

President Zourabichvili Responds to Kobakhidze's Call for Aligning Positions on the 'Foreign Agents' Law

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze said that within the framework of the veto procedure, "positions may be reconciled" regarding the "Foreign Agents" law. He mentioned conversations with international partners on this matter.

"I see positive changes. Among them, after the recent meetings, I have the impression that there is now a readiness for discussion regarding the provisions of the law. I explained to our partners that it is possible to reconcile positions within the veto procedure. We know that Salome Zourabichvili does not write her own veto bills herself; they are either written by NGOs or from external sources. Therefore, we can leverage this again by using the veto procedure to reconcile our positions on this bill.

At this stage, our partners will essentially be compelled to present specific remarks and address the President's veto. As you know, when a veto is submitted to parliament, it must be formulated as a specific bill. There is already a compulsion to offer something specific. Until then, we are prepared to reconcile positions. We are absolutely open and ready for discussion from our side," Kobakhidze said.

President Salome Zourabichvili responded directly to Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze's remarks regarding her presidential veto.

Zourabichvili criticized the



sudden discussion of her veto, particularly in light of past tensions where the Prime Minister publicly labeled her a traitor in front of her own army.

The President stated that she would issue a veto but will not engage in manipulations or games.

"As for the president's veto, they suddenly remembered the president and her veto - the same president whom the prime minister called a traitor in front of her own army.

They are telling the president, "Present a veto to us, write something in it. You don't write it

yourself, others write it for you, either foreigners or NGOs. Present it to us, and then we might consider it."

I will definitely issue a veto, but I will not engage in any manipulations or start playing games. The sole purpose of this is to create confusion and chaos

among the people. Do you want to change something in this law? It's up to you to either withdraw it or return it to parliament for a second reading and listen to the opposition, which I'm sure will offer you some comments and proposed changes," Zourabichvili said.

President Warns Law Enforcement Against Acting on Prime Minister's 'Threats on Repression and Violence'

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE



During a recent briefing, Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze emphasized the need for accountability among "violent" groups within the "radical opposition", stating that they would be held legally responsible for any acts of violence. He also called upon law enforcement officers to exercise patience and adhere to European standards when responding to incidents.

"I want to warn every member of the violent groups within the radical opposition that they will be held accountable under the law for any acts of violence. At the same time, I would like to ask law enforcement officers to demonstrate maximum patience and to act according to higher European standards when responding to instances of

violence and abuse.

I would like to thank the law enforcement officers once again for the fact that, despite the need for large-scale and completely unacceptable level of violence during the past few weeks, they essentially acted at a higher standard than those in America and Europe.

During the past few weeks, there have been some exceptional incidents that will not be pleasing or acceptable to anyone. Georgia is a small country where people should take special care of each other. Consequently, the harsh forms of response to perpetrators, which are common for the American or French police, should not be acceptable for Georgian law enforcement officers. I would also

CONTINUED ON Page 2

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.6755; Euro - 2.8837; GBP - 3.3527; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.8914; Swiss Franc - 2.9505

President Warns Law Enforcement Against Acting on Prime Minister's 'Threats of Repression and Violence'

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

like to remind everyone that any incident will be used by the radical opposition to cover up their planned violence," Kobakhidze said.

Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili responded to the Prime Minister's statement by appealing to law enforcement agencies to refrain from acting on any "threats" mentioned in the Prime Minister's words. She

emphasized that law enforcement should not resort to repression, violence, or the fabrication of conspiracies to intimidate the peaceful and conscious society that has demonstrated its peaceful nature and good manners

against "Foreign Agents" law over the past weeks.

"You can't convince anyone of anything. It is in vain. You will only show the world that you do not behave democratically, that you do not obey the law. There-

fore, I advise you to stay away from it, because whatever happens, however it happens, is your responsibility. I am saying this in advance, and I think it is clear to everyone," said Zourabichvili, addressing law enforcement officers.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Opposition Demands Withdrawal of 'Russian Law', Rejects Attempts to Whitewash Repression



Seven opposition parties, including Ahali, Girchi - More Freedom, Droa, United National Movement, Strategy Aghmashenebeli, Lelo, and the Republican Party of Georgia, issued a joint statement declaring

that the "Russian law" is not subject to improvement. According to them, Georgian Dream should unconditionally withdraw it.

"The public statements made by representatives of Georgian Dream regarding cosmetic changes to the Russian law and

As a result of Ivanishvili's Russian initiative, a significant portion of our population has fallen victim to psychological and physical terror. This includes not only criminal groups operating with state backing but also police units from the Ministry of Internal Affairs involved in terrorizing opponents of the law.

Ivanishvili has made political repression a daily reality for our people. The international image of Georgia has already been seriously damaged, and our European and Euro-Atlantic future is under attack. Therefore, we, the democratic opposition, will not accept a whitewashed version of the Russian law. This law is not subject to improvement and must be unconditionally withdrawn.

We, the united opposition, continue to oppose the Russian law and regime for the European future of Georgia," the statement reads.

Court Orders Pretrial Detention for Military Blogger Ucha Abashidze and Wife Amid 'Foreign Agents' Law Protests

Ucha Abashidze, a military blogger and active participant in anti-Russian protests, was arrested on May 9. During the arrest, police conducted investigative activities at his house for several hours, preventing Abashidze's lawyer and family

from visiting him. Supporters and protesters against the "Foreign Agents" law gathered at Abashidze's house, leading to a significant police presence.



The Tbilisi City Court has sentenced Ucha Abashidze and his wife, Mariam Iashvili, to pretrial detention as a preventive measure. Shota Tutberidze, the defendants' lawyer, criticized Judge Aleksandre Iashvili's decision as unfounded.

The prosecutor's office has charged Abashidze and Iashvili with invasion of privacy. Additionally, Abashidze faces charges related to the illegal purchase and possession of ammunition, which he denies.

Much of the court session was held behind closed doors, and a nondisclosure agreement was

signed between the prosecutor's office and the defense. Consequently, details of the case beyond the state's official indictment remain unknown at this

stage.

During the portion of the session open to journalists, Abashidze described feeling humiliated and subjected to a cynical attitude by the police during the search.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs released a video after the arrest claiming to show weapons seized from Abashidze's house. Abashidze is a member of the Airsoft Federation, a sport involving toy guns and biodegradable plastic bullets. His family contends that all confiscated weapons, except for two officially registered firearms, were "toys".

Seventeen cross-border investigations will receive EU grants worth Euro 540,000 - next call in September

The Investigative Journalism for Europe (IJ4EU) fund, which supports cross-border watchdog journalism in and around the



European Union, has allocated almost Euro 540,000 in grant funding to 17 cross-border reporting teams as part of its In-

vestigation Support Scheme.

The grants will allow dozens of journalists based in 30 countries in Europe and beyond to join forces to probe subjects of public interest, ranging from artificial intelligence and ammunition supplies to pollution, big pharma and psychiatric care.

For example, a cross-border project by Delfi Estonia, VSquare and OSINT Ukraine will investigate issues related to European security (Euro 33,900), and a cross-border investigation into sanctions evasion (Euro 31,000).

Financed mostly by the Eu-

ropean Commission and managed by the Vienna-based International Press Institute (IPI), the Investigative Support Scheme is the flagship grant programme of the Investigative Journalism for Europe (IJ4EU) fund, now in its fifth edition.

In 2024/25, the scheme will disburse Euro 1.5 million, offering grants of up to Euro 50,000 to cross-border investigative teams, along with legal assistance, training and networking opportunities.

The next call for proposals will open on 2 September, 2024.

(eunighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Monday, May 13

Day Light Rain
High: 15°C

Night Cloudy
Low: 9°C

Tuesday, May 14

Day Cloudy
High: 12°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 7°C

published by

The Messenger

43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi, 0108, Georgia
Founded by Prof.

Zaza Gachechiladze

Tamar Gachechiladze
Publisher

Mob.: +995 599 565621; +995 577 760000
E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge
<http://www.messenger.com.ge>

Nino Metreveli

Commercial Director

Mariam Mchedlidze

Editor-in-Chief

Khatuna Gogichaishvili

Layout Designer, Photographer

The Messenger welcomes your contributions. If you are interested in submitting an article or news item please contact.

All contributions should be submitted by e-mail.

The Messenger Georgia's English language daily is an independent newspaper, and,

therefore, the opinions expressed in some articles do not necessarily coincide with those of the newspaper. We take no responsibility for any claims made in advertisements.

The Messenger preserves the style of a source written in English where possible.

On the occasion of the 3rd of May Constitution Day and Ambassador's farewell, Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to Georgia H.E. Mr. Mariusz Maszkiewicz held a reception on May 8.









