

## U.S. Ambassador Robin Dunnigan Reflects on Democracy and Bids Farewell at Independence Day Celebration

By Liza Mchedlidze

U.S. Ambassador to Georgia Robin Dunnigan delivered a heartfelt farewell and strong defense of democratic values during a speech at the U.S. Embassy's July 4 Independence Day celebration in Tbilisi. The remarks marked her final public address as ambassador ahead of her planned retirement and departure from Georgia later this month.

"Since the day we arrived, Georgians have opened their hearts and their homes to us, making us feel that we too are part of the Georgian family," Dunnigan said. "We will forever be friends of Georgia, and I will leave a piece of my heart behind when I depart. And I will never stop believing in and supporting the future of democracy in Georgia."

The ambassador used the occasion of America's 248<sup>th</sup> Independence Day to reflect on the meaning of democracy, emphasizing the importance of civic responsibility, freedom, and optimism.

"This year, I find myself reflecting more deeply than ever on the concept of democracy," she said. "I believe this moment in history demands reflection on our democracy, on the freedoms we enjoy, and our duty to future generations."

Dunnigan spoke of three essential elements that sustain democracy: promise, duty, and optimism. She described democracy as a shared commitment that thrives when people are free to speak, vote, worship, and debate. She honored those who have sacrificed to uphold those freedoms, including American service members and people still fighting for democratic rights.

"July 4 is also a day when Americans reflect on the tremendous sacrifices made for our independence, a day when we remember that freedom is not free," she said. "Our men and women in uniform know that all too well, and I want to thank them for volunteering to pay the



ultimate price for our freedom."

The ambassador also warned of the ongoing threats to democracy. "There are citizens who are jailed because they are political opponents of the government. There are civil society representatives who are being targeted for their work to promote rule of law, free media, and free

and fair elections. And there are ordinary citizens who are being labeled 'radical' because their views differ from government officials," she said.

Dunnigan reflected on Georgia's religious and cultural diversity and praised the country's democratic aspirations. "I have witnessed freedom of religion in the

heart of Tbilisi, where the peaceful coexistence of churches, synagogues and mosques is a symbol of the spirit of community and inclusion of the Georgian people," she said.

She pushed back against claims that the U.S.-Georgia relationship is merely symbolic, pointing to years of real cooperation and support. "I have met thousands of Georgians who told me how the U.S.-Georgian partnership helped them. Farmers, teachers, students, doctors, businesspeople, all of whom told me how their collaboration with America improved their lives."

Recalling the aftermath of Russia's 2008 invasion, she said, "As Russian tanks were withdrawing, U.S. tractors and engineers and food aid were arriving. Because that's what friends in democracies do."

Dunnigan also expressed deep gratitude to the U.S. Embassy staff, the USAID team, and event sponsors for their continued work and support. She confirmed that her time in Georgia was coming to a close.

"As many of you know, my husband Harry and I have decided to retire after 33 years as U.S. diplomats, and we will be departing this amazing country later this month," she said.

The ambassador closed her speech with a message of hope. "I am optimistic because I know the vast majority of Americans and Georgians believe in the promise of our democracy and our duty to defend it. I am optimistic because of the many people in the United States and Georgia committed to service for their country. And I am also optimistic because I know the youth in both of our countries are extraordinary."

"Let me close by asking you to join me in a toast – to the power of the promise of democracy, our duty to defend it, and optimism that we will succeed. Happy Birthday, America! Gaumarjos!"

## Interior Ministry Gains Authority to Inspect Foreigners' Homes and Workplaces Under New Immigration Rules

By Liza Mchedlidze

Georgia's Interior Ministry now has the authority to inspect the homes and workplaces of foreigners and enter private property, as the ruling Georgian Dream government enforces stricter immigration laws and intensifies its rhetoric against illegal migration.

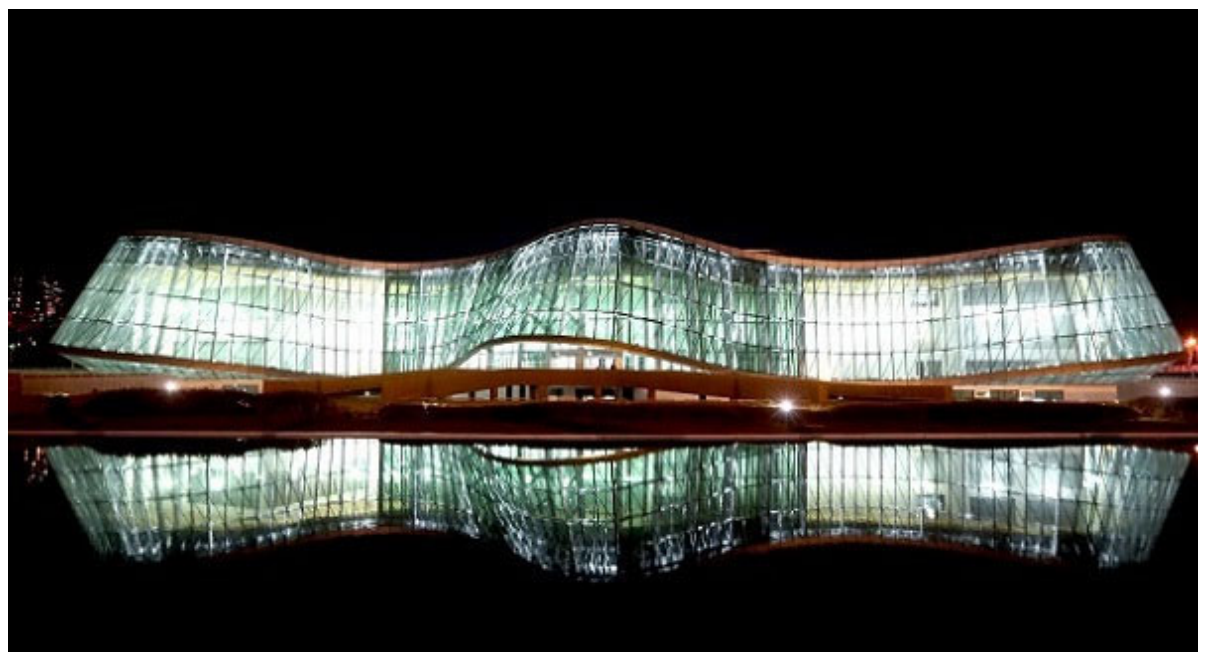
On July 2, Georgian Dream-led Parliament adopted changes to the Law on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons following two days of extraordinary sessions and fast-tracked discussions. The amendments allow a body authorized by the Interior Ministry to carry out inspections in order to identify foreigners living in Georgia without legal status or to

check their place of residence or travel documents.

Under the new law, inspections may take place with the consent of a property owner or employer, or based on a city court order. In cases the authorities consider urgent, when a delay could allow a foreigner to flee or hide important documents, inspections may be conducted without a court order as long as one is obtained within 24 hours.

The authorized inspectors can question individuals, verify identities, conduct superficial checks, and take other preventive or coercive actions allowed by Georgian law. At workplaces, they may request documentation confirming a foreigner's legal

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right to work in Georgia.

Over the past week, the Interior Ministry reported detaining 20 foreigners during what it described as two special immigration control operations. All of them are set to be expelled. Georgian Dream Member of Parliament Tornike Cheishvili said before the vote that 525 foreigners were expelled from Georgia during the first half of 2025 for residing in the country illegally. He said the figure is about three times higher than during the same period last year.

According to the explanatory note attached to the bill, the goal of the changes is to improve procedures for identifying illegal migrants. It states that illegal migration presents challenges to national security, public order, and labor market regulation.

The new rules come shortly after Parliament approved another legislative package on June 26. That set of changes introduced expulsion and reentry bans for both criminal and administrative offenses and increased fines for violations related to immigration.

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

**Georgian Deputy Foreign Minister Attends Memorial at Iranian Embassy**



Georgian Dream Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandre Khvtisiashvili attended a memorial event at the Iranian Embassy in Tbilisi, dedicated to what the Embassy described as “the memory of martyrs who died during the Israeli regime’s armed attack against Iran’s territorial integrity.” The Embassy of Iran shared the information

in a Facebook post on July 2. The event took place over two days, June 30 and July 1. According to the Embassy, it was attended by the ambassadors of Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Armenia, and Azerbaijan to Georgia, Iraq’s chargé d’affaires,

China’s military attaché, and representatives of religious groups. These included the chair of the Muslim Administration of Georgia, members of the Iranian diaspora, and Georgian scholars of Iranian studies. “They made entries in the condolence book at the Embassy, expressed condolences and solidarity to Iran,” the Embassy

said. “We express our deep thanks to our friends and partners in this difficult period for their support and empathy.” The Israeli Embassy in Georgia condemned the Deputy Minister’s attendance. In a statement, it said, “We were dismayed to learn that Georgia’s Deputy Foreign Minister attended a solidarity event at the Iranian Embassy in Tbilisi. At a time when the West condemns Iran’s attacks on Israeli civilians and supports efforts to stop its nuclear and genocidal ambitions, it is deeply disappointing to see the Deputy Foreign Minister taking part in such an event. This is morally wrong.”

### Georgian Citizen Released from Illegal Detention by Russian Occupation Forces

Giorgi Mosiashvili, who had been illegally detained by Russian occupation forces, has been released and is now in territory controlled by the central government, according to a statement from the State Security Service of Georgia. “In the process of releasing Giorgi Mosiashvili from illegal detention, both the ‘hotline’

mechanism operating with the direct involvement of the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in Georgia and all relevant instruments at the disposal of the central government



were actively used,” the statement said. “The central government of Georgia provided information to international partners on a constant basis.” The issue of Mosiashvili’s detention was raised at meetings of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) as well as during the international discussions held in Geneva. The State Security Service

emphasized that efforts are ongoing to secure the release of other Georgian citizens who remain illegally detained in the occupied territories. “The central government, together with inter-

national partners, continues to work actively to release all citizens of Georgia illegally detained in the occupied territories.” The statement concluded by holding the Russian occupation forces accountable for the situation: “The Russian occupying forces bear responsibility for all destructive actions carried out in the occupied regions of Georgia and along the occupation line.”

# European Commission and EIB announce more flexible guarantee of Euro 5 billion to boost global investments

On 30 June, the European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) announced a new type of guarantee agreement that will provide up to • 5 billion to de-risk investments and expand EIB operations outside the European Union. This guarantee has the

potential to unlock up to • 10 billion in funding for critical projects in clean energy, green infrastructure and access to finance for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in partner countries.

This new guarantee is designed to support an increased number of companies – companies with a state participation or public

organisations – that operate at local or regional levels in partner countries outside the EU. The novelty about today’s new



guarantee is that it can also apply to entities that borrow money from financial markets on their own terms – without state backing, whereas the previous guarantees used to support only state-backed projects. With today’s new type of guarantee agreement, it will be more flexible and faster to back up investments. Ultimately, the new guarantee will advance Global Gateway investments by financing projects of public interest that are considered too risky for traditional lenders, while ensuring

affordable borrowing costs for partner countries. Among other projects, the guarantee will help finance telecommunication and energy infrastructure projects and support municipalities in the EU’s enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood regions, contributing to the EU’s accession priorities. At the same time, the guarantee will enable for instance the development of the Transcaspian Corridor in Central Asia. (euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Thursday, July 3

Day Showers  
High: 19°C

Night Showers  
Low: 15°C

Friday, July 4

Day Showers  
High: 23°C

Night Partly Cloudy  
Low: 16°C

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