

Opposition Alliance Says May 26 Rally Will Go Ahead Despite Rejections From City Hall and Interior Ministry

By MESSENGER STAFF

Opposition Alliance leader Nika Gvaramia said the planned May 26 rally in Tbilisi will proceed despite back-to-back rejections from Tbilisi City Hall and the Interior Ministry, which he said amounted to a de facto ban on protest.

Gvaramia said the Interior Ministry's refusal included a question about why he had not submitted the application in person, which he dismissed as "completely surprising" alongside "many other stupid things." He said the rejections made one thing clear: "Protests are prohibited in this country, without exaggeration, they are prohibited." He added that the rally would go ahead regardless, and that the government's responses would be challenged in a fair court. "Do whatever you want at home' will not work. The rally will take place as the Constitution tells us," he wrote on Facebook.

Tbilisi City Hall refused the Alliance's request to place structures, including a stage, near parliament, saying official Independence Day events planned across Tbilisi on May 26 had required changes to traffic patterns, and that placing such structures near parliament was therefore "impermissible."

The Interior Ministry cited separate procedural grounds, saying the application missed the legal submission deadline and failed to include the purpose of the gathering, its end time,



the estimated number of participants, and the form of emer-

gency medical assistance to be provided. The ministry said it

was therefore unable to carry out the measures required under

Georgia's Law on Assemblies and Demonstrations.



Ilia State University Students Raise Over 1 Million GEL in Three Days for Children With Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy

By MESSENGER STAFF

A fundraising campaign launched by students from Ilia State University raised over 1 million GEL in under three days for children diagnosed with Duchenne muscular dystrophy, as the Georgian Dream government continues to resist parents' calls for access to newer medications.

Students from "Protect Iliauni," an initiative opposing controversial education reforms set to gut Ilia State University, launched the campaign on the evening of May 20 with an ini-

tial goal of 100,000 GEL, running non-stop social media livestreams to cover urgent needs including wheelchairs, adapted vehicles, and respiratory equipment. "When the state does not take responsibility for the children's lives and health, or for bringing the necessary medication into the country, the engagement of citizens is crucial," they said.

By early May 23, the campaign had surpassed 1 million GEL, drawing support from the public, businesses, publishers, prominent public figures, and senior Orthodox clergy. As part

of the drive, students also traveled more than four hours to Kobuleti in the Adjara region to deliver birthday gifts to 12-year-old Mate Verulidze, a child living with the disease.

Around 100 children in Georgia are reported to live with DMD, a rare genetic muscle-wasting disease primarily affecting boys. Symptoms typically appear between ages 2 and 5, with loss of mobility by age 10 and early mortality usually between ages 25 and 30.

For over a year, parents of

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