

Georgian Dream Resigns as Observer Member of Party of European Socialists Over Ideological Differences and Threat of Expulsion



BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

At a briefing, Irakli Kobakhidze, the chairman of the Georgian Dream party, announced that the ruling party has decided to resign from their position as an observer member of the Party of European Socialists and other affiliated organizations. Kobakhidze also mentioned that they plan to send a written statement to the Party of European Socialists without delay.

Kobakhidze has explained that the Georgian Dream party decided to end its partnership with the Party of European Socialists due to the threat of expulsion they received. This threat was reportedly issued because of their participation in a conservative conference held in Hungary on May 4, which had the slogan God, Motherland, Family. He stated that the officials of the European political party critically evaluated their participation in the conservative conference and issued a

public threat of termination of cooperation without prior mutual communication. According to Kobakhidze, this kind of attitude and action by the leaders of the Socialist Party of Europe is considered fundamentally unacceptable to the Georgian Dream party.

According to him, Georgian Dream had been an observer member of PES since 2015, but PES had never issued a statement in support of their party. Instead, individual representatives of PES had actively participated in the political campaigns of the "radical opposition". Furthermore, many MEPs from PES had supported "absurd" resolutions calling for sanctions against the founder of "Georgian Dream," the release of individuals convicted of crimes, and the termination of criminal prosecutions. Kobakhidze stated that the membership of "Georgian Dream" in PES had not been productive and had even been counterproductive under these conditions.

The Chairman stated that since 2015, the Georgian Dream had observed the ideological transformation of PES, which has increasingly moved away from classical social-democratic ideology towards a pseudo-liberal platform.

Kobakhidze emphasized that this kind of ideological transformation is not acceptable for their party and is incompatible with the values and visions of Georgian society.

"As it is known, our participation in the conservative conference was critically evaluated by the officials of the European political party, whose observer member is "Georgian Dream." Moreover, there was a public threat from their side about

the termination of cooperation, which was not preceded by mutual communication. This kind of attitude and action of the leaders of the "Socialist Party of Europe" is fundamentally unacceptable to us.

Our party has been an observer member of PES since 2015. Unfortunately, until today, PES has not made a single loud statement in support of the "Georgian Dream." Individual representatives of PES regularly joined the political campaigns of the radical opposition. Last year and this year, several dozens of MEPs from PES supported the absurd resolutions by which the European Parliament demanded the imposition of sanctions on the founder of our party, Bidzina Ivanishvili, the release of two criminals, Nika Gvaramia and Mikheil Saakashvili, and the termination of criminal prosecution against another criminal, Davit Kezerashvili. Unfortunately, PES has never once condemned the support of absurd resolutions by its members. In such conditions, the membership of "Georgian Dream" in PES did not play a positive role; on the contrary, it was completely counterproductive.

From 2015 to the present day, we have continuously observed the ideological transformation of PES. The mentioned party was increasingly moving away from the classical social-democratic ideology and moving to a pseudo-liberal platform, which is responsible for overcoming the ideological crisis created in the modern world. This kind of ideological transformation of PES is unacceptable for us and incompatible with the values and visions of our party, as well as the Georgian society," said Kobakhidze.

US Ambassador to Georgia Raises Concerns over Putin's Decision to Resume Flights and Cancel Visa Regime for Georgians

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Kelly Degan, the US Ambassador to Georgia, stated that Putin's decision to resume flights and cancel the visa regime for Georgians raises concerns about Russia's intentions towards Georgia. Degan questioned why Putin would make such a move now and whether it would affect Georgia's candidate status. She added that the presence of hundreds of thousands of Russian citizens in Georgia, with the potential for a million more to arrive after the opening of direct flights, could be seen as a tool for Putin to interfere in Georgia's affairs. Degan said that it is unlikely that Putin is motivated by concern for the comfort of Georgian passengers.

The US Ambassador emphasized that a real show of care from Putin would be to withdraw Russian troops from

Abkhazia and Tskhinvali and fulfill his obligations under the ceasefire agreement.

Degan also reminded that Russia invaded Georgia in 2008 and attempted to destroy Georgia's independence in 1989, suppressed the Georgian language in 1978, and insulted Georgian churches throughout history. She further condemned Russia's attacks on Ukraine and called it a 'bloody regime' that targets residential buildings, schools, and hospitals, and separates children from their families.

"We have seen that sometimes Putin uses the presence of Russians in a country to interfere in its affairs. I believe that many Georgians are already concerned about the hundreds of thousands of Russian citizens who arrived in Georgia last year. Now we hear from the Russian



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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.5458; Euro - 2.7805; GBP - 3.1998; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.3428; Swiss Franc - 2.8470

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Tourism Agency that a million more may

come after the opening of direct flights. If Mr. Putin wants to show that he cares,

he should withdraw Russian troops from Abkhazia and Tskhinvali, fulfill his obligations under the ceasefire agreement, and change Russia's recognition of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali. These would be actions that Georgians would appreciate. Let us not forget that this is the same country that invaded Georgia in 2008 and tried to undermine Georgia's independence in 1989. They attempted to suppress the Georgian language in 1978 and

have insulted Georgian churches throughout the centuries.

This is a country that is currently attacking Ukraine, just as it did to Georgia 15 years ago, targeting residential buildings, schools, hospitals, and separating children from their families. This gesture from the bloody regime, which is now doing to Ukraine what it did to Georgia 15 years ago, seems strange," said Degnan.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Georgia's Demographic Issues Review Council holds session under Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili's leadership



The Demographic Issues Review Council of Georgia, under the leadership of Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili, held a session at the government administration to discuss the main goals of demographic development.

According to the press office of the Prime Minister, the council members discussed various initiatives aimed at improving the demographic situation,

with a focus on developing and implementing new programs and improving existing ones. The session also covered topics such as employment promotion, migration, healthcare, social sphere, and education.

After the council session, Tamar Gabunia, the Deputy Minister of IDPs from Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Protection, stated that a package of initiatives will be prepared as soon as possible. This package will be presented for consideration at the next council session.

"The first session of the council was held today. The main trends, which are noted from the demographic point of view, as well as the initiatives that are already underway in the health, education and social direction were presented. We discussed the necessary improvements, international practices and the necessary changes that will contribute to the improvement of demographic trends in the future. An agreement was made to prepare a package as soon as possible, which will be presented for discussion at the next meeting", said Tamar Gabunia.

British Ambassador to Georgia Calls Russian President's Decision to Resume Flights and Cancel Visa Regime 'Provocative Move'

Mark Clayton, the British Ambassador to Georgia, has characterized Russian President Vladimir Putin's decision to resume flights with Georgia and cancel the visa regime for Georgians as a 'provocative move'.

The British Ambassador to Georgia, Mark Clayton, described Russia's decision to resume flights with Georgia and cancel the visa regime for Georgians as a "provocative step" aimed at increasing Georgia's dependence on Russia and potentially involving them in sanctions avoidance.

According to the Ambassador, this move is also an attempt to divert attention from the main issue in the relationship between Russia and Georgia - the continued presence of the Russian army on Georgian territory in violation of international norms.

"With this provocative move, Russia is clearly trying to increase Georgia's depen-

dence on it. In addition, the risk of Georgia getting involved in sanctions avoidance processes may increase. At the same time, this action is an attempt to divert atten-



tion from the main issue of relations between Russia and Georgia. The main issue remains the fact that the Russian army continues to illegally stay on the territory of Georgia in violation of international norms. The United Kingdom supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia and continues to support Georgia's joining Euro-Atlantic structures, since this is the wish of the population of Georgia and the declared task of all major political powers," Clayton said.

USAID to Work with Batumi, Chokhatauri and Ozurgeti to Improve Services, Increase Quality of Life, and Strengthen their Communities and Hosts Panel Discussions in the Framework of the Open Government Week

Batumi, Georgia – May 11, 2023. USAID's Local Governance Program today finalized the first step in a partnership with three of Georgia's municipalities that will support improvement of local government performance and increase the quality of life for people in these communities. The memorandums of understanding signed today with Batumi, Chokhatauri and Ozurgeti encourage dialogue and partnerships between the local governments, citizens, civil

society and the private sector to secure support for improved public services and increased local revenues. The program also hosted panel discussions on digital services and legislative oversight in the framework of the Open Government Week.

The memorandums of understanding are also the foundation for cooperation between USAID and the municipalities that strengthen local administrative capacity. The cooperation will address systems and services identified in each municipality that will yield improvements in areas such as municipal social services, solid waste management, municipal transport, pre-school education, management of shelters for homeless animals,

coupled with digital services and other areas prioritized by local communities.

The USAID Local Governance Program is a five-year initiative that brings together central government and local government representatives to work with civil society and the private sector to achieve the goals of Georgia's decentralization strategy. It strengthens accountability across the local governance ecosystem and supports central-level institutions to manage the implementation of decentralization and public administration reform. Through the program, USAID will provide support to at least 22 municipalities and include others in learning, exchange, and outreach activities.

The three municipalities are among 11 selected for partnerships in the first year of the USAID Local Governance Program. They went through a multi-stage selection process and demonstrated a high interest and commitment to work on enhancing municipal efficiency and accountability, to improve public service delivery, and to encourage citizen participation in local decision-making processes. USAID conducted co-creation workshops with representatives of the 11 partner municipalities to identify challenges and priority needs of each municipality. Individual action plans were developed that serve as the basis for each memorandum of understanding.

Archil Chikovani, Mayor of

Batumi city, Ramaz Jincharadze, Sakrebulo Chair of Batumi municipality, Avtandil Talakvadze, Mayor of Ozurgeti municipality, Davit Darchia, Sakrebulo Chair of Ozurgeti municipality, Davit Sharashidze, Mayor of Chokhatauri municipality, Irakli Kuchava, Sakrebulo Chair of Chokhatauri municipality, as well as civil servants from the mentioned municipalities participated in MoU signing ceremony. Corinne Rothblum, Acting Deputy Director, Office of Democracy, Rights, and Governance (DRG), USAID Georgia, Kevin McLaughlin, Chief of Party of the USAID Local Governance Program, and Archil Chikovani, Mayor of Batumi city opened the event.

Weather

Friday, May 12

Day Light Rain
High: 18°C

Night Showers
Low: 14°C

Saturday, May 13

Day Light Rain
High: 16°C

Night Rain
Low: 11°C

published by

The Messenger

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