

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Ned Price: Washington Concerned About 'Foreign Agents' Bill

According to the Spokesperson for the United States Department Ned Price, Washington is concerned about the "foreign agents" bill.

Ned Price told reporters that whoever votes for this bill will be responsible for potentially jeopardizing Georgia's Euro-Atlantic future.

"We have talked about this law several times over the past few days and expressed our consistent concerns. The law is first going through procedures in the system of Georgia. Nevertheless, we remain deeply concerned by the proposed Foreign Agent Act.

Namely, because it will stigmatize and silence those independent voices and citizens of Georgia who are trying to build a better country for their fellow citizens and society. We are deeply concerned about the potential consequences of this law on freedom of speech and democracy in Georgia.

Our opinion is simple. We noted this publicly and privately. Anyone who votes for this bill will be responsible for potentially jeopardizing Georgia's Euro-Atlantic future.

Such a law does not correspond to the aspiration that Georgian citizens have been expressing for decades. It does not correspond to the future they envisioned, and in which we, the United States, aim to be Georgia's partners and help them achieve this future.

It is not only the USA that expresses concern, but also several partner countries of Georgia, the European Union, and the United Nations. The Georgian civil sector has also published a strong statement in which they express their concern regarding this draft law," said Ned Price.

According to him, there was a lot of propaganda about this law and he spoke about the differences of American law FARA and Russian law, which has become a subject of speculation:

"You mentioned one example that is



not true. I mean the idea that this law is based on the US "Foreign Agent Registration Act", FARA. Our law requires people who are agents of a foreign country to register. Our law does not affect the work of non-governmental organizations or their sources of funding.

We can provide you with more information regarding US law, but we will tell you that US law is very narrow and only applies to agents of foreign countries. This is very different and that's why we are very concerned", said Ned Price in response to the journalist's question.

Price said that the adoption of this law will be of great concern to the US, although it is still a draft and now it is important to clearly state the position of the international community.

"The US has a very clear position. We want no one to doubt the concerns we have expressed, which have been expressed by the European Union, the United Nations and several countries around the world. Perhaps the most important concern that the Georgian government needs to hear comes from the civil society in its own country, from the

citizens of Georgia. That is exactly what we are focusing on.

Obviously, the adoption and implementation of this law will be of great concern to us. We're not going to cross that bridge. At this stage, this law is the first draft, which is being considered by the legislators of Georgia. That's why we think that the most important thing we can do at this stage is to state our position and that of the international community without any doubt," said Ned Price.

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

David Kramer Suggests Sanctioning Individuals Responsible for Georgia's 'Current Trajectory'



The former Assistant Secretary of State of the USA, David Kramer, in an interview with the Voice of America, stated that the Russian law may harm Georgia's goal of becoming a member of the European Union.

According to him, the authorities know that this will lead to a negative reaction in Europe and the USA. Kramer doubted Georgian government's Western trajectory:

"Now I am no longer sure whether the Georgian government really wants to go in this western direction, and if they do, then this is the wrong step. So, I think there are several goals for the adoption of this bill, none of them are positive," Kramer said.

According to him, it is important to impose individual sanctions on everyone who is responsible for Georgia's current trajectory.

"I have been saying for a long time that individual sanctions, which mean visa denials and account freezes, are a way to make it clear to these individuals that such actions will not be tolerated. This is not against the country or the Georgian people, these are targeted sanctions against specific individuals: against those who are responsible for the current trajectory of Georgia," David Kramer said.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Young European Ambassadors in Georgia Issue Statement Regarding 'Foreign Agents' Bill



Participants of the Young European Ambassadors in Georgia program issued a statement regarding the draft law on 'foreign agents' bill. The statement reads that the legislative initiative threatens the interests of

Georgia and its European course, which is defined by the constitution of the country.

"The activities of each of us in different countries of the world, over the years, were dictated by the love of our country and the desire to introduce Georgia, as a

democratic country, with its distinctive culture and history to as many foreigners as possible. Today, by passing this bill, we are facing the threat of losing democracy and the support of the West, which is disastrous for our country.

Also, we believe that the law on 'agents of foreign influence' will limit both Georgian civil society and media organizations.

We call on the Parliament of Georgia not to support the presented legislative project and not to jeopardize the prospect of the country's reunification with the European family," the statement reads.

Doctors Join Movement Demanding Pardoning of Nika Gvaramia

Representatives of the medical field joined the movement to release the founder of Mtavari Arkhi TV Company, Nika Gvaramia, and call on President

Salome Zourabichvili to pardon him.

They note that it would be a 'wise' decision to release Nika Gvaramia as soon as possible.

"We, doctors, believe that the European future of our country, along with other fundamental issues, largely depends on the release of Nika Gvaramia. Time is running out, now silence and indifference are unacceptable.

We, doctors, stand on the side of truth and justice, we think that releasing Nika Gvaramia as soon as possible will be a wise decision, correct both morally and legally, and will help our country on this very important path," the statement reads.



EU, UNDP and UK conduct training programme on the rights of people with disabilities for Georgian officials



of the Georgian presidential and governmental administrations and parliament and civil service bureaus participated in training programmes on models and approaches to disability as well as stereotypes, barriers and dis-

crimination deeply rooted within society.

Participants also discussed ways to support the employment of people with disabilities in the public sector.

The training programme was

organised by the Civil Service Bureau of Georgia with assistance from the EU Delegation to Georgia, British Embassy to Georgia and UNDP Georgia.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Monday, March 6
Day: Few Showers, High: 12°C
Night: Light Rain, Low: 3°C
Tuesday, March 7
Day: Partly Cloudy, High: 11°C
Night: Clear, Low: 1°C

The European Union supported a three-day training programme for Georgian officials on the rights of persons with disabilities. Up to 30 representatives from human resources departments

published by The Messenger

43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi, 0108, Georgia
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

The Messenger welcomes your contributions. If you are interested in submitting an article or news item please contact. All contributions should be submitted by e-mail. The Messenger Georgia's English language daily is an independent newspaper, and,

therefore, the opinions expressed in some articles do not necessarily coincide with those of the newspaper. We take no responsibility for any claims made in advertisements. The Messenger preserves the style of a source written in English where possible.

The English - Speaking Union
ინგლისურ ენაზე მოლაპარაკეთა კავშირი
Creating global understanding through English
Patron: Her Majesty The Queen
President: HRH The Princess Anne
Invites 16-20 year old young speakers to take part in the Public Speaking Competition
The theme of the competition is "Relations between nations are too important to be left to governments alone". Speakers may interpret this theme in any way they see fit, but they should not use the theme as their title. Each speaker will be allocated 5 minutes. The competition will be held in three rounds. The first round March 8, 11, 13 at the English Language Centre "British Corner". The date and theme of the second round will be announced later. The competition is sponsored by the Bank of Georgia. ESU-Georgia will send the lucky winner to London to take part in the final and organize 5 day stay in England. The deadline for registration is March 6 Contact us: "British Corner", Vake Park (entrance from I. Abashidze St.). Tel.: 591339993, 557030080 E mail: britishcornerbc@gmail.com www.esugeorgia.com

On the occasion of the National Day of Republic of Bulgaria and the Bulgarian Armed Forces Day, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Bulgaria to Georgia H.E. Mr. Vesselin Valkanov held a reception on March 2.









