

The Messenger

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GEL 3.00

#112 (6168)

TUESDAY, JUNE 23, 2026

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Saakashvili Calls Lelo and Ahali Business Projects, Says Opposition Falls Short

By MESSENGER STAFF

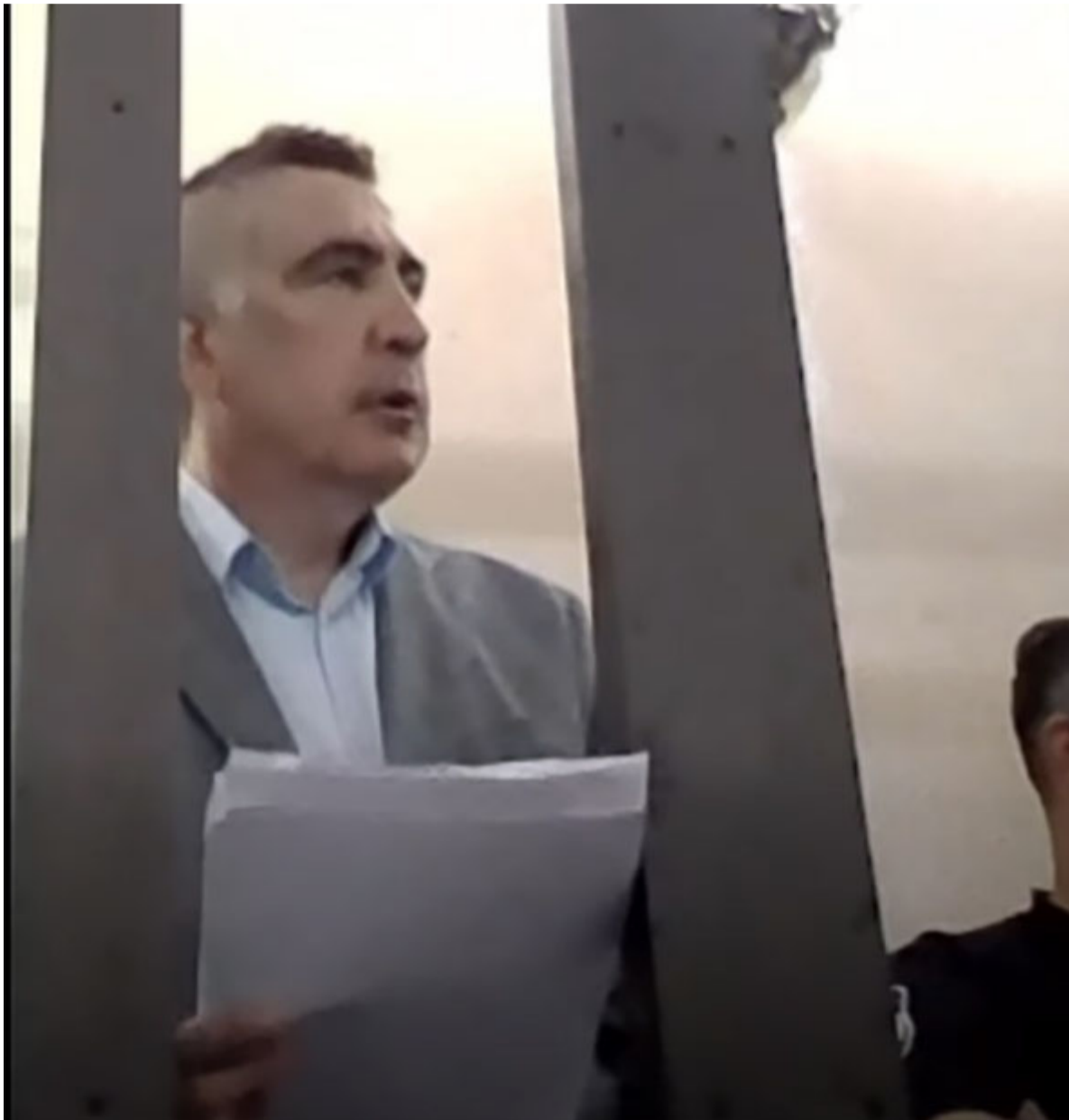
Georgia's Third President Mikheil Saakashvili used a court hearing to weigh in on the Georgian opposition, calling several parties vehicles for business interests rather than genuine political forces.

“With all due respect, Lelo is a business project of Badri and Mamuka. Ahali, no matter how much we try to ignore it, was created from the outset as a project of the Gilauri brothers, not to win, but to take voters away from my party, the United National Movement,” Saakashvili said, adding that there were also “several smaller business projects spread across different categories.”

He claimed the Gilauri brothers stopped funding Ahali after fulfilling what he called their “patrons’ assignment.” “The goal was achieved. After the Gilauris fulfilled their patrons’ assignment, they also stopped funding it, and now I see that Ahali is stuck,” he said.

Saakashvili also questioned whether the opposition was capable of defeating Georgian Dream. “Does today’s opposition meet the criteria for victory? So far, no. How do you defeat a dictatorship when parties boast that the dictatorship awarded them a higher percentage than their competing opposition in a rigged election?” he said.

He also took issue with what



he described as efforts within the opposition to build political profiles at his expense or cooperate with “the dictator’s accomplices.”

Saakashvili disagreed with his “old friend” Nika Gvaramia’s characterization of the October 4 unrest. “October 4 was not a day when people lost their judgment. It was the struggle of 200,000 passionate people together with the organizers of the rally,” he said.

On the question of removing Georgian Dream from power, Saakashvili argued that internal pressure alone was sufficient, drawing a comparison to a recent fire at a Moscow oil refinery. “Russia is burning. Look at how the roof of an oil refinery in Moscow was blown off. In exactly the same way, this regime sits on Georgia like a lid. Just as Ivanishvili’s palace towers over Tbilisi, this dictatorship towers over Georgia, and removing it requires only internal pressure,” he said.

He argued that society had not yet built up enough of that pressure. “This is not general pressure. It is pressure caused by injustice, by the degradation of Georgia’s dignity, by corruption, and by poverty. We are not generating enough of this pressure,” he said, addressing the audience directly: “Are you satisfied with this boiling point, with this situation? Probably not.”

Bokuchava Defends UNM’s Alliance Decision, Acknowledges Party Challenges

By MESSENGER STAFF

United National Movement Chair Tina Bokuchava said the party does not need an external audit to recognize the serious challenges it faces, as she addressed ongoing internal developments within the party.

Bokuchava said she had personally opposed joining the Opposition Alliance but ultimately deferred to former President Mikheil Saakashvili’s judgment. “I believe that a democratic front for victory must be a broad socio-political coalition that confronts the regime together during elections, united against a single opponent. The alliance met neither of those criteria,” she wrote.

She said Saakashvili had feared the UNM would be blamed for undermining opposition unity if it stayed out. “President Saakashvili believed that the

UNM would become the target of attacks and that he personally would be blamed for undermining opposition unity. Therefore, I agreed with his decision that the UNM should join the Opposition Alliance,” she said.

Bokuchava also dismissed suggestions that the party should now revisit the issue. “I do not believe it is justified to artificially revive this issue now. If anything is disconnected from people and their real problems, it is precisely this discussion,” she wrote.

On the party’s internal state, she acknowledged the toll of recent years while framing the party’s survival as an achievement.

“Despite the imprisonment of President Saakashvili, Political Council Chairman Levan Khabeishvili, and the backbone



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