

# Macron, Tusk, and Merz Issue Joint Statement on Georgia's Independence Day Condemning Democratic Backsliding

By Liza Mchedlidze

On the occasion of Georgia's Independence Day, French President Emmanuel Macron, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz issued a joint statement sending a message of friendship and solidarity to the Georgian people while expressing serious concerns about the state of democracy in the country.

The joint statement reads: "On the occasion of the Independence Day of Georgia, we would like to send a message of friendship and solidarity to the Georgian people, and reiterate our unwavering support for the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Georgia."

The European leaders affirmed their support for the democratic and European aspirations of the Georgian people, emphasizing that "these aspirations reflect a willingness to be part of the European family."

However, they also strongly condemned recent actions by Georgian authorities. The statement says, "We, therefore, condemn all activities of the Georgian authorities resulting in the democratic backsliding and the attacks against civil society, media and government critics. Freedom of expression and of assembly must be upheld. Reports of excessive violence must be investigated. Laws that

contradict European standards must be amended and the much-needed reform process must be picked up again."

The statement further calls for renewed dialogue, saying, "The Georgian authorities need to re-establish a dialogue

with opposition and civil society. The people of Georgia should not be deprived of the opportunities associated with the country's European path."

The message drew an immediate response from the ruling Georgian Dream

party. Shalva Papuashvili, Speaker of the Georgian Parliament, condemned the statement, calling it "a shameful attack on the Georgian people and the Georgian state on their national holiday."

ÉLYSÉE

News Presidency Contact

## Joint statement from the leaders of France, Poland and Germany on Independence Day of Georgia.

Posted on 26 May 2025

On the occasion of the Independence Day of Georgia, with Mr Donald Tusk, Prime minister of the Republic of Poland, and Mr Friedrich Merz, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, we would like to send a message of friendship and solidarity to the Georgian people, and reiterate our unwavering support for the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Georgia.

We support the democratic and European aspirations of the Georgian people. These aspirations reflect a willingness to be part of the European family.

## International Community Condemns Arrest of Georgian Opposition Leader Zurab Japaridze

By Liza Mchedlidze

On May 22, Tbilisi City Court Judge Irakli Shvangiradze ordered the pre-trial detention of Zurab Japaridze, leader of the opposition party Girchi – More Freedom. This decision came after Japaridze refused to appear before a parliamentary commission investigating alleged abuses by the former United National Movement government. Japaridze has rejected the legitimacy of the parliament elected in October 2024. As he was taken into custody, he declared, "In the end, we will win."

The arrest sparked widespread international condemnation. Anna Lyberg, Sweden's Ambassador to Georgia, said, "Sweden is concerned by the developments in Georgia with growing pressure on the opposition including arrests of opposition leaders like Zurab Japaridze and adoption of repressive laws threatening democracy. These actions are not in line with EU values."

The Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated, "We are deeply concerned by the detention of Zurab Japaridze. Democratic decline, along with repressive actions against civic society, including unfounded detentions, is the way to no-

where. Our solidarity with Zurab Japaridze."

Jeanne Shaheen, Ranking Member of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, called the detention "appalling and unjust," and said, "Congress should stand with the Georgian people in the face of the Georgian Dream government's crackdown on democratic institutions."

Dan Barna, MEP and Vice President of Renew Europe, said, "Zurab Japaridze has been arrested in a sham political trial. Democracy, freedom, and the rights of Georgian citizens are in danger. The pro-Russian government aims to destroy pro-European opposition parties and silence pro-European voices. Together with our European liberal family we support the call for his release."

Joe Wilson, Co-chair of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, said, "The anti-American Georgian Dream regime has wrongly arrested Zurab Japaridze and is creating a precedent to jail all opposition."

Rasa Juknevičienė, MEP, said, "The GD regime's brutality keeps escalating. Zurab Japaridze has been jailed. The EU and Member States must sanction Bidzina Ivanishvili and his cronies now."

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.7376; Euro - 3.1061; GBP - 3.6955; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.4435; Swiss Franc - 3.3135

# International Community Condemns Arrest of Georgian Opposition Leader Zurab Japaridze

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Petras Austrevicius, MEP, described the detention as “one more shameful example of political persecution.”

Marko Mihkelson, Chairman of the

Estonian Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee, said, “Georgia’s dictatorship committed yet another crime against justice, democracy, and the rule of law. Free all political prisoners in Georgia.”

Yevheniia Kravchuk, Vice President of

the ALDE Party, said, “His detention is a blatant attack on democracy and a sign of authoritarian backsliding. Ukraine stands in full solidarity with Georgia.”

Nathalie Loiseau, MEP, asked, “Is Georgia becoming the new Belarus? What are we doing?”

The ALDE Party, Liberal International, and ALDE PACE issued a joint statement condemning the imprisonment, calling the trial a “sham,” and urging the Georgian Dream government to release Japaridze and respect international law.

James MacCleary, British MP, said, “Georgia continues down its slippery slope of political repression. Japaridze must be released now. UK sanctions

should follow.”

The British Embassy in Tbilisi expressed deep concern, calling the detention “wholly disproportionate” and evidence of “serious democratic decline.”

The Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs called on Georgia to uphold democratic values and respect fundamental rights.

Lithuanian MP Zygimantas Pavilionis warned that Georgia is showing “loyalty to Russia” and moving away from EU and NATO integration.

Norwegian Ambassador Bergljot Hovland said, “Georgia stands at a troubling crossroads” following the crackdown on opposition leaders.

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

**Salome Zourabichvili  
Addresses Election Plans  
for Fall 2025**



During the May 26 Independence Day event, the fifth President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili, spoke about the upcoming elections scheduled for fall 2025. She stated that parliamentary elections should be held first, followed by local elections, or both could be conducted jointly.

Zourabichvili emphasized the importance of preparation for the elections. She explained that within the framework of

the Resistance Platform, new election rules are being developed to set the conditions under which the elections will be held. She stressed the need to mobilize observers and the Georgian diaspora to register early and avoid last-minute delays.

Commenting on the ruling Georgian Dream party, Zourabichvili said that no one will participate in the local elections if they are conducted under Georgian Dream’s rules and control. She said the opposition is likely to participate once fair conditions are established.

“This preparation is our common one, so that everyone together, all the oppositions protect everyone’s voice. This is the formula for victory. I am sure of this and

our mission is to till the end,” Zourabichvili said.

**Member of Lelo Party Grigol  
Gegelia Attacked and  
Required Medical Assistance**



Grigol Gegelia, a member of the opposition party Lelo – Strong Georgia, was attacked recently, according to reports from the party. Gegelia needed emergency medical assistance following the incident.

Speaking live on TV Pirveli, Gegelia described the attack in detail. He said an unknown individual was filming him on their phone while verbally abusing and spitting on him.

“I was walking uphill when someone grabbed me from behind. He already had

a phone ready and was recording a video. I was already a target; this was not a random encounter,” Gegelia said. He added that the attacker asked if he was a politician, to which he confirmed.

“He tried everything—verbally insult-

ing me and spitting on me. He said that he curses Mikheil Saakashvili’s supporters, even within his own family. I responded that it was his business and that the biggest supporters of Saakashvili are actually within the Georgian Dream party,” Gegelia stated.

Gegelia said he will remain strong and brave until the very end. He promised to join forces with his friends and the Georgian people to defeat what he called a cruel and cowardly regime.

**Kaja Kallas: ‘We need  
the strongest  
international pressure  
on Russia to  
stop this war’**

### Weather

Tuesday, May 27

Day Mostly Cloudy  
High: 26°C

Night Mostly Cloudy  
Low: 17°C

Wednesday, May 28

Day Overcast  
High: 24°C

Night Mostly Cloudy  
Low: 16°C

“Russia bent on more suffering and the annihilation of Ukraine,” EU High Representative Kaja Kallas posted yesterday on X, reacting to the latest massive missile and drone attacks carried out by Russia over the weekend.

“Devastating to



see children among innocent victims harmed and killed. My thoughts are with the families today,” said Kaja Kallas, adding there was a need for the strongest international pressure on Russia to stop this war.

On Saturday night alone, Russia launched 298 drones and 69

cruise and ballistic missiles at Ukraine, EU Ambassador to Ukraine Katarina Mathernova wrote in a Facebook post. As a result of these attacks, 12 people were killed and more than 60 were injured. Among the dead were three children from the same family in the Zhytomyr region. Their parents were hospitalised, and their mother is in critical condition.

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*On the occasion of 77<sup>th</sup> Independence Day of the State of Israel, the Ambassador of Israel Her Excellency Hadas Meitzad held a reception on May 21<sup>st</sup> at the Residence of Ambassador, with the participation of the guest of honor, survivor of captivity - Mr. Gadi Moses.*





