

## Georgian PM Describes U.S.-Georgia Relations as 'Active-Negative' Amid Sanctions and Political Tensions

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Georgian Dream Prime Minister and party chair Irakli Kobakhidze described the current U.S.-Georgia relationship as "active-negative," stating that it can no longer be considered "neutral" because of already-imposed and upcoming sanctions on Georgian Dream officials.

"The silence of the new U.S. administration is not real silence. You can only describe the situation as 'silent' if relations are neutral. But our relations are not neutral," Kobakhidze said on Imedi TV on May 14.

Kobakhidze noted that the Biden administration has already sanctioned high-ranking Georgian officials, including Vice Prime Minister and Interior Minister Vakhtang Gomelauri, as well as other law enforcement leaders.

"We must also mention the MEGOBARI Act and other measures. This is not a neutral or passive status. Our relations are in an 'active-negative' phase," he said.

He added that the ruling party is in "waiting mode" to see what position Donald Trump will take. Georgian Dream claims it shares values with Trump and hopes for a reset in relations that, in their view, will depend on the outcome of what they call a struggle between Trump and the "deep state."

"We are hopeful there will be a response, but we'll see. Everything depends on who wins the battle — Trump or the deep state," Kobakhidze said. "We hope Trump wins, but we are prepared for all outcomes. We



will defend Georgia's national interests to the end."

However, Georgian Dream's reliance on Trump may be challenged as the MEGOBARI Act, calling for broader sanctions on GD officials and their family members—moves forward. The bill passed the U.S. House of Representatives on May 6 and was added to the Senate's legislative calendar the next day. If passed there, it could eventually be signed into law by Trump himself.

"We must stay optimistic. We

hope the deep state will lose or be weakened, and relations will reset," Kobakhidze said.

He also criticized the bill's co-sponsor, Rep. Joe Wilson, calling him a "tiny agent" of the deep state. "They picked this person and made him write these things. If you asked him where Georgia is, he might not even be able to point to it on a map. But sometimes he posts five or six times about Georgia."

"When someone claims there is a pro-Iranian government in Georgia, there should be a basis

for that. It's completely absurd. I won't even mention the claims about Russia and China. Doesn't this discredit everything coming from the U.S. and Europe?" Kobakhidze said. "Even the Soviet Communist Party's Central Committee never said things like some current American and European officials are saying."

"What do they want from our small country?" he asked. "It's ridiculous to say they're concerned about democracy here," he continued, adding that Georgia leads many global gover-

nance rankings.

Kobakhidze also repeated claims that some foreign actors want to drag Georgia into the war in Ukraine, a narrative commonly pushed by Georgian Dream.

He targeted USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), calling them foreign influence tools that have "spread hatred in Georgian society," comparing their tactics to those of the KGB in the 1990s.

"I remember the early 1990s, when the KGB deliberately fueled hate within Georgian society," he said. "Since then, no one has spread more hatred than USAID, NED, and similar funds." He also accused these groups of funding attacks on the Georgian Orthodox Church.

When asked what would happen if the U.S. doesn't respond to his letter, Kobakhidze said it would mean the deep state is not weakening.

"In that case, we'll face more challenges in U.S.-Georgia relations. But I'll say again—we've defended our national interests under tougher conditions before, and we're ready for worse, including if Trump's opponent, Kamala Harris, wins. That would mean the deep state stays in power, and we'll still defend national interests."

Kobakhidze concluded by saying the state of bilateral relations doesn't depend on the Georgian government. "It's simple," he said. "If Trump weakens the deep state, U.S.-Georgia relations will reset. If not, the status quo will remain — what I call a one-sided friendship."

## Helsinki Commission Urges Portugal to Block Georgian Dream Officials from OSCE Assembly

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The U.S. Helsinki Commission, backed by leading members of the United Kingdom, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine, and Sweden's delegations to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), has called on Portugal to deny entry to members of Georgia's ruling Georgian Dream party ahead of the 32nd Annual Session of the OSCE PA, which will be held in Porto from June 29 to July 3.

In a formal letter sent to Portuguese Prime Minister Luís Montenegro on May 8, the Commission commended Portugal

for hosting the session, while issuing a clear appeal: "I urge your government to deny visas to, or otherwise prevent the participation of, members of the Georgian Dream government seeking to attend this crucial gathering."

The letter accuses the Georgian Dream leadership of "systematically undermining democracy in Georgia," pointing to "widespread electoral fraud, violently suppressing peaceful protests, and jailing journalists and civic activists who dare to challenge its autocratic rule."

The signatories warn that allowing Georgian Dream officials to attend the Assembly would

amount to endorsing authoritarianism. "Granting members of the Georgian Dream government the privilege of attending this prestigious session would legitimize their repressive governance and provide them with a platform they do not deserve," the letter states.

Their participation, it continues, "would undermine the very principles the OSCE stands for and send the wrong message to those fighting for democracy in Georgia and beyond."

The signatories include 28 delegates from the U.S., U.K., Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine, and Sweden.





The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF  
Salome Zourabichvili Accuses  
Ruling Party of Political  
Repression



Salome Zourabichvili, the 5<sup>th</sup> President of Georgia, has publicly condemned what she describes as a “new wave” of political repression initiated by the country’s ruling party. Speaking at a press briefing, Zourabichvili accused the Georgian Dream-led government of weaponizing a newly established parliamentary investigative commission to target opposition figures rather than uncovering the truth. “A new wave [of repression] has begun and continues, which concerns politicians,” the president said, referring to the recent activation of a temporary investi-

gative commission ostensibly tasked with probing crimes allegedly committed by the former United National Movement (UNM) government. Zourabichvili questioned the legitimacy

and purpose of the commission, arguing that its true intent is punitive. “No one should believe that this commission was created so that some truth, which has not been established for 12 or more years, can now be established,” she stated. “It was created to summon politicians, and fine and arrest those who would not come.” The president also voiced support for the opposition’s stance, asserting that the parliament, and by extension the investigative commission, lacks legitimacy. Zourabichvili’s remarks followed a

court decision just one day earlier, in which a Tbilisi judge ordered pre-trial detention for Irakli Okruashvili, a former Defense Minister and prominent UNM-era figure.

Kobakhidze Defends  
Withdrawal of Support for UN  
Tourism Chief Pololikashvili



Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze has defended his government’s decision to withdraw support for Zurab Pololikashvili, the current Secretary-General of the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), saying the move was nec-

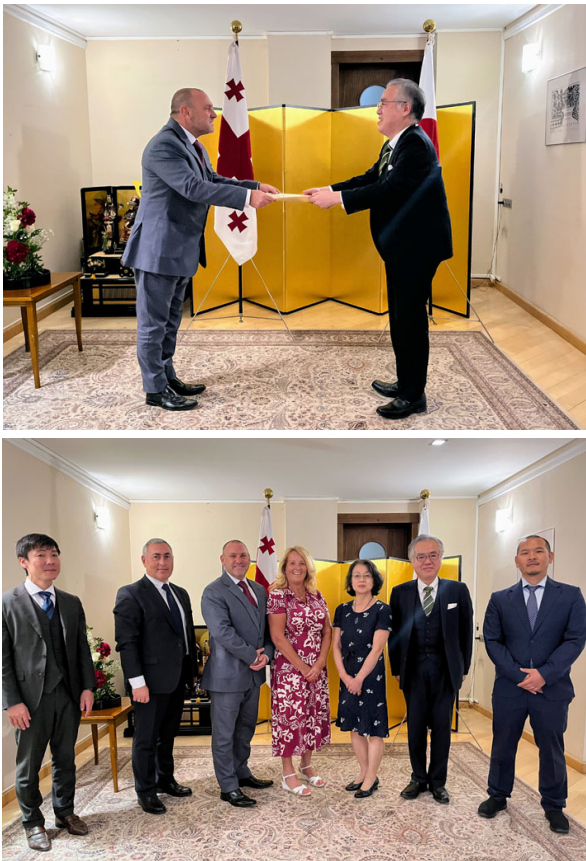
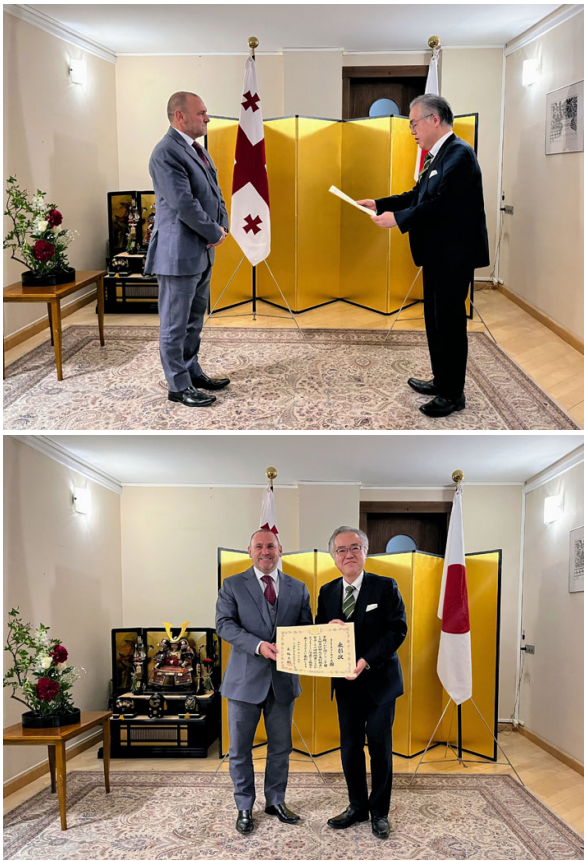
essary in defense of national interests. “Anyone who tries to attack the Georgian authorities should not be surprised when they receive a response,” Kobakhidze stated. “You cannot complain about not getting an answer if you have acted against the state.” Kobakhidze declined to elaborate further, noting that Pololikashvili remains in office until the end of the year. However, he emphasized that continued support for Pololikashvili would amount to “a betrayal of the country.”

Pololikashvili, who has led the UNWTO since 2018, recently responded to the government’s withdrawal of support through a statement to Formula TV, he said he had made repeated efforts to contact the Prime Minister but was met with silence. “For more than three weeks I’ve been writing and calling and he’s been hiding,” Pololikashvili said. “He should come out and say what my candidacy was exchanged for. I represent neither the Deep State nor the Global War party. I am a Georgian, and I am the Secretary-General of the UN World Tourism Organization.”

Ambassador’s  
Commendation Ceremony  
for JTI Caucasus

On May 14, at the Ambassador’s official residence, Ambassador Ishizuka held the awarding ceremony of the Ambassador’s Commendation for JTI Caucasus. JTI Caucasus has made significant contributions to the development of Georgia’s economy through its business activities as a leading Japanese company since its establishment in 2011. The company has also been committed to sustainable develop-

ment of local communities through its Community investment activities for many years. Furthermore, JTI Caucasus has been actively promoting the friendly ties between Japan and Georgia for many years. Ambassador Ishizuka presented Mr. Thomas Adams, the General Manager of JTI Caucasus with award certificates of commendation in recognition of its achievement. The Japanese Ambassador/Consul-General confers this award on individuals or organizations that have contributed to the promotion of mutual understanding and friendship between Japan and their respective assigned countries or regions.



Weather

Friday, May 16  
Day Partly Cloudy  
High: 23°C  
Night Clear  
Low: 11°C  
Saturday, May 17  
Day Partly Cloudy  
High: 23°C  
Night Partly Cloudy  
Low: 14°C

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43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi,  
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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

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# MADE in ITALY & ITALIAN FASHION DAY

The event “National Day of Made in Italy and Italian Fashion 2025”, organized by the Italian Embassy in Georgia with the support of RMG, took place on May 8 in the Capital and offered numerous guests - representatives of the Diplomatic Corps, the business world and society - an evening entirely dedicated to the fashion, beauty and cosmet-

ics industry. “This year we are celebrating Made in Italy Day in the name of fashion, a key sector for Italian manufacturing, in which Italy boasts a leading role recognized throughout the world”, said the Italian Ambassador Massimiliano D’Antuono in his speech. The event focused on fashion and high-

quality beauty products, which began with a workshop by Dr. Carlotta Sadino of Istituto Marangoni, one of the best Italian institutions in the training of the fashion and design sector, continued with an exhibition of the collections of some of the most famous Italian brands, including Armani, Platano, Macron, Replay, Geox and Roberto Bravo and with a make-up

masterclass by Kiko Milano, one of the most prestigious European make-up brands. The evening ended with the award ceremony for the winners of the second edition of the competition “Italy Meets Georgia: a Fusion of Aesthetics and Innovation”, organized by Istituto Marangoni in collaboration with the Italian Embassy in Tbilisi, which provides scholarships to talented young Georgians to study at the Fashion and Design courses at Istituto Marangoni.





