

U.S. Secretary of State Labels Georgia's Ruling Party 'Anti-American' Amid Growing Tensions

By Liza Mchedlidze

In a congressional hearing held on May 21 before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio characterized Georgia's ruling party, Georgian Dream (GD), as an "anti-American government." The remarks were made in response to pointed questions from Congressman Joe Wilson, who expressed concern over the current political trajectory in Tbilisi.

"For over 200 days, freedom-seeking Georgians have taken to the streets, many draped in American flags and displaying images of the U.S. president," Wilson said during the session. He pressed Secretary Rubio on what concrete measures the State Department might adopt under his leadership to hold the Georgian Dream leadership accountable.

Rubio reiterated that U.S. foreign policy is grounded in national interest, stating: "We have to ask ourselves: is it in our national interest to see a government that is openly anti-American in such a strategic region? If the answer is no, then it is our responsibility to act accordingly."

He emphasized that the administration is currently reviewing policy options. "We are exploring measures, though I don't have a specific announcement to make today. It's an active discussion," he noted, adding that regional experts and U.S. officials on the ground in Georgia are being consulted to identify pressure points most likely to influence GD lead-



ership.

During the hearing, Rep. Wilson accused Georgian Dream of undermining democratic norms, including allegations of election manipulation during the October 26 vote and suppressing ties with the United States. He further charged the party with expelling American businesses, obstructing access to key trade routes like the Middle Corridor, and fostering closer ties with China's Communist Party. Wilson also claimed GD has vilified both President Trump and broader

American leadership.

Rubio's comments reflect a broader deterioration in U.S.-Georgia relations, marked by concerns over democratic backsliding, increased authoritarianism, and inflammatory anti-Western rhetoric from GD officials.

Tensions were further escalated earlier this month when the U.S. House of Representatives passed the MEGOBARI Act on May 6 with bipartisan backing. The bill calls for targeted sanctions against individuals affiliated with GD,

citing systemic abuses and growing hostility toward U.S. interests.

In response, Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze issued an open letter on May 13 addressed to President Donald Trump and Vice President J.D. Vance. In the letter, he condemned the MEGOBARI Act as "absurd" and "hostile" toward what he described as a democratically elected government. The letter conveyed frustration over what Kobakhidze sees as Washington's dismissal of GD's attempts to "reset" bilateral ties.

By Liza Mchedlidze

German Ambassador Targeted in Verbal Attack by Alleged Georgian Dream Supporter in Batumi



German Ambassador to Georgia Peter Fischer was subjected to a verbal assault by an individual believed to be affiliated with the ruling Georgian Dream party during a visit to Batumi on May 18, the German Embassy confirmed in a statement to Formula TV.

The incident came to light after the pro-government outlet POSTV broadcast a video showing the man using explicit language and boasting about insulting the ambassador in public. The man, later identified in media reports as Mr. Kochiashvili, also posted a video to TikTok recounting the altercation and repeating offensive slurs directed at Fischer. In his video, he mocked the ambassador's title using a Russified term and claimed the diplomat should not have been allowed into Georgia, adding, "He should starve here." He also questioned why Fischer had not yet been expelled by the authorities.

In response, the German Embassy expressed appreciation to local residents who intervened. "The embassy confirms the incident and thanks the Georgians who witnessed it and stood up for the Ambassador as a guest in their city," the statement read. According to the embassy, after several bystanders condemned Kochiashvili's behavior, he promptly left the scene. No law enforcement officers were reportedly present at the time.

While opposition politicians have

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spoken out against the incident, denouncing it as both disrespectful and symptomatic of the country's deteriorating political

climate, the Georgian Dream party has so far made no public comment. Giorgi Vashadze, leader of the Strategy Aghmashenebeli party, condemned the episode as "shameful," "unacceptable,"

and emblematic of "anti-Georgia behavior." In a Facebook post, he wrote: "Not only was it a provocation, it was also an attack against a friend of the Georgian people, encouraged and organized by the

regime, as evidenced by their propaganda circulating the incident. This is not an isolated case. It is the result of years of hatred, incitement against the West, targeted propaganda, and attempts to derail the country's European course."

Mamuka Khazaradze, leader of the Lelo party, also criticized the verbal assault, calling it both a national embarrassment and a "crime" that warrants urgent response. "The government of Georgian Dream is directly responsible," he said in a social media post, "because its anti-Western rhetoric and propaganda provoked this incident."

The News in Brief

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Lithuania Warns Against Reengaging with Georgian Government Amid Democratic Decline



Lithuanian Foreign Minister Kestutis Budrys has cautioned against restoring diplomatic ties with Georgia's ruling Georgian Dream party unless it recommit to core democratic principles. In an interview with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty published on May 20, Budrys criticized the European Union for failing to respond decisively to Georgia's democratic backsliding, calling missed opportunities to impose sanctions a critical error.

"We had multiple chances to send a strong message, especially over legisla-

tion targeting NGOs, flawed elections, and violent crackdowns on peaceful protests, but we didn't act," Budrys said. He described the government's actions as having crossed "red lines," warning that democratic freedoms in Georgia are con-

tinuing to erode.

Despite strong public support in Georgia for EU membership, Budrys emphasized that the current government must demonstrate a clear commitment to democratic norms. He urged for new elections and the withdrawal of laws restricting civil society and political opposition. "If not, we are heading in a very bad direction and that's the responsibility of Georgian authorities," he stated.

When asked whether top EU officials should maintain dialogue with Tbilisi's

leadership, Budrys firmly opposed normalization under current conditions. "There is no value in engaging unless the relationship is fundamentally redefined," he said. "We're not just talking politics, we're talking about European values."

Giorgi Tkemaladze Appointed Vice Mayor of Tbilisi

Giorgi Tkemaladze has been named



the new Vice Mayor of Tbilisi, replacing Irakli Khmaladze, who recently transitioned to the role of Deputy Minister of Justice. The announcement was made by Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze during a May 21 press briefing.

Tkemaladze previously chaired the

Tbilisi City Council (Sakrebulo), a position he held since 2021 and during the previous council term. Kaladze praised his long-standing involvement in city governance, noting that Tkemaladze played an active role in shaping and supporting key municipal projects.

"All the projects implemented in the capital have involved the City Council and Giorgi personally," Kaladze said. "I'm confident that his experience and dedication will be crucial as we move forward with major initiatives."

Kaladze described Tkemaladze as a central figure in Tbilisi's administrative leadership and emphasized his future role in driving the city's urban development and strategic planning efforts.

EU sanctions three entities in Russian Armed Forces over use of chemical weapons in Ukraine

On 20 May, the Council of the European Union decided to impose additional restrictive measures on three Russian entities



involved in the development and use of chemical weapons. The entities listed are the Radiological Chemical and Biological Defence Troops, the 27th Scientific Centre and the 33rd Central Scientific Research and

Testing Institute of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, all belonging to the Russian Armed Forces.

This decision was taken in light of the reports issued by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in November 2024 and February 2025, confirming the presence of riot control agents such as chemical CS (2-Chlorobenzalmalononitrile) and related compounds in the samples collected at the

frontlines in Ukraine. Such agents have been used as a method of warfare by Russian forces in Ukraine, in breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention, to which Russia is a State Party.

"Russia has not provided a credible explanation regarding its widely reported use of riot control agents," says a press release by the Council of the EU. "Considering the seriousness of the situation and to enhance the global norm against the use of chemical weapons, the EU calls for a timely attribution by the OPCW of the proven use of riot

control agents as a method of warfare."

EU restrictive measures against the use and proliferation of chemical weapons now apply to a total of 25 individuals and six entities.

Those listed under the sanctions regime are subject to an asset freeze and a ban on the provision of funds or economic resources, directly or indirectly, to them or for their benefit. Additionally, a travel ban to the EU applies to the natural persons listed.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Thursday, May 22

Day ☀️ Clear
High: 24°C

Night 🌧️ Partly Cloudy
Low: 13°C

Friday, May 23

Day 🌧️ Partly Cloudy
High: 24°C

Night 🌧️ Mostly Cloudy
Low: 15°C

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