

By Liza Mchedlidze

President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili Vetoes the 'Foreign Agents' Law

The President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili, vetoed the 'Foreign Agents' law, emphasizing that it cannot be changed or improved. It will be submitted to the Parliamentary Bureau on May 20. The law was returned to Parliament unchanged, except for one new article specifying that it will only be valid for one day after enactment, ending the following day.

"Today, I vetoed the Russian law. This law is Russian in its essence and spirit, which is against our constitution and all European standards, and thus represents an obstacle to our European path.

This veto is legally valid and will be submitted to Parliament today. This law is not subject to any changes or improvements, making this a straightforward veto. This law should be withdrawn," Zourabichvili said.

Zourabichvili's veto document states that Georgia's 'Foreign Agents' law closely mirrors Russia's Law of Agents. She noted that despite terminology differences, both laws essentially target individuals or entities perceived as carrying out the interests of foreign powers. She referenced a legal opinion from OSCE/ODIHR in July 2023, which labeled the law as undemocratic and against human rights and European standards.

"This law meticulously repeats the spirit of the Russian law. The law is, in fact, the same as the so-called Law of Agents, from which the words 'agent of foreign influence' have been removed and replaced by the term 'carrier of the interests of a foreign power', which is the definition of the term 'agent'. As early as July 2023, the legal opinion by the OSCE/ODIHR clearly confirmed that the law is undemocratic, against basic human rights and freedoms, and European standards," the document reads.

The Georgian President argued that the "On Transparency of Foreign Influence" law is unconstitutional as it violates the freedom of association (Article 22) by compelling organizations to register as foreign agents, resulting in stigmatization. Additionally, it contradicts



the right to privacy (Article 15) by imposing intrusive measures.

"The law 'On Transparency of Foreign Influence' is unconstitutional because it contradicts Article 22 of the Constitution, 'Freedom of Association'. The law forces organizations to register as agents of a foreign power, leading to their stigmatization. It creates all the conditions to restrict the activity of the organization and eventually cancel it. Additionally, it contradicts Article 15 of the Constitution, 'rights to inviolability of private and family life, personal space, and communica-

tion," the document reads.

Zourabichvili also argued that the law imposes, among other things, the obligation to provide a special category of personal data, which violates the constitutional rights of a person to have their personal and family space protected from any unjustified interference. In this regard, the law serves to intimidate and instill fear.

The veto document reads that the law contradicts Article 78 of the Constitution regarding "Integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures," hindering Georgia's European integration. It goes

against European values and requirements for EU candidacy. Additionally, it opposes the obligation for constitutional bodies to pursue EU integration, emphasizing that no improvement is possible.

"The law in its entirety is unconstitutional, therefore, un-Georgian, un-European, and undemocratic. Thus, it is not amenable to improvement through changes because its essence, content, and principles are unacceptable. Accordingly, the repeal of the law is inevitable and reflects the will of the Georgian people," the document reads.

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Georgian Dream MP compares 'Global War Party' to Freemasons



In an interview with journalist Lewis Goodall on the British podcast The News Agents, Georgian Dream MP Mariam Lashkhi made comparisons between the so-called 'Global War Party' and the Freemasons. Lashkhi suggested that this group, much like the Freemasons, exerts a significant influence on global politics.

When asked about the identity and actions of this "Global War Party", Lashkhi admitted that she does not know the personal identities of its members.

The exchange proceeded as follows:

Interviewer: Your Prime Minister has spoken of a global war party. What is a global war party?

Lashkhi: Freemasons, for instance. Who we were hearing about them for decades and who we were seeing that they do

have the influence on world politics and everything. Today, when I, myself, I am involved in foreign relations, and sometimes when I have the partnership, and then they say that, Well, you are okay and you are doing well, but then there is an additional voice.

Interviewer: So what are the freemasons doing? You think the freemasons are manipulating a global war?

Lashkhi: Me, personally, I'm comparing it to freemasons who are a separate standing power who we do not know in person, right?

Georgian Dream Leaders have been referencing the "Global War Party" recently. International partners have consistently asked who the ruling party means by the "Global War Party", but no clear answer has been provided.

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.7585; Euro - 2.9910; GBP - 3.4914; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.0337; Swiss Franc - 3.0327

Georgian Dream MP compares 'Global War Party' to Freemasons

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For instance, Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze, after meeting

with the US Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Jim O'Brien, mentioned that he shared 30% of the

information he had on this topic with O'Brien.

"We cannot speak openly. I'm sharing with you about 20% of

the information, and shared about 30% with Mr. O'Brien. It's difficult to talk about these topics even in a closed meeting... It's a very, very uncomfortable subject and quite a dangerous one. We are dealing with dangerous people in the form of the global war party," said the Prime Minister of Georgia.

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis said "the only war party is in Moscow."

"This is the party that attacked Georgia in 2008. This is the party that attacked Ukraine in 2014 and is currently waging a war against Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity," Landsbergis said.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Macron and Scholz Express Concern About Georgia's Shift from European Path



French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz jointly issued a statement expressing deep concern about the situation in Georgia.

According to them, both countries strongly support Georgia's European path. They actively backed the European Council's decision to grant Georgia candidate status in December 2023. However, they regret the Georgian government's deviation from this path by adopting laws

that contradict European values. They emphasized that Georgia's progress toward Europe depends on its adherence to shared values.

"We, Germany and France, are deeply

concerned about the situation in Georgia.

Both of our countries have been staunch supporters of Georgia's European path and actively supported the decision of the European Council to grant candidate status in December 2023.

It is with deep regret that we take note of the decision of the Georgian government and ruling party to deviate from this path by acting against our common European values and the aspirations of the Georgian people, such as through the

adoption of the so-called law "on transparency of foreign influence."

Georgia's European path has been chartered – but speed and direction of moving forward depend on Georgia," their joint statement reads.

Georgian Dream Chair Denounces Sanctions as Wrong Approach



The chairman of the ruling party, Georgian Dream's Irakli Gharibashvili, believes that the optimal resolution to the discussion would be one that calms and satisfies all parties involved. According to Gharibashvili, GD is open for discussions:

"The prime minister has said many

times that our colleagues, including the chairman of the parliament, have all stated that the team is ready for discussion.

If procedurally there is no other solution in this situation, perhaps this is what our colleagues meant. If the veto is a solution and within its framework, such terminology or a solution is possible, which will relieve this situation, calm all

the involved parties, and make them accept what is acceptable. I think this would be an ideal case," Gharibashvili said.

Gharibashvili emphasized the necessity of discussion and dialogue with international partners, asserting that it must continue. He criticized the need for sanctions, stating

that imposing sanctions on the country or its people is the "wrong approach".

"On the one hand, we confirm our desire for discussion; on the other hand, threats, blackmail, and such statements are unproductive. We must utilize all available opportunities in this process," Gharibashvili said.

EBRD guarantee to Ukraine's OTP Leasing to unlock Euro 80 million of new business finance

On 16 May, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) announced the extension of an unfunded portfolio risk-sharing facility to Ukraine's OTP Leasing to unlock new leasing finance for Ukraine's business sector amid the ongoing war waged by Russia.

The EBRD's facility will cover up to 50 per cent of OTP Leasing's credit risk on new leas-



ing finance worth 80 million to businesses operating in Ukraine.

This credit enhancement mechanism enables OTP Leasing to finance the agribusiness sector and other critical industries, such as manufacturing, transport and logistics, supporting company operations and preserving access to critical goods as a vital step in safe-

guarding people's livelihoods.

Total enabled financing under similar EBRD guarantees signed since the start of Russia's war on Ukraine amounted to close to Euro 900 million at end 2023.

This agreement between the EBRD and OTP Leasing is an extension of a cooperation in support of Ukrainian businesses that began in 2022. One element of the facility is a programme to enhance the competitiveness of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in the EU's Eastern Partnership countries as part of the EU4Business initiative.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Monday, May 20

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 18°C

Night Showers
Low: 9°C

Tuesday, May 21

Day Showers
High: 19°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 9°C

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