

TEMPEST IN A TEAPOT?

By BRYAN ADRIAN, GT

The recent LGBT gay parade hostility in Tbilisi, a parade by and large initiated by foreign NGOs, should it really be a reason to question the effectiveness of the new Ivanishvili government, and to portray the entire Christian Orthodox national religion of Georgia as being “backward” and represented by a cave-full of retro-grade priests?

As reported by Freedom House, an NGO with central offices in Washington DC and New York City, Saakashvili in late 2011 signed into law amendments to the Georgian civil code that enabled religious groups to register as legal entities, against the clearly stated wishes of the national Orthodox Church of Georgia. By July 2012 four new religious groups had been registered already for official legal status in Georgia. <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2012/georgia>

Does this across the board permission for freedom of religions to register their legality in Georgia, religions that may or may not clash with the well established national religion of Georgia, a national religion dating back to the 4th century, should this legislation work as an enabler of USAID and American private citizens monies and their missionaries, to assist any and all religious groups, sects, organizations and cults, such as Moonies, Scientologists, Jehovah Witnesses, extremist Hassidic isolationists, Children of God, Pentecostals, Druids, Neopagans, Jews for Jesus, and the new Alien Abductees faith-based movement, in addition to Bahais, and Wiccans too, to provide competitive religions and sects a foothold here in Georgia?

We have two issues here suddenly and complexly intertwined in the camera lenses of the western media and various western NGO spokespersons. Gay rights to parade downtown against the admonitions of the Georgian Church, and the rights of new legal religious entities in Georgia and the rights of minority groups for their non-traditional sexual preferences. Some western news outlets are even suggesting that this less than an hour violent melee during the gay parade, with no deaths and no permanent injuries, was a stealth operation of Russia working along with the new lame Prime Minister, in their assessment he is a lame puppet of Putin—who does not want to make war with

Russia—the country which the former leader of Georgia again and again and over and over, claimed vociferously to be the single most cause of all evils in this Georgian nation, until he lost his leadership last October 2012 during the proven and widely acknowledged democratic national elections.

Don't forget, there was a huge anti-gay backlash last May 2012 in front of the Philharmonic during the LGBT parade, in which quite a ruckus took place, during the government of Saakashvili. Now all of a sudden, Ivanishvili's team is somehow suspect because of a repeat performance of a cluster of foreign NGO agitators, promoting gay rights as if they are in bohemian San Francisco, clashing with a few well known extremist Georgian Orthodox priests. Out of the blue, this year even more homophobes from the provinces were alerted and present at Ground Zero to make the headlines doing their uncivil deeds against the foreign brigade of LGBT activists, with a few of their Georgian gay representatives alongside them.

Is there something i am missing here? I know more than a few Georgian gays here and none of them would have gone near the western organized protest to parade for their rights. I think these people here in Georgia given a little more time can iron out a fistful of homophobic priests, doesn't everyone, without alien NGOs sending press releases to BBC and CNN, not so reliable news sources? Or do we need to interfere here like in Syria and Libya and I guess what the hell—why not in Lebanon and Egypt and Tunisia too—or why not everywhere, worldwide then? OCCUPY WALL STREET and We Are the 99 Percent civil and financial rights movements have already been nearly completely silenced in USA by police strategies and surveillance techniques. Shouldn't we put our vehemence for reform back onto our own soil, where we understand the culture and traditions somewhat better? The Czech Republic has a balanced relationship with the USA, the EU, and with Russia. Would the same NGOs and western spokespersons here in Georgia—who use the English language in most of their activities—recommend to an Eastern European nation, supposing that if a group of provincial extremist Czechs suddenly descended on Prague and clashed with a very small but well publicized homosexual parade for gay rights, along with some miscreant self hating priests who were throwing



stones also, would the western agencies and spokespersons recommendations be to fatuously suggest that the Czech government was in collusion with the Russians and their mutual Christian church movements, against minority rights in the Czech Republic, just because the Czech government does not denounce Russia as a Great Satan? Are political prisoners' rights so mundane in Georgia now that they become inconsequential by comparison? Last year during the anti-gay parade here, the violence was much more vastly underplayed than this year, and there was no voice then, not even a peep, defending the tens of thousands of prisoners who were still wrongly imprisoned and staving off TB and rape on the inside of Georgian prison cells.

Don't you think it is time for NGOs here to set their priorities into some kind of order of importance? Let the local gays do it on their own, their own style of seeking attention, and let the majority of good priests here apply corrective measures to their own bad apples. I give the Georgian people and intelligentsia and Church, more credit than only this trust I am recommending strongly here. The question here in Georgia maybe should be, “Couldn't the new government request the Church to put into their priesthood, ONLY university trained graduates of approved Orthodox seminaries?” What do your readers of Georgian Times think about this?? Should we all get equally alarmed because in Israel we are not seeing huge protests, of Shias and Sunnis, and of course Palestinians and Gazans, begging for religious rights in their old homeland, which is now the

media endorsed lighthouse symbolizing near perfect democracy in the region, the infallible Israel? Are the bulk of NGOs in Israel getting really worked up over the bulldozing down of homes of non-Jews, as much as the NGOs are getting worked up over LGBT injuries during an inflammatory Tbilisi parade, given the very widely known traditions of Georgia and other related ancient Orthodox Christian cultures?

One should first ask, what are the numbers of battered and abused gays here in Georgia? Are their numbers more, or less, than battered wives statistics? Should we have a foreign NGO backed public parade of Battered Wives demanding justice against their Georgian husband beaters?? Are the numbers of bashed gays here, more or less, than the proportionate number in Saudi Arabia and Qatar and Turkey and Dubai? In which land[s] should our

western NGOs and democracy-building spokespersons endeavor to achieve sexual rights for more and more and more of the silent minorities of LGBTs? Should one condemn Israel for their bashings against their minority religions, as much as the Ivanishvili government and the Orthodox Church are taking heat for not protecting their minorities and minority religions? Let's hear this out immediately instead of making a huge mistake in over-publicizing an unclear foreign-imposed agenda that does not represent the majority of gays in Georgia. And if you disagree, show us all a survey and poll, of tens of thousands of gays here in Georgia, who incontrovertibly agree that they need access to larger gay parades, more frequently organized, along with some proof that such activities increases their standard of living and civil security.

In the last week I have read in the local and national media,

and seen on YouTube numerous NGO and western self appointed spokespersons of democracy-validation entities, alleging that Russia is an evil shadow behind this recent outburst of a number of imported busloads of homophobic late teens aged boys, joined by an ideological cluster bomb of extremist homophobic priests, with no mention much at all about the legions of priests who were there in their black frocks standing around only to register their protest against too liberal and exhibitionist a gay rights parade, for their parishes. If such a sinister strategy is afoot by Russia, it is time to let us hear from the thousands of Georgian gays here that this suspicious idea holds true and is as palpable a reality as the taste of large red ripe Georgian tomatoes in one's mouth in mid summer. Is this recent tempest created out of the web of information networks, more bluster than fact, and more convenient than reformatory?

NEWS

U.S. Statement on Arrest and Detention of Former Senior Georgian Officials

The United States Government is closely following the cases of arrest and detention of former senior Georgian officials, including former Prime Minister Merabishvili. We have stressed to the Georgian government the importance we attach to ensuring that such investigations and prosecutions are conducted with full respect for due process and the rule of law - including the presumption of innocence - and avoiding the perception or reality of political retribution. This is particularly true with respect to a politically-sensitive case such as the arrest of a former prime minister. We note the open access to pre-trial court hearings, including detention hearings, and to trial proceedings to both Georgian and international observers, and we encourage continued transparency. We believe that pre-trial detention should be imposed in accordance with Georgian law where there is a clear justification, and in accordance with relevant international and European guidelines and commitments.