

EU Report 2022: Efforts Needed to Strengthen the Independence of Judicial and State Institutions in Georgia

By Liza Mchedlidze

According to the 2022 report on the state of human rights and democracy in the world, published by the European Union, further efforts are required to address certain challenges, particularly in the areas of judicial reforms, anti-corruption measures, and the strengthening of the independence of state institutions in Georgia.

The report indicates that the human rights situation in the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia remains concerning, highlighting the need for attention to the issues in those regions. While Georgia has made some advancements in human rights and democracy, there is still work to be done to fully meet the standards required for EU membership and ensure the protection of human rights across the country.

"Overview of the human rights and democracy situation: Georgia applied for membership in the European Union in March 2022. The European Council recognised the European perspective of Georgia in June 2022 and stated its readiness to grant the status of candidate country once the priorities specified in the Commission's Opinion on Georgia's membership application have been addressed. These priorities include issues related to the strengthening of democratic principles, the rule of law and human rights obligations. 39 Overall Georgia has a solid human rights framework, including legislations and policies in line with international and European standards. However, implementation should be strengthened in several areas. In 2022, progress has been achieved in the reforms of the electoral system, of the public administration, the enhancement of gender equality, the rights of the child, and the rights of persons with disabilities. Fur-



ther efforts are still needed in the area of judicial reforms, anti-corruption, strengthening the independence of State

institutions. The human rights situation in the Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia remains con-

cerning," the report reads.

According to Mikheil Sarjveladze, Chairman of the Human Rights Protection Committee of the Georgian Parliament, the European Union's report on Georgia is positive. Sarjveladze stated that the country has made remarkable progress in terms of human rights protection, and it continues to move forward.

According to Sarjveladze, the government is carrying out reforms that have not gone unnoticed by the European Union.

"The report of the European Union is positive. In 2012, Georgia had a difficult legacy in terms of human rights protection; it was the worst situation, known not only to the local community but also to the whole world. However, Georgia has made remarkable progress in this regard and continues to advance. The government's efforts in implementing reforms have been acknowledged by the European Union. The appreciation is appropriate and positive, signifying that the country now has a robust system in place for protecting human rights. This demonstrates Georgia's significant progress in building institutional democracy, including the protection of human rights."

Sarjveladze emphasized that although Georgia has achieved much, it doesn't mean they can rest satisfied without a vision for further strengthening those achievements.

"While focusing on anti-corruption measures, we must remember that Georgia is one of the model states with its own indicators, surpassing many EU states due to its sustainable system. I wouldn't call it a mere note in this aspect. However, the priority direction should be outlined to determine how the state should continue its work. Georgia must continue moving in the direction it has been following so far," he stated.

EU Sanctions Prohibit Re-Export of Cars from Georgia to Russia and Belarus

By Liza Mchedlidze

Within the framework of the 11th package of EU sanctions, the re-export of cars from Georgia to Russia and Belarus has been prohibited, as confirmed by the Revenue Service.

According to the service, the restriction on the export and re-export of cars imported from the USA to the territory of Georgia came into effect on August 1.

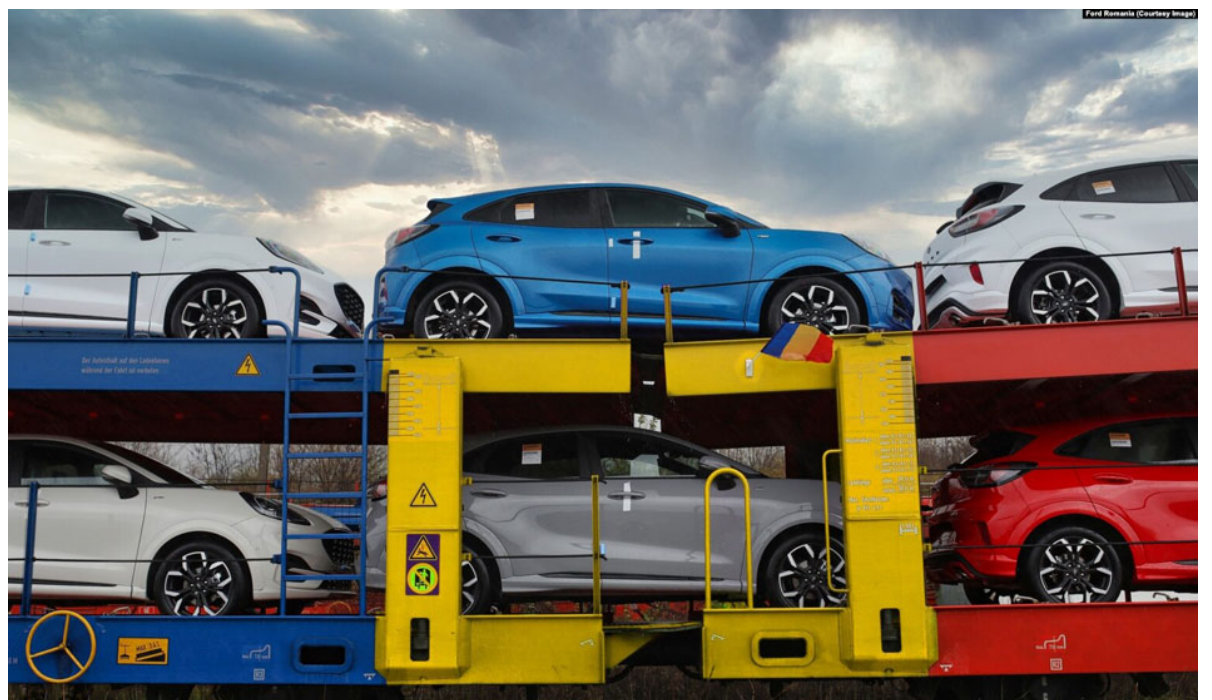
"The restriction on re-export/export of vehicles imported from the United States of America has been enforced on the territory of Georgia since August 1, and the restriction on those imported from Europe will be enforced from September 26, as provided for by the 11th package of imposed sanctions," stated the Revenue Service.

This restriction is part of the 11th package of sanctions imposed by the European Union against Russia, which includes a ban on exports to Russia.

As of August 1, the ban has affected cars imported from America, and from September 26, this ban will also apply to cars imported from European countries.

The Revenue Service made the information about the restrictions public only after a video of a Russian citizen, allegedly filmed in the vicinity of the Rustavi auto market, circulated on social networks.

The Russian citizen claimed that "global problems have arisen" and Russians will no longer be able to buy "their favorite cars" from Georgia.



Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.6185; Euro - 2.8749; GBP - 3.3475; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.8017; Swiss Franc - 2.9830

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

NATO Vilnius Summit: Georgia's Rocky Path to NATO Membership Under Scrutiny

NATO's Vilnius Summit noted that Georgia's and Ukraine's paths to NATO have diverged. Ukraine will be accepted into NATO without the MAP, while Georgia will also need the MAP and the implementation of reforms. The prospect of Georgia joining the Euro-Atlantic structure remains, but according to experts, under the current government, there will be no progress toward NATO.

The NATO Vilnius summit (July 11-12) was widely discussed in the Georgian media, but they were more interested in how Ukraine would proceed with its way to NATO. As for Georgia, there were no great expectations. It was known that Georgia would be represented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the NATO summit in Vilnius. It has never happened before that the first person from Georgia did not attend the NATO summit.

This was the Russian narrative - the war in Ukraine started because it wanted to join NATO. Besides, this was not a slip, but rather a general and constant message from the government. No one from the Georgian government explained why Gharibashvili did not attend the Vilnius summit. The German publication Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung directly noted that NATO informed the Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli

Gharibashvili, that he was not a welcome guest at the Vilnius summit. But why wasn't it possible for President Zourabishvili, who has a positive reputation in the West, to attend the summit? Aleko Elisashvili, the parliamentarian and leader of the Citizens Party, explained that while the Prime Minister was not invited, the president was. However, the "Georgian Dream did not let the president go."

The NATO Vilnius Summit was met with mixed assessments by the leaders of the Georgian Dream:

There were optimistic statements that everything is fine in Georgia-NATO relations. After arriving at the summit, Foreign Minister Iliia Darchiashvili said that "it was once again emphasized that Georgia enjoys strong support from NATO partners".

It was also voiced that neither Georgia nor Ukraine received anything new from the NATO summit. Chairman of the Georgian Dream Irakli Kobakhidze stated that "the status quo remained in force" and both Georgia and Ukraine are in the same position as they were in 2008 at the NATO Bucharest Summit. In Vilnius, they did not specifically tell Ukraine when they will join

NATO, and that "without specifics, no statement has any value."

Regarding Georgia-NATO relations, the same was said about Georgia-EU relations. Before the summit, the Speaker of the Parliament, Shalva Papuashvili, published an open letter that "there is no longer any argument left, why Georgia should not be accepted into NATO."

According to Papuashvili, in the last decade (that is, during the Georgian Dream government), democratic institutions were fundamentally strengthened and defense capabilities improved, "and NATO only repeats the promise of membership from the summit to summit."

Papuashvili's position is likely to be continued, that Georgia is being 'punished' because it refuses to join the war against Russia.

This statement is aimed at inciting anti-NATO sentiment in Georgia, although 80% of the Georgian population supports Georgia joining NATO. The topic of Georgia's 'punishment' will probably become more active by the end of the year when the EU's response to Georgia's fulfillment of the 12 points and the granting of membership candidate status will become known.

However, the official assertion that Georgia has done everything for further integration with NATO is unconvincing for the opposition. At the July 11 session of the Parliament, the opposition unanimously criticized the Georgian Dream for not doing anything to bring it closer to NATO. According to Salome Samadashvili, a member of the 'Lelo' party, the Georgian government arrived at the Vilnius summit empty-handed and left empty-handed as well. According to him, the reason for this is that today Georgia is ruled by people who believe that joining NATO is dangerous.

According to opposition representatives, there is no progress on Georgia's path to NATO membership, and the policy pursued by the Georgian Dream over the years is to blame, which is especially visible after Russia's attack on Ukraine.

Along with the confirmation of Georgia's Euro-Atlantic perspective in the communiqué adopted at the Vilnius summit, there was a note that Georgia needs to implement reforms.

"To advance Euro-Atlantic aspirations, Georgia must make progress in reforms, including key democratic reforms," the

NATO communiqué said.

What reforms are needed, it is recorded in the 12 points of the European Union. "Georgia not only didn't get anything but there was a record that there is a need for progress in reforms, which is translated from diplomatic language as the situation is difficult," commented Mikheil Saakashvili, who is in prison. Sabotaging democratic reforms by the current government is sabotaging NATO and EU membership.

The opposition points to the existing reality: on one side is the mood of the people - the desire to join the European Union and NATO, and on the other side is the Georgian dream of Bidzina Ivanishvili, who is in power, and instead of striving for integration into the European Union and NATO, the government intensifies anti-Western and Putinist rhetoric.

Georgia is approaching the parliamentary elections of 2024 in the conditions of increasing polarization, where the Georgian Dream plans to maintain the government for the 4th term, and the opposition plans to defeat it. It is already clear today that the elections will not be easy and will not take place in a peaceful atmosphere.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Ukrainian Citizen Arrested at Batumi Rally Accuses Police of Physical Assault and Aggressive Treatment

The Ukrainian citizen arrested at the rally in Batumi alleges that the police physically assaulted her. Additionally, she claims that the police treated her rudely and aggressively.

"They treated me very rudely, and one of them was extremely aggressive. I was arrested on the street where there were also protesters. Then they took me to a place

where there were only policemen. They treated me very rudely there as well. Although there is a video of the arrest, everything seems normal in it. However, before the video was taken, no one was paying attention, and just before they put me in the car, they used excessive



when they removed the flag from me and yanked my hand. At that moment, they twisted my hands, hurt my fingers, and I felt like I was hit several times. I still have bruises," she said.

EU Report Highlights Serious Problems in Georgia's Justice System and Corruption Direction says Tina Bokuchava

Tina Bokuchava, the chairwoman of the parliamentary faction United National Movement, has criticized the EU report, stating that the "Russian Dream" reads everything backward, and the EU report is no exception from this perspective. She mentioned that the report is highly critical and severe. In response to the assessments made by the EU report and 'Georgian Dream,' she highlighted that Georgia has been given specific recommendations to address the



identified problematic issues in order to attain candidate status.

According to Bokuchava, the report points out significant problems in the justice system, corruption issues, and concerns about the independence of institutions. These issues are some of the requirements set by the European Union for Georgia to attain candidate status and successfully continue its path of European integration.

"There are serious problems in the justice system, in the direction of corruption, and in terms of the independence of institutions. These are, among other things, the requirements that the European Union puts to Georgia in order to receive the candidate status and continue successfully on another path of European integration," said Bokuchava.

Weather

Thursday, August 3

Day ☀️ Clear

High: 36°C

Night 🌧️ Partly Cloudy

Low: 21°C

Friday, August 4

Day 🌧️ T-storm

High: 30°C

Night 🌧️ T-storm

Low: 20°C

force.

I had the flag wrapped around me, and they were untying it, for no apparent reason. It is neither illegal nor did anyone do anything wrong. I was shocked

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