

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves recently phoned the Georgian Head of State, Mikheil Saakashvili, who provided him with an overview of the current situation in South Ossetia.

According to the Georgian President, they started operations last night after massive heavy weapons fire was opened on Georgian positions, during the unilateral cease-fire declared by Georgia, and heavy military equipment started to enter South Ossetia through the Rok Tunnel. The goal of the Georgian actions was to prevent the broad military operation planned against Georgia and to restore constitutional order to South Ossetia. Georgia was also forced to declare a general mobilization since planes originating from Russia bombed Georgian territory. President Saakashvili said that Georgian forces have also shot down Russian planes.

President Ilves said that it was extremely regrettable that it has not been possible to halt the hostile activities that have resulted in needless victims, injuries and destruction. "I express condolences to the families and friends of the victims on behalf of the entire Estonian nation," President Ilves told the Georgian Head of State.

The Estonian Head of State expressed hope that the hostile parties will soon reach the negotiating table. "It is essential to immediately end the bloodshed, to prevent further violence and to start resolving the problems by peaceful means," he said.

"Russia's military intervention will definitely not help the resolution of the conflict," President Ilves stressed. "Quite the opposite—it significantly increases the risk of the conflict possibly spreading throughout the region." The Estonian Head of State's opinion is that the resolution of the conflict must be based on the principle of Georgian territorial integrity.

The Georgian side has presented its vision for the status that South Ossetia could have within Georgia. The Georgian side has also repeatedly demonstrated its initiative to return to the negotiating table.

"Estonia has always supported, and continues to support, all initiatives that result in the resolution of the conflict," President Ilves said. "In the current situation, it is regrettable that South Ossetia did not use the opportunity to find a solution."

## **President Ilves phoned the Georgian Head of State**

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According to President Ilves, at the same time, Estonia, as well as other countries, should actively make use of all the possibilities to aid the peace process available through the European Union, NATO, United Nations and other international organizations.

Office of the President  
Public Relations Department  
Phone +372 631 6229