, introduced the team members: Giorgi Vashadze, Gia Japaridze, Sopo Japaridze, Lasha Bakradze, Ana Mosashvili, Tamar Kordzaia, Armaz Akhvlediani, Irakli Pavlenishvili, and Lasha Diarov.

The election number for Unity will be 5.

In her speech, Bokuchava emphasized the importance of the upcoming October 26 elections. She described it as a crucial opportunity to save the country from division and controversy caused by Bidzina Ivanishvili's 12-year rule. Bokuchava urged unity, stating,

"Now is the time for unity for Georgia". She highlighted the election as a referendum between aligning with Russia or Europe, calling for citizens to set aside divisions for the greater good.

"I stand before you with a great sense of responsibility to each of you and to each citizen of this country, those who realize and feel that the October 26 elections are a chance to save our country. This is a chance to reclaim our historical choices. This is a chance to get out of the vortex of controversy and division in which Ivanishvili's 12-year rule has dragged us, to become proud and to take Georgia to the European Union," Bokuchava stated.

Weather

Tuesday, July 9

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 34°C

Night Mostly Cloudy

Low: 22°C

published by

The Messenger

43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi, 0108, Georgia

Founded by Prof.

Zaza Gachechiladze

Tamar Gachechiladze

Publisher

Mob.: +995 599 565621; +995 577 760000

E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge

http://www.messenger.com.ge/

Nino Metreveli

Commercial Director

Mariam Mchedlidze

Editor-in-Chief

Khatuna Gogichaishvili

Layout Designer, Photographer

The Messenger welcomes your contributions. If you are interested in submitting an article or news item please contact.

All contributions should be submitted by e-mail.

The Messenger Georgia's English language daily is an independent newspaper, and,

therefore, the opinions expressed in some articles do not necessarily coincide with those of the newspaper. We take no responsibility for any claims made in advertisements.

The Messenger preserves the style of a source written in English where possible.