

## Georgia and Hungary Reaffirm Strong Ties and Shared Goals at Joint Summit

By Liza Mchedlidze

Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán held a joint press conference during the second Georgia-Hungary Intergovernmental Summit, emphasizing deepening ties, shared political values, and support for Georgia's European Union aspirations.

Kobakhidze praised Hungary for its consistent backing of Georgia's EU path, stating, "I want to thank you for supporting Georgia's European path. We have a very clear and ambitious goal – for Georgia to become an EU member state by 2030."

He said that Georgia plans to fulfill 90 percent of its commitments under both the Association Agreement and the Free Trade Agreement by 2028. "Even expert cooperation and your support in any direction are very important for our country," he added.

Kobakhidze also emphasized the importance of unity between the two nations. "We face very similar challenges, and standing together to address these challenges is, of course, crucial. Georgia will always stand where the interests of the Hungarian people lie."

He said the bilateral format, launched two years ago, plays a key role in advancing relations. "This meeting has allowed us to discuss the progress achieved and to jointly outline future plans," Kobakhidze said, noting that discussions included topics such as trade, energy, agriculture, defense, education, and culture.

"Several memoranda were signed today in various fields, and these agreements will contribute to the further development and deepening of relations between our countries," he stated. "We emphasized how important it is not only to have cooperation between governments



but also between business sectors."

The Prime Minister also used the opportunity to express criticism toward EU institutions. "We deeply regret the unfair assessments and statements often made about Georgia by the European bureaucracy," Kobakhidze said. He accused some EU-linked institutions of funding extremist groups and interfering in Georgian elections, saying these practices fail to respect Georgia's sovereignty.

"For us, the EU has been a symbol of justice for years, and we want it to remain a symbol of justice in the future," he stated. "We will stubbornly continue moving toward the EU, and we express

hope that by the time Georgia is ready to join, this attitude will change."

Kobakhidze thanked Hungary again for standing by Georgia, saying, "If we hear fair assessments and see a fair attitude from anyone, it is from the Hungarian authorities."

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán expressed strong admiration for Georgia's economic performance and political resilience. "Everyone envies Georgia, and we envy your 7% economic growth – my God, what a great achievement, coupled with a decreasing state budget deficit and a decreasing national debt," Orbán said. "Meeting a Prime Minister with such

results is a great honor for us."

Orbán said Hungary values opportunities to learn from Georgia's recent progress. "It has been a long time since we had the pleasure of hosting a European delegation – I'm talking about the Georgian delegation. Sharing Georgia's achievements is very important for us because these results represent a huge leap forward."

The Hungarian leader also expressed alignment with Georgia in pushing back against what he called "mainstream liberals" in the EU. "Even today, we have

CONTINUED ON Page 2

## UK Embassy Cancels Election Support Grants in Georgia Citing Legal Uncertainty

By Liza Mchedlidze

The British Embassy in Tbilisi has canceled several grants planned to support transparency and competitiveness in Georgia's upcoming municipal elections, citing uncertainty created by recent amendments to the country's Law on Grants. These changes require foreign donors to obtain government approval before funding local initiatives.

In a June 11 statement, the Embassy said it had sought approval for "several grants to support Georgian civil society organizations working on voter education and citizen electoral monitoring," noting that "the Central Election Commission (CEC) had confirmed that these are valuable activities."

However, the Embassy added that "following discussion with the Georgian authorities, we have been told that the

CONTINUED FROM Page 2



British Embassy Tbilisi



# Georgia and Hungary Reaffirm Strong Ties and Shared Goals at Joint Summit

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

to fight them because the Georgian government is a beast that the EU and Brussels fear to confront. Georgia was the first to resist,” Orbán said. “We also want such economic growth, and in time, we

will achieve it.” Orbán confirmed that Hungary plans to implement numerous joint projects with Georgia, especially in trade and energy. “Pharmaceutical products are exported to Georgia from us. We are developing cooperation in the energy sector,”

he said. He highlighted a regional initiative involving five countries to transmit green electricity from the Caucasus to Hungary and the EU. “Our route will be very strong for economic activity. We will have similar decisions with our Georgian

friends in the future,” Orbán said, also noting Wizz Air’s growing presence in Georgia, with 28 active routes and over \$100 million in annual revenue. Both leaders concluded the summit by reaffirming their commitment to closer political, economic, and strategic cooperation.

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CONTINUED FROM Page 1

planned Government Decree establishing a procedure for grant approvals is not finalized, and therefore no mechanism or timeframe currently exists for grant approval decisions.” “Due to this uncertainty, we have reluctantly had to cancel our grant plans to support the transparency and competitiveness of the upcoming municipal elections,” the statement continued. The announcement follows fast-tracked legal amendments by the ruling Georgian Dream party that broaden the definition of grants to include technical assistance

and knowledge-sharing, further tightening government control over foreign-funded civil society activities. These changes accompany Georgia’s controversial “foreign agents” laws, which have drawn widespread criticism for targeting independent media and NGOs. Shortly after the UK’s announcement, online media outlet Tabula said it was set to receive a £50,000 grant to cover the elections. “The regime did not respond to the UK government in a timely manner. After this, the British government canceled the project and informed Georgian society about the regime’s anti-democratic actions,” the outlet said. It

also pledged to continue “doing the Georgian job and defending Georgia’s European course.” The British Embassy also criticized the Georgian government for not inviting international observers from the OSCE/ODIHR, a step that was taken in previous elections. “Unlike the last municipal elections in Georgia, the government has not invited an OSCE/ODIHR monitoring mission,” the Embassy noted, adding that it is “not facilitating grants for citizen election monitoring.” It warned that the absence of such independent observers “would represent a backwards step that could reduce public

confidence in the transparency of the democratic process in Georgia.” The statement concluded by saying, “The United Kingdom reaffirms its readiness for dialogue on how it can support Georgia’s democratic development and regrets this missed opportunity to promote objective, professional, and transparent scrutiny of October’s municipal elections.” The elections are scheduled for October 4. Georgia’s opposition remains divided on whether to participate, while Georgian Dream is expected to retain control of all municipalities.

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

### Activist Expelled to Turkey Amid Ongoing Rights Concerns



Temur Katamadze, a Turkish citizen of Georgian descent known for his support of Georgia’s pro-European protests, was expelled from the country on June 11, according to a statement

by the Interior Ministry. His removal came just after the expiration of a voluntary departure notice, raising criticism from human rights groups and Georgia’s president. Katamadze, 56, had lived in

Georgia since 2012 and had applied for citizenship. He gained public attention for consistently appearing at anti-government protests in Batumi, often holding the national flag, earning him the nickname “Batumi’s flag bearer.” He was arrested twice in January 2024, first for allegedly disobeying police orders and later for residing illegally in the country. During his detention, he went on a hunger strike

lasting 48 days. Authorities said the expulsion was executed in line with legal procedures and based on a court ruling. In April, the Tbilisi Court of Appeals denied his request for refugee or humanitarian protection. The Ministry of Internal Affairs confirmed that force was used to carry out the expulsion. His legal team, led by the Social Justice Center, criticized the timing of the decision. They said it occurred while a response was still pending from the UN Human Rights Committee, which could have delayed the expulsion. The European Court of Human Rights had declined to impose interim measures in the case. Georgia’s 5<sup>th</sup> President, Salome Zourabichvili, also condemned the move, accusing the government of bypassing proper legal channels and showing disregard for constitutional principles. Activist Investigated for Alleged Assault During Court Incident Georgia’s Interior Ministry announced on June 11 that it has opened a criminal investiga-

tion against activist Nino Datashvili for allegedly assaulting a court bailiff. The incident took place on June 9 at Tbilisi City Court, where Datashvili attempted to attend a hearing for detained protesters and was forcibly removed from the premises. According to the ministry, Datashvili did not comply with instructions from court officers and physically assaulted one of them after being told she could not enter the courtroom. Officials said the hearing had already begun, and there was no space available. If found guilty, she faces a fine or a prison sentence of up to three years.



Video from the scene shows several bailiffs surrounding Datashvili as she sits on a bench before forcibly dragging her out of the courthouse. In the footage, she can be heard shouting at the officers to avoid putting pressure on her arm, which she said had recently undergone surgery. On June 10, a social media post including a screenshot from the video was released, alleging that Datashvili slapped a bailiff. In the clip, she is seen raising her arms in distress while being restrained, though it remains unclear whether any physical contact resembling a slap took place.

## Weather

Thursday, June 12

Day  Clear  
High: 31°C

Night  Partly Cloudy  
Low: 18°C

Friday, June 13

Day  Clear  
High: 33°C

Night  Partly Cloudy  
Low: 19°C

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