

Papuashvili Accuses West of 'Revolution Attempts' in Annual Parliament Address

By LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Georgian Parliament Speaker Shalva Papuashvili delivered a politically charged annual address on Tuesday, accusing Western governments, NGOs, and civil society groups of orchestrating five alleged attempts to overthrow the ruling Georgian Dream party since 2020.

Departing from a standard legislative review, Papuashvili framed the current Parliament as the guardian of national sovereignty during a period marked by what he called "revolutionary plots" backed by foreign actors.

The first alleged attempt followed the 2020 elections, with Papuashvili blaming local watchdog ISFED and USAID for "spreading false results" that fueled opposition protests. The second, he said, came during the 2021 EU-mediated Charles Michel agreement, when opposition parties boycotted Parliament and media allegedly "manipulated minority rights" during violent street demonstrations.

The third, dubbed the "sour cream revolution," referred to former President Mikheil Saakashvili's covert return to Georgia in 2021 hidden inside a sour cream truck. Papuashvili claimed the operation was organized by Ukrainian intelligence and backed by Western officials to provoke unrest during local elections. He accused EU diplomats and Baltic lawmakers of pressuring the government over



Saakashvili's imprisonment and hunger strike.

The fourth attempt followed the EU's 2022 refusal to grant Georgia candidate status. Papuashvili said this encouraged radical groups and NGOs to demand regime change. He

claimed CSOs pushed for a new government with veto power for unelected activists.

The fifth attempt, he alleged, occurred in 2023 during protests against the "foreign agents" law. He accused Western donors and diplomats of fueling unrest, say-

ing a foreign ambassador was first to label the bill as "Russian." Though the bill was later reintroduced, Papuashvili claimed the government defused tensions and exposed foreign influence.

He concluded that Georgian Dream faced "unprecedented for-

eign interference" ahead of the 2024 elections and accused the West of imposing polarization on Georgia. "Violence walks the streets wrapped in an EU flag," he said, praising Parliament for resisting pressure and defending national interests.

Georgian Parliament Condemns U.S. MEGOBARI Act as Hostile and Unjust

By LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

GD Parliament has strongly condemned the U.S. House of Representatives' adoption of the MEGOBARI Act, deeming it an "extremely hostile" act toward the Georgian state, its people, and its democratically elected government. The Parliament issued a draft statement, currently under review by the Foreign Relations Committee, which criticizes the Act for being based on false claims and flawed premises.

The draft statement rejects three main accusations in the MEGOBARI Act: that Georgia is experiencing "significant democratic backsliding," that the Georgian government is obstructing its Euro-Atlantic integration, and that it is developing improper ties with Russia, China, and Iran. The statement

counters each of these accusations with evidence of Georgia's democratic progress and commitment to its Euro-Atlantic goals.

On the first accusation, they point to the significant democratic reforms Georgia has undergone since 2012. These include the adoption of a new constitution aligning with democratic standards, substantial reductions in the prison population, the eradication of torture practices, and improvements in judicial independence and media pluralism. It also highlights Georgia's high rankings in international indexes, such as the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index, where it outperforms several EU countries.

Regarding Euro-Atlantic integration, the statement asserts

CONTINUED FROM Page 2



Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.7436; Euro - 3.0822; GBP - 3.6608; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.4190; Swiss Franc - 3.2873

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CONTINUED FROM Page 1

that Georgia has made significant strides. In 2017, the Georgian Constitution was amended to define Euro-Atlantic integration as a state goal. Despite these efforts, Georgia's Euro-integration has faced challenges due to reluctance from European partners. The Parliament emphasizes that the government applied for EU membership in 2022

and achieved EU candidate status in December 2023, despite facing setbacks in the process. The third accusation, that Georgia is forging improper ties with Russia, China, and Iran is also dismissed. The Parliament highlights that Georgia does not maintain diplomatic relations with Russia, a country that occupies 20% of Georgia's territory. Moreover, Georgia's trade relations with Russia are limited,

and the country has joined numerous international acts condemning Russia's aggression in Ukraine. As for China and Iran, the Parliament notes that Georgia's relations with these countries are comparable to those of other Western partners, including the U.S. The draft statement also criticizes the MEGOBARI Act as the product of "deep state" influence within the U.S., sug-

gesting that the act reflects a broader pattern of unjust treatment toward Georgia. The Parliament expresses concern that this hostile approach is rooted in a desire to punish Georgia for not aligning with Western demands, such as opening a "second front" in the war in Ukraine. The statement concludes by urging the U.S. Congress to reconsider its stance and work to rebuild its reputa-

tion with the Georgian people. The Georgian Parliament reaffirmed its readiness to cooperate with the United States on matters that can strengthen relations, despite the current tensions. The Parliament remains committed to democratic principles, the rule of law, and Georgia's strategic goals of Euro-Atlantic integration and sovereignty.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Former Defense Minister Irakli Okruashvili Sent to Pre-Trial Detention for Bail Non-Compliance



Former Defense Minister Irakli Okruashvili has been placed in pre-trial detention after refusing to comply with bail conditions set by the Tbilisi City Court. The decision, delivered by Judge Nino Tarashvili, follows a motion from the Prosecutor's Office after Okruashvili chose not to pay the GEL 20,000 bail and refused to appear before a parliamentary commission. Okruashvili, who served as Defense Minister from 2004 to 2006 under the United National Movement (UNM) government, is charged under Article 349 of the Georgian Criminal Code for "failure

to comply with the request of the temporary investigative commission of the Parliament of Georgia." The charge stems from Okruashvili's refusal to attend a hearing before the Georgian Dream-led parliamentary investigative commission, chaired by MP Tea

Tsulukiani, on March 26. While he later provided testimony to investigators before a magistrate judge, the court initially released him on bail and prohibited him from leaving the country. However, his failure to pay the required bail prompted the prosecutor's request for his detention.

Georgian Dream Withdraws Support for UN Tourism Chief Pololikashvili, Backs UAE Candidate

The Georgian Dream has officially withdrawn its support for Zurab

Pololikashvili's bid for a third term as Secretary-General of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), opting instead to back the candidate nominated by the United Arab Emirates, Shaikha Al Nowais. According to the government's administration, the decision to withdraw Pololikashvili's candidacy was made at his own request. The move has sparked international attention and controversy following a report by The Diplomat in Spain, which described the decision as a "shocking political maneuver." The outlet alleges that the Georgian government had been secretly preparing to switch its support to the UAE's candidate as part of a "covert agreement" between the two countries.

The report also raised concerns about possible geopolitical motivations behind the decision, suggesting that Georgia's pivot may signal a strategic alignment with the Russian Federation. This speculation is especially sensitive given Pololikashvili's record: in 2022, he played a key role in leading the process to suspend Russia's membership in the UNWTO following its invasion of Ukraine. Pololikashvili, who has served as Secretary-General since 2018, was considered a highly influential figure in the field of global tourism and was previously supported by the Georgian government in two successive terms.



EU Ambassadors approve 17th package of sanctions against Russia

Weather

Thursday, May 15

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 15°C
Night Showers
Low: 9°C

Friday, May 16

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 23°C
Night Clear
Low: 11°C



The Committee of Permanent Representatives in the EU (COREPER) today agreed to new sanctions on Russia – the 17th package of sanctions. European Commission President Ursula von Leyen welcomed the agreement, saying

the EU had listed an additional 189 shadow fleet vessels to target Russia's energy exports. "We are further restricting access to battlefield technology," she posted on X. "This war has to end. We will keep the pressure high on the Kremlin." EU High Representative Kaja Kallas wrote on X that the EU is "upping the pressure on Russia to end its war".

"It will target more of Russia's shadow fleet, which is illegally shipping oil for revenues to fund Putin's aggression. Sanctions drain Russia's war chest," she said. On 20 May, EU Defense ministers are expected to give their final approval of the package. The previous 16th package of sanctions came into force on 24 February 2025. (euneighbourseast.eu)

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Europe Day 2025: A Day to Remember!





