

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Parliament Chairman Papuashvili Signs Anti-LGBT Bill

On October 3, Georgian Parliament Chairman Shalva Papuashvili signed into law a controversial bill aimed at restricting LGBT rights after President Salome Zourabichvili refused to endorse it but chose not to veto the legislation. Papuashvili, a co-author of the bill, had five days to act after the president's refusal, and the law will take effect 60 days after its publication, falling after Georgia's crucial October 26 parliamentary elections.

In a statement on Facebook, Papuashvili defended the bill, asserting that while Georgians value tolerance, "tolerance means co-existence based on mutual respect, not living to spite others and disturbing public peace by ignoring others' beliefs and values." He claimed that "millions of people" had supported the bill in what he called a "de facto referendum" on May 17, 2024, a claim disputed by rights groups.

The new "Law on the Protection of Family Values and Minors," passed by the ruling Georgian Dream party on September 17, imposes several restrictive measures targeting the LGBT community. These include censorship of media and educational content on queer issues, a ban on gender reassignment procedures, and prohibitions on same-sex marriage and adoption by non-heterosexual or non-cisgender individuals. Same-sex marriage has never been legal in Georgia, but the law equates same-sex relationships with "incest."

The law has drawn significant



backlash from human rights organizations, who see it as part of a broader, hate-filled campaign led by the Georgian Dream party ahead of the elections. Critics also argue that the

bill stifles freedom of expression and assembly.

President Zourabichvili's decision not to veto the bill has sparked mixed reactions from activists. Some expressed disap-

pointment, while others viewed it as a strategic move to prevent the ruling party from using homophobia as a political tool in the final days before the election.

Papuashvili, anticipating in-

ternational criticism, remained defiant, stating that Georgians have historically been guided by "faith, common sense, and loyalty to the country," and were unafraid of external judgments.

PACE Members Express Concerns Over Georgia's Upcoming Elections

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

A group of 24 members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has issued a written declaration expressing serious concerns about the pre-electoral environment in Georgia ahead of the upcoming parliamentary elections. The declaration warns of "alarming developments" that suggest the ruling Georgian Dream party may be preparing to manipulate the election outcome.

The signatories highlight several issues, including widespread intimidation of opposition candidates and their supporters, with reports of physical attacks, threats to families, and the looting of opposition premises. They also express concern about efforts to undermine voter confidence, citing false claims that the government would know how individuals vote, leading to pos-

sible repercussions.

In addition, the declaration points to the suppression of national election observation groups through the misuse of anti-corruption legislation, as well as concerns over the recent control of the Central Election Commission by the ruling party. These actions, the declaration asserts, create an environment that makes it difficult to hold free and fair elections.

The PACE members call on Georgian authorities to reverse course and ensure a democratic electoral process. They stress the importance of international election observers, including those from PACE, to ensure that Georgian citizens can freely determine their future.

The declaration has been signed by representatives from various European countries and political groups, signaling broad concern over the situation in Georgia.



The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

U.S. Embassy Denies Sanctions on Georgian Dream's Honorary Chair Bidzina Ivanishvili and Family

ruling Georgian Dream party, or his family members. The statement came after local media reported that Ivanishvili's children living abroad had their access to bank accounts restricted. "The United States has not imposed financial sanctions against Bidzina

The clarification follows an October 2 report from opposition-leaning Formula TV, which, citing a "reliable source," claimed that Ivanishvili's children—Uta, Gvantsa, and Bera—who live abroad, had faced restrictions on some bank accounts, with others allegedly being blocked. Of Ivanishvili's four children, three have resided outside of Georgia for years.

Educational Quality Enhancement, thanked the Prime Minister for the opportunity, emphasizing the importance of education in shaping the country's future. "Education creates the future of the country, and I believe that with our dedication, hard work, and responsibility, we will ensure a better future for this country," he stated.

Tsuladze's appointment comes after his leadership at the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement, where he oversaw the Accreditation Council, which recently granted a controversial "conditional accreditation" to Ilia

Aleksandre Tsuladze Appointed as Georgia's New Minister of Education, Science, and Youth



On October 2, Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze officially introduced Aleksandre Tsuladze as the new Minister of Education, Science, and Youth of Georgia. Tsuladze, who previously served as the Director of the National Center for

State University. Prior to his role as director, Tsuladze held the position of First Deputy Minister of Education from December 2023 to August 2024, and before that, he served as a judge in Georgia's Supreme Court from 2019 to 2023.



The U.S. Embassy in Georgia has denied claims that the United States has imposed financial sanctions on Bidzina Ivanishvili, the Honorary Chair of the

Ivanishvili or his immediate family members," adding that the U.S. Department of Treasury publicly discloses all financial sanctions.

TBILISI, 3 October 2024 – In the lead-up to International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction, young people from across Georgia came together to discuss their role in creating a climate-smart future.

The event, organized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Environmental Information and Education Centre of Georgia's Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, was supported by the Green Climate Fund, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

Many attendees were participants in the "Young Climate Ambassadors" summer camp, which fosters environmental leadership among Georgia's youth.

Discussions focused on the

Youth Action for a Safer Tomorrow

Georgian Youth Lead Climate Initiatives Ahead of International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction



rise of youth climate activism in Georgia and how young people communicate the urgency of climate action. A key highlight was the screening of the video project "Thank You for This World", a joint initiative by Karen Cirillo, Digital Communications Specialist at the UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub, and Rezi Dgebuadze, a Young Climate Ambassador and member of UNDP's regional youth network, "Generation Nexus."

This thought-provoking docu-

mentary captures the hopes and concerns of youth facing a future shaped by climate change. Set to the poignant poem

Thanks by renowned American poet W.S. Merwin, it features

heartfelt letters from young adults sharing their reflections on an uncertain tomorrow.

"What will happen in 10 years? Will the green still be there?" asks Rezi. The response echoes in Merwin's haunting words: "We are saying thank you faster and faster with nobody listening."

"Collaborating with Rezi on this project was very inspiring. I could really feel young people's deep understanding of the climate crisis and their drive to

reconnect with nature," said Karen Cirillo.

"My experience with climate camps and the youth network has shown me that we are not facing climate change alone. It's about unity, cooperation, and finding solutions together," added Rezi Dgebuadze.

The discussion continued with youth presenting various climate initiatives across Georgia, from Kakheti to Ajara, focusing on environmental education, raising awareness, and encouraging behaviour change. These local projects are already making a difference by engaging communities and fostering greater climate consciousness.

"Youth are at the heart of climate action as we work together to build a safer, disaster-resilient future. UNDP is proud to support Georgia's young leaders in their environmental efforts. Their work is shifting attitudes towards more sustainable lifestyles," said Nils Christensen, UNDP Deputy

Resident Representative in Georgia.

"We empower hundreds of young people to lead climate campaigns and engage in educational programmes through green summer camps, scholarships, and grants. These initiatives are preparing the next generation to tackle the climate challenges ahead," said Ekaterine Bendeliani, Deputy Director of the Environmental Information and Education Centre.

Background Information:

Climate awareness and environmental education are central to UNDP's broader climate programme, supported by the Green Climate Fund and the governments of Georgia, Sweden, and Switzerland. This seven-year initiative helps Georgia implement systemic disaster risk management approaches, protecting over 40 percent of the population from climate-related hazards.

Weather

Friday, October 4

Day Clear High: 24°C

Night Clear Low: 13°C

Saturday, October 5

Day Mostly Cloudy High: 23°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 14°C

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