

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

## EU Raises Alarms Over Georgia's Threat to Ban Opposition Parties

The European Union has expressed deep concerns about recent statements from Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili and other officials regarding plans to ban all opposition parties in the country. According to Rikard Jozwiak, the Europe editor for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), the EU stressed the importance of upholding democratic principles, specifically political pluralism, which it described as a “key part” of any healthy democracy.

In its statement, the EU highlighted that “a healthy democracy thrives on diversity,” pointing to the essential roles of opposition parties, a vibrant civil society, and independent media in ensuring that governments remain accountable and democratic values are upheld. The EU warned that it has “all options on the table” to respond to any anti-democratic actions by Georgia’s government, indicating a readiness to take significant measures if necessary.

The EU is set to closely monitor Georgia’s upcoming parliamentary elections, scheduled for October 26. The conduct of these elections is seen as critical, given that stable and consolidated democratic institutions are a central pillar of the EU accession process. However, due to recent actions by the Georgian government, including the adoption of a controversial Russian-style Foreign Agents Law and increasingly anti-democratic rhetoric, the EU has decided to halt Georgia’s EU accession process. As it stands, there is little prospect that the forthcoming annual enlargement report, expected this



fall, will recommend opening accession talks with Georgia.

EU Foreign Policy spokesperson Peter Stano, in a statement to American news outlet POLITICO, reinforced the EU’s stance, warning that the Georgian government’s current trajectory “jeopardizes Georgia’s EU path, de facto leading to a halt of the accession process.” Stano

emphasized that while the EU is closely observing developments in Georgia, it remains prepared to react “in an appropriate manner” should the government move forward with plans to ban opposition parties, adding, “All options are on the table and we would act accordingly.”

Despite these warnings, Stano noted that the EU’s door to mem-

bership for Georgia “remains open, should Georgia choose to realign with EU values and norms and reverse the negative tendencies of the last months.”

The ruling Georgian Dream party is seeking to secure a constitutional majority in the upcoming parliamentary elections, with the stated intention of banning opposition parties, which it

collectively refers to as the “collective UNM” (United National Movement). The party has branded opposition groups as “criminal political forces,” blamed them for the 2008 war with Russia, and vowed to initiate a “Nuremberg-style” criminal court after the elections, which would ultimately lead to the outlawing of these parties.

## Georgian Parliament Chair Rejects EU Criticism

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Georgian Parliament Chairman Shalva Papuashvili has dismissed concerns from European Union representatives about potential legal actions against the opposition United National Movement party. Papuashvili criticized the EU’s characterization of these actions as undemocratic, stating that such claims are against the principles of the rule of law and democracy. He also called accusations that the Georgian government intends to ban all opposition parties “disinformation.”

Papuashvili stated that the United National Movement was responsible for creating a criminal regime marked by systemic violence, as highlighted by a European Court of Human Rights ruling in the case *Ochigava v. Georgia*. He emphasized that the party’s continued existence only prolongs the criminal legacy of that era and disrespects the victims of former President Mikheil Saakashvili’s government.

Additionally, Papuashvili criticized the EU for what he sees as a double standard, noting that Saakashvili, despite being convicted of serious crimes, was allowed to move freely within EU countries and even engage with EU institutions. He accused some EU representatives of continuing to push for Saakashvili’s release, which he believes undermines Georgia’s legal system.

Papuashvili concluded by urging the EU to consider that similar legal actions are taken against political parties within EU member states. He reaffirmed Georgia’s commitment to upholding democratic values and the rule of law, despite the criticism.



### The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

#### German Ambassador Peter Fischer Criticizes Government Rhetoric



In a recent podcast with Nini Shengelia, German Ambassador

Peter Fischer stated that Georgia cannot join the European Union as long as the Russian-influenced "foreign influence" law remains in place. Fischer explained, "If a country adopts laws that contradict the funda-

mental principles of the European Union, then it cannot join.

The law on 'foreign influence' is precisely such a contradictory piece of legislation, as it blatantly interferes with the fundamental rights guaranteed by the European Union."

Fischer also criticized the Georgian government's recent rhetoric towards Western partners, describing it as "unfriendly". He noted, "There has been very unfriendly rhetoric towards former best friends: Germany, the EU, other EU member states and the US, towards whom many things have been said that are not typical of partner countries." He refuted accusations that the EU funds terrorism, stating, "The EU does not finance terrorism; the EU fights terrorism," and expressed disbelief at claims about threats against European officials, saying, "We don't kill people, and we somehow get mentioned in discussions about the Global War Party, liberal fascism, the revolution, the second front. We figure in a context where we don't belong."

Fischer also addressed misinformation about the EU, remarking, "If all this is true, then why are so many Georgians going to the European Union? Ac-

tually, I would say that the European Union is the best place to live."

Finally, the ambassador encouraged Georgians to participate in the October 26 parliamentary elections, urging citizens to express their positions during this critical time for the country.

#### State Department Denounces Russian Claims of 'Color Revolution' Plot in Georgia



State Department press spokesperson Matthew Miller has refuted accusations from the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service that the US is orches-

trating a "color revolution" in Georgia. In a statement reported by journalist Alex Raufoglu, Miller labeled the allegations as "categorically false."

Miller reiterated the US's commitment to supporting Georgia, saying, "We have a proud record of working together with the people of Georgia to build a more peaceful, prosperous, democratic Georgia."

He further criticized Russian actions, noting, "The Kremlin orchestrated the 2008 invasion and today occupies 20% of sovereign Georgian territory, while

continuing its brutal war of aggression against Ukraine. We stand with Georgia against Russia's aggression."

## EU4Youth: 'State Builder' training course opens in Kyiv

On 26 August, a training course on 'State Builder: The Path to Recovery of State' started in Kyiv. The seven-day

The first day of the course opened with a welcome from the Chairman of the Parliament of Ukraine, Ruslan Stefanchuk,

actively contribute to their communities and the broader society.

The 'State Builder' programme was initiated by the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine and the All-Ukrainian Youth Centre, and is implemented by the Ukrai-

nian Student League and the Kyiv School of Public Administration named after Serhiy Nizhny, with the support of national and international partners, including the 'EU4Youth IV: Youth Engagement and Empowerment' project,

co-financed by the European Union and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany and implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

(euneighbourseast.eu)



course for 35 youth leaders was designed as part of the national 'State Builder' programme, which aims to foster responsible leadership and enhance civic engagement among youth.

who highlighted the vital role of youth in shaping the future of Ukraine. The EU4Youth National Coordinator for Ukraine also delivered a welcoming speech, emphasising the importance of youth engagement in state-building efforts.

Throughout the next days of the course the participants will attend lectures and discussions with top speakers aimed at equipping young people with the tools and knowledge necessary for effective governance, empowering them to

### Weather

#### Thursday, June 29

Day ☀️ Clear High: 33°C

Night 🌙 Clear Low: 20°C

#### Friday, June 30

Day ☀️ Clear High: 31°C

Night 🌧️ Partly Cloudy Low: 20°C

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**21 AUGUST**  
**BORJOMI** | Borjomi Likani Hotel

**23, 25 AUGUST**  
**BATUMI** | Batumi Drama Theater

**15, 17, 18, 20**  
**SEPTEMBER**  
**TBILISI** | Tbilisi State Conservatoire

Founder of the Festival  
LIANA ISSAKADZE

Artistic Director  
GIORGI ISSAKADZE

LIANA ISSAKADZE NIGHT SERENADES

ART

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