

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

## Opposition Union 'Strong Georgia' Unveils Election Program 'Ilia's Path'

The opposition union "Strong Georgia: Lelo, for people, for freedom!" presented its comprehensive election program, *Ilia's Path*, in Saguramo at the monument of Georgian national figure Ilia Chavchavadze. The program lays out concrete measures to address social and economic issues, as well as strategies to reduce Russian influence in Georgia.

Lelo Leader Mamuka Khazaradze outlined the party's vision, focusing on social-infrastructure projects and resisting Russian occupation. He emphasized, "We must save the country from Russian influence and occupation." Khazaradze revealed the party's 9-point plan to expedite Georgia's EU integration. Key proposals include tightening visa regulations and flight controls to reduce Russian influence and banning land sales to Russian nationals.

Khazaradze also stressed the urgent need to tackle unemployment, announcing plans to create 200,000 jobs. He committed to reviving large-scale infrastructure projects, specifically mentioning the Anaklia Deep Sea Port, as a priority for economic growth.

Another major component of Lelo's platform is its 1,000 GEL pension plan for seniors, which Khazaradze promised is not a mere campaign promise but a detailed plan. "This is about ensuring that our pensioners have the basic means to live in dignity," he said.

Ana Dolidze, another union member, focused on labor re-



forms, pledging to implement a decent minimum wage. She pointed out that over 150,000 Georgians currently live on less than 500 GEL per month, which she called unacceptable for a

country striving toward European standards. "We will push for a minimum wage that aligns with European Union norms, while supporting small and medium-sized businesses and at-

tracting investors," she added.

Levan Tsutskiridze, leader of Freedom Square, addressed education reform, linking it directly to economic well-being. He argued that improving the quality

of education is key to raising living standards in the country, stressing that the party's reforms would enhance educational opportunities and increase societal prosperity.

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## ECHR Rules Against Georgia and Azerbaijan in Mukhtarli Case



On September 5, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) delivered its judgment in the case of Mukhtarli v. Azerbaijan and Georgia, ruling that Georgia had violated Articles 3 and 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The violation stemmed from Georgia's failure to effectively investigate the 2017 abduction, mistreatment, and illegal transfer of journalist Afghan Mukhtarli to Azerbaijan. The Court ordered Georgia to pay EUR 10,000 in non-pecuniary damages and EUR 2,500 for costs.

Mukhtarli, a critic of the Azerbaijani government, disappeared from Tbilisi on May 29, 2017, and was found in custody in Baku the next day. Amnesty International warned he was at risk of torture, and in 2018, he was sentenced to six years in prison on charges of illegal border crossing, smuggling, and resisting police. He was released in 2020.

The ECHR concluded that Georgia's investigation, initiated immediately after the abduction, was insufficient, violating the Convention's prohibition of torture and right to liberty and security. However, it found no breach of the substantive aspects of these rights.

Azerbaijan was also found guilty of violating Article 5(3) and Article 8 of the Convention and was ordered to pay EUR 6,000 in non-pecuniary damages and EUR 2,500 for costs.

Judges Šimáèková and Elósegui, in a joint opinion, raised concerns about the lack of independence in Georgia's investigation, citing political influence and pressure on police officers. They criticized the Court for not addressing this issue more thoroughly.



The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

New Estonian Ambassador to Georgia Presents Credentials

On September 4, Estonia's newly ap-



pointed Ambassador to Georgia, Marge Mardisalu-Kahar, officially presented her credentials to Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili.

During the ceremony, the two leaders discussed several key topics, including bilateral relations, Georgia's progress towards European Union integration, and

the pre-election environment in Georgia. They also emphasized the importance of supporting Ukraine amid the ongoing conflict.

"Estonia will firmly support Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration, and we believe Georgia will continue on that road," Am-

bassador Mardisalu-Kahar stated. She also reaffirmed Estonia's unwavering support for Georgia's territorial integrity and praised President Zourabichvili for her clear stance in support of Ukraine and democratic values in Georgia.

Georgian Foreign Minister Meets Malaysian Senate Vice President

Georgia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Iliia Darchiashvili, held a meeting with Datuk Nur Jazlan Bin Tan Sri Mohamed, Vice President of the Upper House (Senate) of the Malaysian Parliament, along

highlighted Georgia's economic potential, investment opportunities, and its strategic position in transport and logistics.

The Malaysian delegation expressed interest in expanding cooperation with Georgia across various fields. The two sides also discussed the potential for further liberalization of visa regulations for



with an accompanying delegation, to discuss bilateral relations and explore future areas of cooperation.

According to information released by the ministry, the discussions focused on deepening ties in key sectors such as economy, trade, tourism, education, and people-to-people exchanges. Darchiashvili

Georgian citizens traveling to Malaysia, as well as the importance of maintaining a strong political dialogue between the countries.

Darchiashvili thanked Malaysia for its continued support of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within internationally recognized borders.

Weather

Friday, September 6

Day T-storm High: 25°C

Night Showers Low: 17°C

Saturday, September 7

Day Mostly Cloudy High: 26°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 17°C

Sunday, September 8

Day Partly Cloudy High: 27°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 17°C

Monday, September 9

Day Partly Cloudy High: 29°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 18°C

Tuesday, September 10

Day Partly Cloudy High: 29°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 19°C

Advertisement for the 'Night Serenades' festival, featuring dates and locations: 21 August Borjomi, 23, 25 August Batumi, and 15, 17, 18, 20 September Tbilisi. It lists the founder Liana Issakadze and artistic director Giorgi Issakadze, along with various sponsors.

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