

## Kobakhidze Leads Efforts to Address Snowstorm Crisis in Guria Region

By Liza Mchedlidze

Irakli Kobakhidze, accompanied by members of the Cabinet of Ministers, has arrived in the Guria region to assess the impact of the heavy snowfall that has disrupted daily life and left many villages isolated.

Reports indicate that Kobakhidze was briefed on the severe challenges posed by the snowfall and the steps being taken by various government agencies to assist in the recovery process. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, emergency operations have been in full swing for three days across western Georgia, with approximately 600 firefighters and rescuers deployed from the Emergency Situations Management Service. These teams are working alongside specialized equipment, including snow blowers, to clear the affected areas and carry out rescue operations.

In a statement to the press, Kobakhidze acknowledged the gravity of the situation, stating, "The situation is difficult, but we



are fully committed to resolving all challenges. The snowfall yesterday has further complicated the situation, making it necessary to involve the defense forces. All agencies are now fully mobilized and coordinated to address the disaster."

Kobakhidze explained that many villages are still cut off

from the outside world, with communication lines severed in multiple areas. To address this, emergency equipment has been mobilized to restore contact and facilitate communication with the affected communities. "A lot of work remains in this regard, and efforts to reconnect specific villages will resume immedi-

ately," he emphasized.

In addition to restoring communication, the government is focusing on providing vital supplies such as medicines, food, and firewood to meet the region's immediate needs. "We are implementing a specific plan to mobilize these resources, ensuring that residents have access to es-

essential supplies for heating and health care," Kobakhidze added.

The Georgian Dream administration has assured the public that all available resources will continue to be deployed in the coming days to manage the aftermath of the storm and provide relief to the residents of the affected areas.

## GYLA Criticizes Government Response to Snowstorm Crisis in Guria and Adjara

By Liza Mchedlidze



@netgazeti

The Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA) has issued a statement criticizing the Georgian Dream government for its response to the ongoing crisis in the Guria and Adjara regions, where heavy snowfall has caused widespread disruption. The organization claims that the government has failed to fulfill its constitutional duty to protect the health, safety, and lives of citizens during natural disasters.

"The population is having to deal with the heavy snowfall on its own. The efforts and measures taken by the local municipality are ineffective given the scale of the disaster," the GYLA statement reads. The association underscores that human life, physical integrity, and access to a healthy environment are fundamental rights guaranteed by Georgia's Constitution, and it is the state's obligation to provide citizens with timely and accurate information about the state of the environment.

The organization highlights that the government is obligated to assess potential threats from natural disasters and implement timely, adequate preventive measures. "The right to life obliges the state to take appropriate steps within its jurisdiction, which includes protection from threats that do not directly emanate from the state," the GYLA added.

The association also pointed to international human rights standards, noting that even when natural events are beyond human control, the state is still required to take measures to prevent loss of life during such disasters. "The European standard of protection of rights requires measures to be taken to prevent loss of life during natural disasters, even if the natural events themselves are beyond human control," the statement emphasized.

Despite these legal obligations, GYLA argues that the state has consistently failed to ensure effective prevention and management of natural disasters, leaving citizens vulnerable to threats that it is legally and ethically bound to address. The organization calls for more decisive action and for the Georgian government to take its responsibilities seriously to protect the public from the adverse effects of such crises.

საია საქართველოში დიდთოვლობაზე  
სახელმწიფოს არაეფექტიან  
რეაგირებას ეხმაურება



The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Heavy Snowstorm Strands Villages in Western Georgia, Response Criticized

Since February 20, heavy snowfall has isolated several villages in the high mountains of western Georgia, particularly in the Guria region, leaving them without gas, electricity, and water. Despite severe weather warnings issued on February 21,

the government failed to mobilize emergency assistance until February 25, when the army was deployed to manage the crisis. Local officials have been working to help those cut off, but conditions remain dire.

The snow, which has reached over two meters in some areas, has caused roofs to collapse and blocked roads with fallen trees, preventing emergency vehicles from reaching affected villages. Social media has been flooded with pleas for help, as some residents, including the elderly, have been left without basic necessities. Two deaths have been reported: a man in Konchkati village and a woman in Japareuli, Guria, who died due to diabetic shock when she couldn't access insulin.

The botched response has sparked outrage. Many Georgians, including political figures, have criticized the government's inaction, with accusations that the government is more focused on repression than citizen welfare. Opposition leaders, including Mamuka Khazaradze, have called for a change in leadership, citing the government's failure to manage the disaster zone.

In defense, Georgian Dream officials, including Parliament Speaker Shalva Papuashvili and Parliamentary Majority Leader Mamuka Mdinardze, claim that the state is fully mobilized, work-

ing beyond its capacity to clear roads and provide supplies to affected citizens. However, critics remain unconvinced, accusing the government of neglecting its duty to ensure public safety.

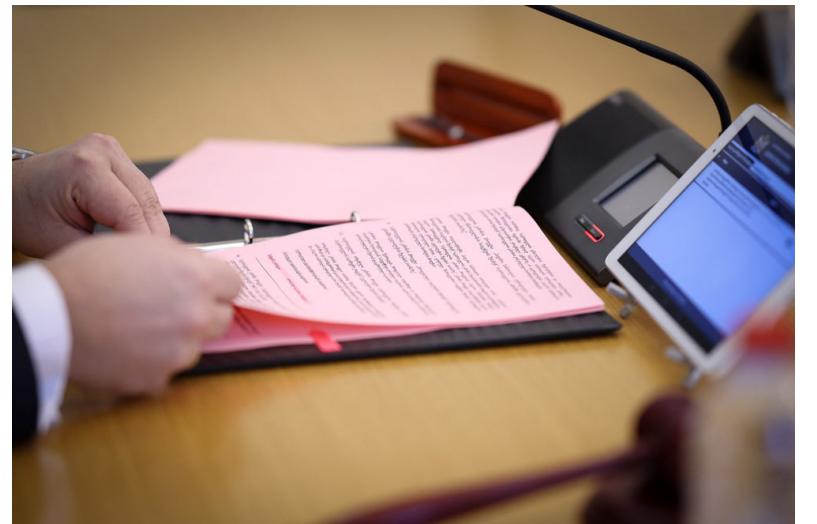
Georgian Dream Proposes Amendments to Broadcasting Law

On February 24, the Georgian Dream (GD) proposed two amendments to the Law on Broadcasting: one banning foreign funding of audio-visual broadcasters, and the other limiting self-regulation by granting the Communications Commission (ComCom) extensive powers to control broadcasting content.

Mamuka Mdinardze, a GD leader, stated that the amend-

ments would follow a "British model." The changes will be discussed at a normal pace in parliament, and the one-party majority is expected to pass the amendments in the coming months.

The amendments, authored by several GD and People's Power MPs, aim to reduce foreign influence on public opinion by prohibiting broadcasters from receiving foreign funding. The restrictions would exclude commercial advertising, sponsorship, and product placements but would extend to forbidding foreign entities from funding broadcasts or purchasing services from broadcasters. "Foreign entities" are defined as foreign governments, non-Georgian citizens, or organizations based outside of Georgia.



Three Years of War, Three Years of Resilience

The Ukrainian House in Tbilisi Marks a Milestone of Strength and Solidarity

TBILISI. 25 February 2025 – Marking three years of resilience amid the ongoing war in Ukraine, the Ukrainian House in Tbilisi brought together its friends, supporters, and beneficiaries to honour the unwavering spirit of the Ukrainian people.

The event was supported by the German Government and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as part of the 'Improving the Rule of Law and Access to Justice for All' initiative.

The gathering featured a moving theatrical performance by the Ukrainian House's drama class, followed by an interactive art workshop where guests

crafted Motanka dolls – traditional Ukrainian talismans symbolising family unity, prosperity, kindness, and hope. A crafts exhibition showcased the diverse talents of Ukrainian artisans. Guests also had the opportunity to sign the Ukrainian flag and leave messages of sup-

port in the 'Book of Solidarity with Ukraine.'

"Your unwavering solidarity empowers Ukrainians to stay strong in the face of war. This House has become a vital space of hope, resilience, and connection," said Valentina Marjanishvili, Head of the Geor-

gian-Ukrainian Platform and the Ukrainian House in Tbilisi.

Recognising the need for sustained support, UNDP and the Ukrainian House signed a new cooperation agreement to enhance its operations. This partnership will expand opportunities for income generation, integration, and socio-economic services for Ukrainian nationals and refugees in Georgia.

"The Ukrainian House provides essential services to those who need them most—women, children, and older people. With support from the German Government, UNDP is proud to strengthen this remarkable assistance hub," said Douglas Webb, UNDP Resident Representative in Georgia.

"For thousands of Ukrainian refugees, the Ukrainian House is more than a place—it's a lifeline. Germany remains Ukraine's largest supporter in Europe, and we stand firmly by

its side," added Esther Lena Wagner, Deputy Head of Mission at the German Embassy to Georgia.

Background:

Since its opening in September 2023, the Ukrainian House in Tbilisi has provided essential services to 4,485 beneficiaries, including 3,517 women. It has hosted 480 social and cultural events and established a referral system connecting Ukrainian refugees with socio-economic services offered by state institutions and civil society organisations. Additionally, it serves as a workspace for Ukrainian NGOs and volunteer groups, fostering cultural exchange and strengthening Georgian-Ukrainian ties.

Support for the Ukrainian House in Tbilisi is part of the 'Improving the Rule of Law and Access to Justice for All' initiative, funded by the German Government and implemented by UNDP to enhance Georgia's rule of law institutions while promoting legal empowerment and socio-economic resilience among vulnerable communities.



Photo: UNDP/Nino Zedginidze

Weather

Wednesday, February 26

Day Snow Showers High: 2°C

Night Overcast Low: -6°C

Thursday, February 27

Day Partly Cloudy High: 4°C

Night Clear Low: -4°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.