

Georgian Dream Withdraws 'Foreign Agents' Bill Due to High Public Pressure

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The joint statement of the political council of the ruling party Georgian Dream, bill initiator People's Power party and the Parliamentary majority has been published, saying they have withdrawn the bill after mass protests.

According to the statement, the ruling party is waiting for the 'emotional response' to subside, so they can explain the importance of the bill to the public and announced that they will start having meetings with citizens to inform the public of the 'truth'.

Georgian Dream blamed the 'radical' opposition for misleading the public by presenting the bill to them in a 'negative light'.

"We would like to inform the public that consultations were held between the political council of Georgian Dream, People's Power and members of the parliamentary majority regarding the ongoing political processes surrounding the law "On Transparency of Foreign Influence".

We see that the adopted draft law has caused differences of opinion in society. The machine of lies was able to present the bill in a negative light and mislead a certain part of the public. The false label of Russian law was attached to the draft law, and its adoption in the first reading was presented as a departure from the European course in the eyes of a part of the public.

In addition, the radical forces were able to involve some of the youth in illegal activities. Thank



you to the heroic law enforcement officers who responded to the violence with patience and the highest standards.

We should be most careful about peace, tranquility and economic development in our country, as well as Georgia's progress on the path of European integration. Therefore, it is necessary to

spend the energy of each of our fellow citizens not on confrontation, but on the development of the country in the right direction.

Considering all of the above, as a governing power responsible to each member of society, we have decided to unconditionally withdraw the bill we supported without any reservations.

As the emotional background subsides, we will better explain to the public what the bill was for and why it was important to ensure transparency of foreign influence in our country. To do this, we will start meetings with the population and let the general public know the truth about each and every detail of the matter.

We act with the special responsibility that, as a governing power, we owe to each member of society.

Georgia will maintain peace and stability and continue moving towards Europe with dignity, which is the principal choice of Georgian society," the statement reads.

Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia says Police Used 'Proportionate' Forces Against People at Rally

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE



After the special forces used water cannons and pepper spray to break up the protest on March 7, citizens gathered in front of the Parliament to protest the passing of 'foreign agents' bill on March 8 as well and police tried to break them up for the second time with the same method.

According to information from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, law enforcement officers arrested 133 people at the protest in accordance with Articles 166 and 173 of the Code of Administrative Offenses, on the grounds of petty hooliganism and disobedience to the legal demands of the police.

MIA of Georgia released a statement regarding the rally on March 8, which reads that police used proportionate forces against the citizens as the participants went 'beyond the norms' established by law on freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

According to them, about 50 employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs were injured, among them sev-

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შინაგან საქმეთა სამინისტრო /
Ministry of Internal Affairs of
Georgia

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.5933; Euro - 2.7398; GBP - 3.0811; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.4158; Swiss Franc - 2.7644

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eral of them required surgical intervention and are still in medical institutions.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs says that the protest was going on peacefully for several hours but it became 'gradually extremely violent'.

"Later, one of the participants of the rally, during his speech, called the gathered people to picket the legislative body, after which the participants of the rally started massively blocking the entrances of the parliament and picketing the building. Dur-

ing the rally, police forces were stationed in the parliament building to prevent verbal and physical confrontations with the rally participants.

Despite the warning of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the participants of the rally went beyond the norms established by the law on freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. They did not obey the legal requirements of the law enforcement officers.

The gathered behaved aggressively and damaged the iron protective dams placed along the legislative body building, entrance doors, smashed the

building's windows, iron grills, threw stones, various objects and pyrotechnics into the parliament building and yard, which may have caused serious consequences.

"The forms of protest by the participants of the rally in the vicinity of the Parliament building and on Rustaveli Avenue gradually became extremely violent," the Ministry of Internal Affairs said.

According to the statement, considering all this, the employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs used appropriate coercive measures and special means.

"The police repeatedly tried to defuse the tense situation - they removed the aggressive persons from the territory surrounding the parliament and called on the participants of the rally to disperse peacefully, although they continued their violent actions and did not obey the legal demands of the law enforcement officers.

The people gathered on Rustaveli Avenue started throwing the so-called 'Molotov cocktails' stones, wooden poles and other objects at the policemen's direction. The participants of the rally damaged, overturned and

set fire to several vehicles belonging to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, damaged a bus of the Special Tasks Department, a fire truck, facades of buildings located on Rustaveli Avenue, and smashed shop windows.

Those who gathered on Rustaveli Avenue damaged material property owned by the Tbilisi City Hall services, among them they set fire to bins standing on the street, broke chairs and public transport waiting rooms," the Ministry of Internal Affairs statement reads.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Public Defender Levan Ioseliani Says opposition leader Zurab Japaridze Has Most Serious Injuries Among March 8 Rally Detainees



The Public Defender of Georgia, Levan Ioseliani, visited people detained at the March 8 rally and said that Zurab Japaridze, the leader of Girchi-More for Freedom, has the most serious visible injury among those arrested on Rustaveli Av-

enue, who is placed in the Solitary confinement in the Main division of police department.

"I visited all the detainees who are here in this Solitary confinement. There are 25 detainees here, we had a face-to-face conversation with all of them and I heard about the circumstances under which they were detained. Several of them have external

injuries, I visited, and of course, Zura Japaridze, who is here, also has external injuries.

All stated that they had consulted a doctor and had been visited by a doctor. In addition to that, several of them claim that they were arrested under unknown conditions, and suddenly, when they had nothing to do with the rally, they were just standing there... one of them was a passer-by, who said that they grabbed him by hand and put him in the car," Ioseliani said.

Democracy Research Institute published a statement on Zurab Japaridze and said that at least three articles of the European Convention were violated against opposition leader Zurab Japaridze.

Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia Shalva Papuashvili accuses President Zourabichvili of 'romanticizing violence'



The President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili shared a video of young people dancing to the sound of sirens to her personal Facebook page and wrote: "They are dancing to the sound of sirens. A generation of cool young people."

Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia Shalva Papuashvili responded to the President's post and said that he is surprised how political groups or non-governmental organizations are able to

express sympathy or empathy towards violence.

He expressed disappointment that the president had 'romanticized violence'. According to him, when there is an operation to restore order by the police, people expect the president to call for peace and not romanticize the encouragement of disobedience to the police.

"I'm very disappointed by the position of the president, who somewhat romanticized this violence yesterday when she posted

All 133 Detainees Released, MIA Says



MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS

According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the 133 people detained at protest rallies in the last couple of days were released from administrative custody.

"On March 7 and 8 of this year, on March 7 and 8 of this year, at the protest action held in the vicinity of the Parliament, all the persons arrested in accordance with the Code of Administrative Offenses were released.

Some of the detainees were brought before the court. And the rest of the persons were released on the basis of the expiration of the term of stay in the pre-trial detention isolator.

In the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the investigation in connection with the violent events that took place on March 7-8 continues under Articles 353 and 187 of the Criminal Code of Georgia," reads the MIA statement.

Weather

Friday, March 10

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 18°C

Night Mostly Cloudy

Low: 6°C

Saturday, March 11

Day Mostly Cloudy

High: 19°C

Night Mostly Cloudy

Low: 8°C

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