

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili Visits Washington

On January 17, Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili arrived in Washington, D.C., for a visit centered around the inauguration of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump on January 20. Zourabichvili met with key U.S. figures, including Marco Rubio, nominee for Secretary of State, Pete Hegseth, nominee for Secretary of Defense, and Scott Mastick, Vice President of the International Republican Institute (IRI). Notably, no representatives from the Georgian Dream (GD) government are expected to attend the inauguration.

During her visit, Zourabichvili met with IRI's leadership to discuss Georgia's political challenges and the country's future political landscape. Zourabichvili emphasized the need for reforms and called for demands that are acceptable to Georgian society, new political forces, parties, and non-governmental organizations. She expressed IRI's support in helping Georgia organize fair elections, underscoring the urgency of addressing these issues immediately.

In a statement regarding her message to Washington, Zourabichvili said, "The existing regime in Georgia cannot be a legitimate representative of the Georgian people. It is no longer



just about elections. It is about a regime that has departed from the constitution and no longer bears any sign of democracy or statehood."

Zourabichvili is also scheduled to participate in a January 21 discussion at the Atlantic Council, focusing on Georgia's political challenges and Russia's growing influence in the region.

In addition to her meetings with political figures, Zourabichvili attended a pre-inauguration reception hosted by Donald J. Trump Jr., where she met briefly with Trump Jr. and the nominees for Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense.

U.S. Congressman and Chair of the Helsinki Commission, Joe Wilson, praised the meetings, writing on X, "I was grateful to introduce President Zourabichvili to Donald J. Trump Jr., two amazing people working to do so much good in the world."

Wilson also posted about Zourabichvili's meetings with Rubio and Hegseth, emphasizing the importance of the U.S.-Georgia relationship in combating the "tyrannical Ivanishvili regime" and bringing back "Peace through Strength."



Strong Georgia Leader Saba Buadze Reports Violent Attack Near Party Headquarters

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Saba Buadze, a leader of the Strong Georgia coalition, has claimed he and Ramaz Mandaria, head of the coalition's Saburtalo branch, were attacked by two armed individuals as they exited the party's headquarters on Vazha-Pshavela Avenue. Buadze shared details in a video on social media and a subsequent interview with Interpress News.

According to Buadze, the confrontation began with verbal abuse and escalated into a physical altercation. "We were met with verbal abuse by two people walking in the street, who be-

gan swearing and mentioning my name and surname. When we responded, it turned into a physical confrontation where stones were used," he said.

Buadze further described the attack, saying, "Ramaz Mandaria was hit in the face with a bag, and later one of the attackers threw a stone at him. One of them had a knife, which is also visible in the video. You can clearly hear how this person threatens me by using my last name."

The incident occurred as Buadze and Mandaria were leaving a meeting at the party headquarters. "After our meeting, the

CONTINUED FROM Page 2

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.8412; Euro - 2.9276; GBP - 3.4683; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.7745; Swiss Franc - 3.1174

Strong Georgia Leader Saba Buadze Reports Violent Attack Near Party Headquarters

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

two of us went out, and these two people passed by, started swearing, and then attacked us," he said. "Ramaz has injuries on his face. The police were present but spent their time speaking with the attackers instead of taking meaningful action."

Buadze criticized law enforcement for their response, alleging

bias in handling the case. "These people are caught on video, and identifying them is very easy. However, the police obviously have no interest because they are aligned with the government, which fosters and tolerates such violence," Buadze stated. He expressed skepticism about justice, saying, "I won't be surprised if these people are declared victims and we are

painted as aggressors. In this country, absurdities like this happen every day."

The Ministry of Internal Affairs has confirmed that an investigation is underway under Article 126 of the Criminal Code, which pertains to violence. Buadze called on authorities to act decisively and ensure accountability for the attack.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Mikheil Kavelashvili Pardons 613 Convicted Individuals Amid Legitimacy Dispute

Mikheil Kavelashvili, the president elected by the Georgian Dream party, has pardoned 613 convicted individuals in connection with the Epiphany holiday. This decision was announced on Kavelashvili's Facebook page.

Kavelashvili's pardon has sparked controversy due to the ongoing legitimacy dispute surrounding his presidency. His legitimacy is not recognized by Georgia's fifth president, Salome Zourabichvili, opposition parties, many in Georgian society, several non-governmental organizations, and a significant portion of the international community.

In the published statement, Kavelashvili emphasized that the pardon was based on the exclusive powers granted to him by the Georgian Constitution, and he highlighted the act as being in the interest of humanism and state interest. "With shown humane attitude, pardoned persons were given the opportunity to return to their families and become full-fledged members of society," he wrote.

However, the statement did not provide specifics on which crimes or legal articles were covered by the pardon.

Public Defender Investigates Detention of Nine Individuals

The Office of the Public Defender has issued a statement addressing the detention of nine



individuals under administrative procedures on January 18. Representatives from the Public Defender's office visited the detainees, some of whom alleged verbal abuse and unethical behavior by the police. Two detainees also reported potential excessive force and improper treatment.

In response, the Public Defender has referred the cases to the Special Investigation Service for further legal action and pledged to pursue appropriate measures regarding other reported rights violations.

The statement also highlighted concerns over regula-

tions banning the wearing of face masks, which some detainees cited as a reason for their arrests. The Public Defender noted that while similar restrictions exist in some Western countries, international human rights standards and European Court of Human Rights practices emphasize that such bans must not be absolute or blanket measures.

The office reiterated the importance of balancing freedom of expression with security interests, calling for a more nuanced approach in legislation to ensure human rights are upheld.



NATO Continues the Integration of Crisis Response Capabilities in Georgia

The Italian Ambassador to Georgia, Massimiliano D'Antuono, met with the Italian military delegation of the Vittorio Veneto Division, which concluded today in Tbilisi the second preparatory phase of the NATO GEORGIA 2025 exercise which will take place in

Krtsanisi from 28 April to 8 May at the NATO-Georgia Joint Training and Evaluation Center.

The trained activity aims to demonstrate the capabilities of the Joint Training and Evaluation Center based in Krtsanisi by testing a Brigade made up

mainly of Georgian personnel with the addition of some multinational elements. Countries that have already confirmed their participation include Azerbaijan, Albania, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Turkey

and the USA. Armenia will also be present as an observer.

The Vittorio Veneto Division Command of Florence of the Italian Army, recently designated

NATO Multinational Division South Command, will direct the exercise, organized for the first time in 2016 and now in its 4th edition.



Weather

Monday, January 20

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 6°C

Night Partly Cloudy

Low: 1°C

Tuesday, January 21

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 9°C

Night Clear

Low: -1°C

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