

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

MEPs Call for Suspension of Georgia's EU Candidate Status



European Parliament

To: Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell

Brussels, 7 May 2024

Dear High Representative/ Vice President,

The continued undemocratic behaviour of the Georgian authorities, in particular their aggressiveness in pushing through a 'Russian-style' law on foreign agents, silencing and using force against peaceful demonstrators, has crossed the line. Such behaviour has further increased tensions and polarisation within Georgian politics and society, which runs counter to the nine steps to which the Georgian government committed itself when the country was granted EU candidate status, and can no longer be ignored by the European Union. We call on you to take a firm stance and the following measures, which would send a clear signal to the Georgian authorities.

First, the behaviour of the Georgian authorities and the leading party Georgian Dream is contrary to the obligations of an EU candidate country. Georgia's candidate status should therefore be suspended without any further progress in the accession process.

Second, EU funding of the Georgian state budget and government programmes should be reviewed.

Third, an interim assessment of Georgia's progress in implementing the nine steps set out in the Commission's recommendation of 8 November 2023 should be carried out without further delay. This measure was included in the Parliament's resolution of 25 April 2024 on attempts to reintroduce a foreign agent law in Georgia and its restrictions on civil society.

standards as expected.

MEPs reaffirmed their support for the Georgian people's aspirations to join the European Union. However, they emphasized that democratic criteria must be uniformly applied to all EU candidate countries and cannot be compromised.

"Dear High Representative/

Vice President,

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a 'Russian-style' law on foreign agents, silencing and using force against peaceful demonstrators, has crossed the line. Such behaviour has further increased tensions and polarisation within Georgian politics and society, which runs counter to the nine steps to which the Georgian government committed itself when the country was granted EU candidate status, and can no longer be ignored by the European Union. We call on you to take a firm stance and the following measures, which would send a clear signal to the Georgian authorities.

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In recent years we have worked tirelessly to support the Georgian people and their aspirations to join the EU. We remain determined to do so, but the democratic criteria for all EU candidate countries are the same and must be respected," the letter reads.

More than thirty Members of the European Parliament have jointly penned a letter to Vice-President of the European Commission, Joseph Borrell, urging the suspension of Georgia's candidate status for EU membership. This letter is in response to what they see as undemocratic behavior and a departure from EU values by the Georgian authorities.

The letter highlighted several specific concerns, including the recent passage of legislation resembling Russia's "foreign agents law" that limits civil society and silences criticism. The MEPs also condemned the use of force against peaceful demonstrators, viewing these actions as a clear violation of democratic norms.

The MEPs stressed that such behavior by Georgian authorities undermines the commitments made when the country was granted EU candidate status. They argued that Georgia's candidate status should be suspended immediately, with no further progress in the accession process until democratic standards are restored.

Additionally, the MEPs called for a review of EU funding allocated to Georgia's state budget and government programs, emphasizing the need to ensure that European financial support aligns with democratic principles.

The letter emphasized the need to promptly assess Georgia's progress in meeting the nine steps outlined by the European Commission in November 2023 to evaluate whether Georgia is upholding democratic

Public Defender Condemns Violence Against Individuals Based on Their Political Views



საქართველოს
სახალხო დამცველი
PUBLIC DEFENDER
(OMBUDSMAN) OF GEORGIA

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The Special Investigation Service has initiated an investigation into the attack on the Formula TV crew and Giorgi Kldiashvili, the director of the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), near the Swedish Embassy. The investigation, as reported by the press office, is based on the first part of Article 154, which pertains to the obstruction of journalistic activities. The incident occurred as Giorgi Kldiashvili was leaving the Swedish Embassy and engaging with journalists.

The Public Defender Levan Ioseliani has strongly condemned recent violent incidents, emphasizing that it is unacceptable to attack individuals based on their different or critical opin-

ions. Levan Ioseliani specifically highlighted the attacks on IDFI Director Kldiashvili and the Formula TV crew, along with the attack on teacher Lado Abkhazava on May 5.

"In each case, it is crucial for investigative agencies to determine the motives behind these violent actions and their potential connection with the victims' professional activities and critical opinions. If confirmed, these violent acts must be subject to appropriate legal assessment," reads the statement by the public defender.

Ioseliani calls upon the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia and the Special Investigation Service to conduct prompt and thorough investigations into each case and to take strict legal measures against those responsible.

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Public Defender Condemns Violence Against Individuals Based on Their Political Views

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According to the Ombudsman, the Office of the Public Defender will oversee the re-

sponse of law enforcement agencies to these incidents.

In addition, citizens have reported receiving calls from foreign numbers on their personal

phones, with callers cursing and threatening individuals who oppose "Foreign Agents" law. According to citizens, these calls appear to be originating from

International VPNs.

"They called and started swearing... [besides the government] I don't see anyone else who can be so incompetent. Young

people are talented in this society, the opposition has no energy for this, there is no one else left," writer Berdzenishvili told Radio Liberty.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Strasbourg Court Orders Government to Pay Over Euro 150,000 to Victims of 'Gavrilov Night'



The European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg has determined that there was a violation of Article 3 of the Human Rights Convention (prohibition

of torture) due to the inadequate investigation into the dispersal of the protest that took place in Tbilisi on June 20-21, 2019.

In this case, 26 applicants claimed that they had suffered injuries as a result of excessive force and argued that the investigation into these incidents was

ineffective. The court found that the investigation did not meet the standards required to address allegations of such serious human rights violations.

Additionally, the applicants alleged violations of Articles 10 (freedom of expression), 11 (freedom of assembly), and 13 (right to an effective remedy) of the European Convention. However, the court did not find a violation of these articles.

The Human Rights Court in Strasbourg ordered the state to compensate the majority of the applicants, totaling 150,000 euros overall.

Georgian Citizen Ramaz Begheluri Abducted by Russian Occupying Forces

Russian occupiers have abducted Georgian citizen Ramaz Begheluri. According to Begheluri's mother, Nora Begheluri, Ramaz was arrested while visiting the grave of his 16-year-old brother near the occupation line. Begheluri expressed concern for her son's well-being, stating to TV Pirveli that she does not know his current condition and emphasizing that

Ramaz has epilepsy and requires constant supervision. According to her, Begheluri is being held in an isolation cell in occupied Tskhinvali, and she does not know his current condition.

Ramaz Begeluri has been abducted five times by the occupiers from Gugutiantkari.

President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili condemned the kidnapping of the Georgian citizen and criticized the occupying force:

"The so-called followers of the same faith and supposed defenders of values! They don't know Easter, they don't know the grave, they don't know family, they don't know the homeland in general, and they don't recognize its real borders or the distinction between their own and neighboring lands... And despite all this, some people are equating friends with enemies!" Zourabichvili wrote on Facebook.



World Press Freedom Day: 'Journalists must be protected at all times, everywhere', says EU

"As our eyes and ears on the ground, journalists must be protected at all times, everywhere," EU High Representative Josep Borrell said on World Press Freedom Day, celebrated today worldwide.

He said the EU firmly condemned all acts of violence, including threats, against journalists for exercising their profession, whether perpetrated by states, organised groups or individuals.

"There must be no impunity for such crimes, no matter where they take place. Journalists and



Kay Nietfeld/dpa via Reuters Connect

media workers reporting from armed conflict must be protected in accordance with international humanitarian law. The EU deplores the dramatic increase in the number of journalists killed or injured while reporting on the devastating consequences of war," said Borrell.

He added that journalists continue to be at risk on a daily basis as they report on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, as well as from conflicts in Gaza, Myanmar, Sudan and elsewhere.

On behalf of the EU, he expressed serious concern about the practice of denying independent media access to conflict zones and said the EU remained "steadfast in its commitment to protect media freedom and pluralism across the world".

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Wednesday, May 8

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 20°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 9°C

Thursday, May 9

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 22°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 13°C

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