
**GEORGIAN DREAM HEAD SUPPORTS INTERIOR MINISTER DESPITE PROTESTS
DEMANDING RESIGNATION**

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Ivanishvili touched on the Tbilisi protests, the parliamentary speakers resignation, Giorgi Gabunia and new political developments

Ruling Georgian Dream party chairman Bidzina Ivanishvili has spoken out for the first time since the Tbilisi protests began on June 20.

In an interview with journalists, Ivanishvili gave his opinion on the demonstrations near parliament, the violent dispersal of the rally and demands for the resignation of Minister of Internal Affairs Giorgi Gakharia.

Ivanishvili called Gakharia a strong guy and said the protesters were insurgents and attackers.

Journalists managed to catch Ivanishvili in Batumi, where the informal ruler of Georgia was attending a party meeting.

The short interview recorded in the corridor is interesting not only for its content, but also for its form: Ivanishvili was notably stressed. Ivanishvili said that critical questions had been formed under the influence of the [ex Georgian President Saakashvilis] United National Movement, belittled the journalists and urged them to show how well they were brought up.

He also uttered an interesting phrase: Get used to silence.

On Gakharia, the opposition and protesters

Ivanishvili expressed his full support for Internal Minister Giorgi Gakharia and put the entire responsibility for what happened on the opposition United National Movement.

Ivanishvili said the actions of law enforcement officers were absolutely legitimate, as they stopped a coup attempt that the opposition tried to carry out, and added that neither Washington nor Europe has any questions about what happened on June 20-21.

The resignation of Gakharia in today's conditions would be interpreted as a betrayal of the motherland, in the literal sense, he said.

Gakharia managed to stop a coup d'état. He ensured the protection of a state institution □ the

parliament □ managed to prevent trouble for the public. If he had not coped with these tasks, then he would have to resign.

Ivanishvili added that the youth demonstrations in front of the parliament, as well as in Batumi and Kutaisi, which have been taking place for almost a month, are controlled by the United National Movement. Ivanishvili believes that the demand for the resignation of Gakharia is a demand of the opposition, but not of the people:

Our society is wise, the people are wise * Two hundred people are shouting for [his] resignation in Tbilisi, and another two hundred in the west of the country, Ivanishvili stated.

He did admit that there were isolated cases of excessive force on the part of law enforcement officers, and that the Ministry of Internal Affairs should investigate all such episodes.

He said that an alleged rumour that he personally had ordered the dispersal of the protest was stupid.

Only [members of] the United National Movement can say such nonsense, Bidzina Ivanishvili told reporters. Well, how do you imagine it [going down] □ at midnight I contacted the police and gave orders?!

On Russian MP Gavrilo's presence in Georgia

Responding to a question as to whether the invitation of the Russian MP Sergey Gavrilo to Georgia was a mistake, Ivanishvili again referred to the United National Movement.

Ivanishvili said that Gavrilo's address was a protocol error, because of which the opposition raised a stir, because it is looking for any reason to exacerbate the situation.

In 2016, there were Russian MPs in Georgia, including Slutsky, who is a much bigger figure than Gavrilo, I don't remember other names, but there was also a former FSB chairman. And where was the opposition then? In 2016, the United National Movement still had hope in the elections. Now they are in the process of disintegration and their return to power through elections is impossible, so they are looking for any excuse to aggravate the situation, Ivanishvili said.

On the resignation of the Speaker of Parliament

Ivanishvili says the now former chairman of parliament, Irakli Kobakhidze, was never guilty of anything, and his resignation is also on the conscience of the United National Movement.

Kobakhidze is not guilty of anything. The United National Movement raised hype around the issue. Of course, Gavrilo sitting in the chair of the speaker was a mistake. But it was a protocol error. Kobakhidze has nothing to do with it. Objective public outrage followed, and Kobakhidze, after analyzing the situation, covered the entire team and resigned, Ivanishvili said.

On the Russian market

Ivanishvili said that people who want to get rid of the Russian market are the enemies of their own country. He said that only illiterate persons could discuss the idea of submitting the Russian market with that of the EU and Ukraine.

If you pay attention, you can see that the Europeans themselves, and the representatives of

developed countries, are trying in every way to establish themselves on the Russian market. Replacing the Russian market is an extremely difficult task for Europeans, and even more so for us, Ivanishvili said.

On Giorgi Gabunia

This is an embarrassment for our country, for our culture. All society condemns his trick. It is an embarrassment for all Georgians, Ivanishvili said about the monologue of journalist Giorgi Gabunia, who cursed the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on live air.

On Mamuka Khazaradze

I welcome his actions. The more businessmen, the more young and active people that come into politics, the better. I welcome this because the society will have a wider choice, Ivanishvili said, commenting on the decision of the founder of one of Georgias largest banks, TBC Bank, Mamuka Khazaradze, to create a new social movement.

<https://jam-news.net/georgia-ruling-party-head-speaks-out-for-first-time-since-tbilisi-protests/>

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