

Former Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili: Georgia Not Ready for EU Membership

By Liza Mchedlidze

Former Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili recently stated that Georgia isn't ready to pursue European Union membership. Responding to questions regarding the ruling party adopting legislation similar to Russian laws and its potential impact on European integration, Gharibashvili emphasized that once Georgia is adequately prepared for European integration, any conflicting laws could be swiftly amended or replaced.

"The country has reached its maximum. The peak was last December when we became a candidate country. The next step is to join. However, we cannot become a member country today. We are not ready for membership today. Do you agree with me? There is currently no consensus that the country can become a member of the European Union today.

Moreover, there are many problems, and you know that it will take time. Today, the EU is not ready for enlargement, and it will take time. The next steps depend on many factors. By the time the country is ready, and they tell us that tomorrow you will become a member of the European Union, this law can be easily canceled, revised, changed, or a new one adopted... so don't worry," Gharibashvili said.



Lithuanian MEP Andrius Kubilius has responded to Gharibashvili's statement and has criticized the ruling party of Georgia, accusing them of attempting to implement 'Russian-style' laws.

Kubilius believes it's the ruling Georgian Dream party that's unprepared.

According to the MEP, this move contrasts sharply with the pro-European sentiment among the Georgian people, who have

shown their opposition through public demonstrations.

"In December, Gharibashvili celebrated Georgia's EU candidate status, calling it a victory. 4 months later, he says Georgia is not ready. Who exactly is not

ready: the Georgian people or the GD party? Answer is clear-GD is pushing Russian-style laws, while pro-European people protest in the streets," Kubilius wrote on X.

Saakashvili Urges Opposition Unity and Transitional Government Formation

By Liza Mchedlidze

Former president Mikheil Saakashvili has released a

new letter, urging the opposition to unite under a common list for the upcoming elections. He proposed that following the defeat

of the ruling Georgian Dream party by this unified opposition, a transitional government should be formed. Saakashvili

suggested that this transitional government should comprise individuals who are not currently prominent figures in politics.

"At a crucial moment for the country, the main order of our proud, strong people is unity. As an individual and a regional leader, I am ready to do everything for this unity. First of all, unity means a common list for elections. All major pro-European powers will delegate their representatives to this common list on a parity basis. The election number can be chosen randomly.

According to our calculations, in the case of a common list, the opposition will defeat Dream with a ratio of 70/30. Then, a transitional government should be formed and staffed with strong specialists who are currently in the country but not prominently involved in politics at this stage. The opposition and civil society should agree on changes in the court, principles of de-oligarchization, and the future consensual presidential

candidate," Saakashvili said.

Saakashvili discussed the United National Movement and advocated for new leadership to emerge, emphasizing the necessity of unity and collaboration with society and other political factions.

Saakashvili notes that despite being "isolated by the regime" now, he is ready to actively participate in this process. He requested the UNM to establish a party board in the coming days.

According to the former president, this is a crucial moment, and in the coming days, "the political backbone of the Russian regime must be broken". Saakashvili emphasized that "No to Russian Law" and "No to Russian Regime" are inseparable slogans.

"Furthermore, we need to reform the election administration and appoint trustworthy individuals. Ivanishvili has misled Georgian society multiple times, and this time, we must not give him the opportunity to deceive us," stated Saakashvili.



Mikheil Saakashvili • 1.3M followers • 0 following

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.6711; Euro - 2.8453; GBP - 3.3223; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.8623; Swiss Franc - 2.9404

Georgian Government's 'Transparency' Draft Law Draws Acute Protests at Home and Reaction Abroad

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

“Very polarised” - this is how local and foreign experts assessed the situation in Georgia in recent years. Today, polarisation in Georgia has reached its peak. The reason is Georgian Dream’s April 3 draft law on ‘Transparency of Foreign Influence’, which the ruling political power declares as ‘European’, while the opposition and the international community considers it a ‘Russian law’.

Georgian society has been divided into two unequal parts - pro-Russian forces and people who support the western orientation of the country. The government attempted to pass the Russian law a year ago, and it was passed in the first reading, but due to the large-scale mass protests, the draft law was withdrawn and the ruling party promised to never bring it back.

The promise was broken a year later when Georgian Dream reintroduced the bill with a small correction, renaming it from the law on the ‘agents of foreign influence’ to the ‘carrier

of the interests of a foreign power’.

If last year, 76 parliamentarians supported the initiated bill, this year, on April 18, the ruling party adopted the revised version of it in the first reading with 83 votes. Last year and today, the party eagerly claimed that the draft law initiated by them was not Russian, and a number of EU countries have or are adopting such a law. In contrast to such statements, a number of Western politicians noted that the bill, which the Georgian Dream intends to adopt, is not a carrier of Western values and is unacceptable for the countries of the European Union. In response, former Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili invited foreign diplomats accredited in Georgia to an open discussion in order to prove to them the Western nature of the law. In addition to asserting the “non-Russianness” of the draft law, government representatives continue to make anti-Western statements and actively point out that Georgia is a sovereign state and will not do anything based

on instructions from outside. Talking about sovereignty in this filter is strange given that Georgia’s sovereignty is permanently violated by Russia, which has occupied two regions of Georgia.

The ‘transparency’ bill initiated is directed not against the ongoing aggression from Russia, but against Georgia’s strategic partners. The draft law will give grant-receiving organisations the status of ‘carriers of the interests of a foreign power’, and the US, European Union and international funds that issue grants in Georgia, the status of ‘foreign power’.

Georgia’s international partners, including the US, the European Union and the Council of Europe, have expressed concern over the re-initiation of the draft law, which was ‘unconditionally’ withdrawn by the Georgian authorities last year. Western partners call on Georgia to refuse to adopt the mentioned law, because it will hinder Georgia’s European perspective.

After receiving the status of a candidate for EU membership,

the task facing Georgia is to fulfil 9 reservations, after which it will be possible to start negotiations on membership.

The adoption of the law on ‘carriers of the interests of a foreign power’ effectively excludes Georgia’s progress on the path of European integration, ensuring that Georgia openly moves into Russia’s orbit.

The government insists that the law only serves the financial transparency of NGOs and nothing else is behind it. However, Putin also mentioned this when adopting the law on foreign agents. In fact, it was the beginning of an anti-democratic process. Adoption of a similar law in Russia completely eliminated independent civil organisations and media. Russia has tightened this law over time, and it now applies to individuals and anyone who receives money from the West in any way.

The reintroduction of the bill rekindled the protest wave in Georgia. Georgian Dream most likely hopes that the protest movement will gradually subside and they will be able to smoothly

implement the law this time.

They point out that the “radical forces” are trying to implement a revolutionary scenario in Georgia, and representatives of the public, outraged by the reversal of the law, talk about a constitutional coup organised by Georgian Dream.

According to Article 78 of the Constitution, any government of Georgia is obliged to do everything to speed up the country’s Euro-Atlantic integration. The ‘Transparency’ law is directly against the process of integration. With the said draft law, it seems that the prolonged process of confrontation has started in Georgia. If the law is adopted by the Parliament, the right of veto of President Salome Zurbishvili remains, but Georgian Dream can overcome the veto as well.

The protests will continue, and the result will depend on many factors, among them on the Russia-Ukraine war. Much will rely on the West’s reaction to the adoption of the law, but the most important force remains the wave of protests.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

European Council President Voices Concerns About ‘Russian Law’ Impact on EU Integration



President of the European Council Charles Michel expressed concern over a draft law being voted on in the Georgian parliament, stating that it does not bring Georgia closer to the European Union, but rather has the opposite effect. He emphasized his disappointment with the government’s decision in an interview with Euronews.

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“The enlargement process is based on merit and assumes that candidate countries wishing to join the EU respect fundamental common principles and values.”

“If they vote for bills that are not in line with these principles and values, this will affect the process,” said Michel.

Parties’ Joint Pledge: No More Confrontations with Masked Special Forces in Peaceful Demonstrations

Seven political parties have jointly issued a statement appealing to the citizens of Georgia. They pledge that after the end of Ivanishvili’s rule and the establishment of a coalition European government, citizens will no longer encounter masked special forces illegally restricting their fundamental constitutional rights during peaceful assemblies or demonstrations.

“We appeal to the citizens of Georgia and pledge that after the end of Ivanishvili’s authoritarian rule and the formation of a coalition European government, you will never again have to come

into contact with masked special forces who will illegally limit your fundamental constitutional rights during a peaceful assembly or demonstration.

“We continue to resist and fight against the Russian law and the Russian government until the final victory of our

people. No to the Russian law! No to the Russian government!,” the statement said, signed by the following parties: Ahali, Girchi More-Freedom, Droa, United National Movement, Lelo for Georgia, Republican Party, Strategy Aghmashenebli.



Weather

Monday, April 22

Day ☀️ Clear
High: 28°C

Night 🌧️ Partly Cloudy
Low: 13°C

Tuesday, April 23

Day ☀️ Clear
High: 28°C

Night 🌑 Clear
Low: 14°C

published by

The Messenger

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