

US House of Representatives passes Georgia Support Act



► The document supports Georgia's Euro-Atlantic and European integration as well as the right of the Georgian people to freely determine their future.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

The US House of Representatives has approved the Georgia Support Act establishing a strong strategic partnership between the two countries at the legislative level. Co-chairs of the Georgia Caucus, US Congressmen Gerry Connolly and Adam Kinzinger, reintroduced the bill in the House on February 8, 2021. The document currently has 19 co-sponsors from both the Democratic and Republican parties. The document will be sent to the U.S. Senate and if approved by the relevant Senate committees and the plenary session, it will be sent to the U.S. President.

"Georgia Support Act supports Georgia's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders; Georgia's Euro-Atlantic and European integration; the right of the people of Georgia to freely determine their future and make independent and sovereign choices on foreign and security policy, without interference, intimidation, or coercion by other countries," reads the statement published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia.

According to the statement, the bill condemns ongoing detentions, kidnappings, and other human rights violations in the Russian-occupied Georgian territories, including the recent killings of Georgian citizens Archil Tatumashvili, Giga Otkhozoria, Davit Basharuli, and others. The bill calls for the imposition of sanctions on persons responsible for human rights abuses, including the

right to life. In this regard, the document emphasizes the need for urging the Russian Federation to fully implement the European Union-mediated ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008. The legislation also supports the establishment of international security mechanisms in the occupied Georgian regions and the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees.

The bill also focuses on Georgia-U.S. defense and security cooperation as well as the strengthening of Georgia's capabilities to defend itself. In this regard, the Secretary of State, in consultation with the heads of other appropriate United States departments and agencies, has been instructed to unveil a five-year strategy to enhance Georgia's deterrence, resilience, and self-defense capabilities.

The bill calls on the United States to enhance the capabilities of Georgia in terms of combating Russian disinformation and propaganda campaigns as well.

Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili echoed the approval of the Georgia Support Act by the US House of Representatives, saying that the bill 'reaffirms the strength and advances robust US-Georgia strategic partnership'.

"Grateful to the US House, its leadership and Georgia Caucus co-chairs Adam Kinzinger and Gerry Connolly for supporting Georgia's sovereignty, territorial integrity, democracy, and NATO integration," he wrote on Twitter.



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NEWS IN BRIEF

PREPARED BY THE MESSENGER STAFF

Missile Attack on Kiev Carried Out During the Visit of the UN Secretary General

According to Mikhail Podolyak, an adviser to the administration of the President of Ukraine, the rocket attack on Kiev took place during the visit of UN Secretary General Antonio Gutierrez.

"The rockets hit Antonio Gutierrez's official visit to the center of Kiev. A day ago he was sitting at a long table in the Kremlin, and today, missiles are flying over his head. A [greeting] card from Moscow. Recall, why is Russia still a member of the UN Security Council?" Podoliaki on Twitter.

According to the adviser to the Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine Anton Gerashenko, two explosions took place in Kyiv. The information was later confirmed by the mayor of Kiev Vitali Klitschko. He said the blasts took place in the Shevchenko district. For reference, the Prime Minister of Bulgaria was also in Kyiv today.

Denisova: Saakashvili's Condition is Serious, Faces Disabilities or Death

Public Defender of Ukraine Lyudmila Denisova calls on the Georgian authorities to provide appropriate treatment to the third President Mikheil Saakashvili and to observe the norms of international law.

As Denisova writes on Facebook, Saakashvili, a Ukrainian citizen and head of the Reform Council, is in critical condition and needs immediate treatment at a clinic abroad.

"This has been confirmed by Dr. Otar Toidze. Delaying Saakashvili's treatment may lead to his disability, which may be fatal. He has repeatedly said that Saakashvili needs treatment in a multidisciplinary civil clinic or in a clinic abroad," the Ukrainian ombudsman wrote.

The Council of Physicians created by the Ombudsman has prepared another report on Mikheil Saakashvili's health.

According to the member of the council, neurologist Tengiz Tsuladze, Mikheil Saakashvili has a protein hunger. According to the doctor, Saakashvili consumes about 1/4 of his daily calories, and his body 'is eating itself'.

On April 20, Mikheil Saakashvili became incapacitated at the trial and had to leave the courtroom. Mikheil Saakashvili's mother, Giuli Alasania, demands the immediate removal of the third president from the country and his placement in a suitable clinic.

EXCHANGE RATES: US DOLLAR - 3.0517 | EURO - 3.2366 | GBP - 3.8400 | 100 RUSSIAN RUBLE - 4.1074 | SWISS FRANC - 3.1657 |

IRI Poll Shows Third of Population Thinks No Party Expresses Their Interests

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The International Republican Institute (IRI) publishes the results of a public opinion poll. According to the survey, 74% of the Georgian population fully and 14% partially support the country's accession to the European Union.

As for NATO, 60% of the population fully supports NATO membership, and 15% - partially.

43% of the respondents think that the biggest benefit of joining the EU is the strengthening of the economy, and in the case of joining NATO - security (31%).

The majority of the population considers the EU (54%), the US (53%), and Ukraine (45%) to be the most important political partners. According to the survey, the number of Georgian citizens who support dialogue with Russia has significantly decreased. One-third of the population surveyed in March 2022 - 36%, strongly or partially oppose dialogue with Russia, while 34% fully support the dialogue. It is noteworthy that the number of supporters of the dialogue has decreased compared to last year. In June 2021, in a survey conducted by the same organization, 56% of the population fully supported dialogue with Russia, 22% partially, and 20% opposed it.

When asked which country poses the greatest political threat to Georgia, 90% of the population names Russia, 8% - Turkey, 5% - the United States, and 3% - Armenia.

As for the internal political situation,



► 74% of the population fully supports EU membership, and 60% - NATO membership.

almost a third of the population, 31%, believe that no political party in Georgia today represents their interests. 35% of the population say that more or less one political party expresses their interests, while 30% say that there is a party that fully pursues its interests in politics. When asked which party they would vote for next week, 31% named the Georgian Dream, 16% the United National Movement, 4% the party of former Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia 'For Georgia'. 53% of the population say that they believe political parties more than they do not, 23% say that they trust them and as many say that Georgian parties can not be trusted.

The poll results showed that the share of the respondents who believed democracy

is the best possible form of government for Georgia decreased from 77% in June 2021 to 64% in March 2022. The share of those who are strongly or somewhat satisfied with the current state of democracy in Georgia has also increased in the same period, from 45% to 53%. More than two-thirds of respondents, (71%) said that Georgia's politics are moving more toward polarization, also increasing from 61% in June 2021. When asked for possible solutions, 40% of the interviewees saw 'certain political parties or politicians' quitting politics as an essential element for political reconciliation. 38% named holding accountable the current and former officials who have committed crimes while in office. 26% of the respondents said

they found the reconciliation very unlikely, while 24% found it somewhat unlikely. Against this background, only 39% found it either very or somewhat likely that a lasting reconciliation occurs.

According to the survey, Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia and the spiritual leader of the Georgian Orthodox Church Ilia II has the highest approval rating (91%), followed by Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze (53%) and President Salome Zurbashvili (52%). According to the poll, Irakli Gharibashvili is in 4th place with 47%, and Public Defender Nino Lomjaria is in 5th place with 44%.

The same survey found that the majority of the country's population considers unemployment (40%) and high prices (18%) as the most important problems. Given the possibility to name 3 answers, 85% of the respondents named economic development as one of the biggest challenges for Georgia's future. Bringing back the lost territories and unemployment were other top responses. The study was conducted on March 4-24, 2022, on behalf of the Research Center of the IRI, by Dr. Rasa Alishauskine, Representative of the Baltic Studies and Gallup Organization. The research fieldwork was conducted by IPM. The data was collected through face-to-face interviews. The sample included 1486 respondents with voting rights and age. Data were weighted by age, sex, region, and settlement size. The margin of error is +/- 2.5%, the response rate is 64%.

Polarisation spikes as Georgian media follows the war in Ukraine and post-election developments in Georgia

EU and UNDP research captures media trends in covering political, economic, and social issues in a post-election environment

TBILISI. On 27 April 2022, the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) released media monitoring reports that analysed the post-election media environment in Georgia. The analysis includes 22 media outlets - six television stations, nine online and seven print media editions. The research was carried out from 24 January 2022 through 23 March 2022 in partnership with the Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics and Internews Georgia.

Findings show that during the monitoring period, political developments dominated the media agenda; the intensity of this coverage left little space for economic and social issues. Events surrounding the 2021 local self-governance elections and Georgia's third President Saakashvili were at the centre of media attention

from the beginning of the research period through 23 February 2022.

After war broke out in Ukraine on 24 February, the focus quickly shifted to wartime reporting. All media sectors were equally gripped by the unfolding humanitarian disaster, international support and Georgia's political and public responses to the crisis. Although all media sectors were focused on developments in Ukraine, their coverage was influenced by deep political divisions in Georgia's society. The manner in which related events were portrayed and interpreted depended on the editorial preferences of individual media outlets.

Most of the monitored television stations offered conflicting interpretations of political statements made by Georgian and international officials. Specific stations manipulated public opinion by

demeaning political positions in Georgia that they did not favour.

Editorial differences became apparent across digital media, which are generally perceived as independent and balanced. Some of the monitored outlets, influenced by Russian information sources, used misleading images, false narratives, and misrepresentation in their coverage.

Wall-to-wall reporting of Georgia's response to the war in Ukraine was notable across print media. Discriminatory language and homophobic statements remained unresolved issues for some of the monitored editions.

"The EU and UNDP have been facilitating media research in Georgia for about a decade, studying and analysing election reporting throughout nine major electoral cycles. Findings of this research have informed the advancement of the

media environment in Georgia and have contributed to promoting media diversity and reducing the use of discriminatory language, thereby increasing the quality of reporting as well as developing civil society watchdog functions," said Asunción Sánchez Ruiz, Deputy Head of the EU Delegation to Georgia / Head of Political, Press and Information Section.

"In the context of a devastating war, accurate and ethical reporting is more critical than ever. People need reliable information and quality journalism gives voice to people on the frontlines and those affected by the crisis. It's an enormous responsibility that must be treated with the utmost care," said UNDP Deputy Resident Representative in Georgia Anna Chernyshova.

Media monitoring reports are available on mediamonitor.ge

FRIDAY APRIL 29

Day Showers
High: 23°C

Night Partly cloudy
Low: 14°C

SATURDAY APRIL 30

Day Partly cloudy
High: 27°C

Night Rain
Low: 15°C

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