

Chairman of Parliament of Georgia Shalva Papuashvili Accuses MEPs of Attempting to 'Separate' Georgians and Their Government

By Liza Mchedlidze

The Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia, Shalva Papuashvili, told reporters that some European politicians are using 'Russian propaganda tools' towards Georgia to separate Georgian people and the government elected by them from each other. Papuashvili called it a 'dangerous road' and asked them to 'abandon the Russian narrative'.

"It is disturbing when we see an attempt by European politicians to separate the people and their elected government. This is a Russian propaganda weapon that Russia is using against Ukraine - it is trying to propagandistically separate the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian government.

Unfortunately, some European politicians are using exactly such a Russian propaganda tool towards Georgia, they want to separate the Georgian people and the government elected by them. This is a very dangerous way and it is very undemocratic, un-European. This is a propaganda weapon that Russia uses against countries or governments it does not like. Therefore, I would like some European politicians to abandon this Russian narrative," said Papuashvili.

Papuashvili also noted that there is a certain group in the European Parliament, which is a political friend and ally of Mikheil Saakashvili.

"As for Saakashvili, the statements about him are not the first time. The European Parliament passed three resolutions, which were unfortunately full of misinformation, including the last one. We see that there is a certain group in the European Parliament, which is a political friend and ally of Mikheil Saakashvili. Mikheil Saakashvili had



their protection when the Georgian court sentenced Saakashvili to prison in 2018. It was under their protection that he would move freely around Europe, he was guilty and in hiding, and despite that they would meet and shake hands in cafes or in their offices.

Saakashvili, a citizen of Ukraine, was talking about the future of Georgia. It was they who encouraged Saakashvili's

radical plan, which was to create chaos in Georgia. If it wasn't for the active work of the Georgian special services, if Saakashvili had not been arrested, no one knows what would have happened in Georgia today in terms of political mess. It is the responsibility of these politicians that they encouraged Saakashvili to take such a step. In their place, I would like them to understand their own contribu-

tion, how they renewed radicalism in Georgia, and with this responsibility, rethink their attitude towards the Georgian people. First of all, it is an insult to the Georgian people when there is an attempt to separate them from the government they have elected. This is the biggest clear example of non-democracy," stated Papuashvili.

Political Parties Should Work Together on 12 Recommendations Issued by EU, Katarina Mathernova Says

By Liza Mchedlidze



Katarina Mathernova, Deputy Director General at DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations told journalists after the meeting with the political party representatives that political parties should all work together to fulfill 12 recommendations issued by EU for candidacy status:

"One issue that I have discussed with representatives of political parties, as well as with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, is that it is not only necessary to take technical steps to make a country part of the European Union, but it is about political culture, the ability to reach compromises and, in this case, come together to fulfill the 12 points. I can't tell you at this point if candidate status will happen, but I can tell you that it won't hap-

pen without completing the 12 steps. For this, the parliamentary parties should work together," said Mathernova.

When asked if she sees any progress regarding the recommendations, the Deputy Director General at DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations noted that she heard from the members of "Georgian Dream" that they are ready to work on the implementation of the recommendations within the framework of the inclusive process.

"One of the good elements was the response to two very important opinions published yesterday by the Venice Commission, on judicial reform and deligarchization of society. We heard from the majority representatives of the Georgian Dream that there is a readiness to work on the implementation of the recommendations and to do it within the framework of the inclusive process. I think this is a very promising end to our consultations," said Katerina Mathernova.

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.5867; Euro - 2.7520; GBP - 3.1234; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.4097; Swiss Franc - 2.8129

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

'Foreign Agents' Law Was Deliberate Provocation From Georgian Dream, MEP Andrius Kubilius Says



Member of European Parliament Andrius Kubilius said that Georgians have a problem achieving the strategic goal to join the European Union and the reason for it is Bidzina Ivanishvili.

Andrius Kubilius accused the ruling Georgian Dream party of creating a provocation by presenting 'Foreign Agents' law.

In Kubilius's words, the members of

the formal and informal authorities are united in their tactics to create new problems on the path of Georgia's European integration:

"That's why Mikheil Saakashvili and Nika Gvaramia are in prison, and that's why we became eyewitnesses of history about 'foreign agents'. The initiative of the 'foreign agent' law was a deliberate provocation by the Georgian government, which was directed against the Georgian people. This behavior of the government is absolutely contrary to what the European Union demands from Georgia, i.e. depolarization of political life. It is very good that the Georgian people were able to protect their own path to European integration, but we should not be naive, this is not the last political and anti-European provocation of the government.

Prime Minister of Georgia Gharibashvili made an important statement. I quote: "The European Parliament should take care of itself, the MEPs are involved in a corruption scandal, their goal was to drag Georgia into the war and destroy it together with Ukraine." The Kremlin should be jealous of such propaganda, but it does not lead to the status

of a candidate, although we will continue to stand by the Georgian people," said Andrius Kubilius during the debate on the current situation in Georgia in the European Parliament.

MEP Nacho Sánchez Amor Thinks EU Not Giving Georgia Candidacy Status Strengthened Ruling party's Anti-European Narrative

MEP Nacho Sánchez Amor said that not putting Georgia in the same line as other countries to which the European Union offered candidate status was a mistake because it strengthened the anti-European narrative of the Georgian Dream.

"I refuse to choose this false dichotomy between a jailed former president who has been advised by many sitting here not to return to the country and who entered the country illegally during the election campaign, and a government whose tendency toward authoritarianism is becoming increasingly apparent.

However, it seems that we agree to support civil society, and from there, I

mean pro-democracy and pro-European civil society, we will be able to reach a consensus. I repeat that it was a mistake when we did not put Georgia in the same line with other countries that we offered candidate status, because it strengthened



the anti-European narrative of the Georgian Dream.

We opened up a lot of space to fill this anti-European narrative, and it certainly didn't help to end the polarization that, as we said, we were already worried about. Now we have to rearrange the levers of our influence on the country in a situation that is much worse than it was a few months ago, although this is our obligation. I urge you all to support the civil society and not get involved in false dichotomies," said Nacho Sánchez Amor.

Opinion & Analysis

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

On March 7, Georgian Dream openly created a political crisis in the country by passing the first reading of the law on foreign agents. The country has been moving to this crisis at an accelerated pace lately. The further development of the events depends on the scale of protests in the country and the reaction of the West.

On March 7, 78 deputies of the majority in the parliament building voted for the draft law "on transparency of foreign influence" in the first hearing. These deputies include deputies of the Georgian Dream and its division People's Power. Four MPs from the majority in the chamber initially said they did not vote for the bill, but two later, apparently under additional pressure, said there had been a "technical error" and that they supported the bill.

The Parliament of Georgia has 150 members and judging by the results of the voting mentioned above, the Georgian Dream is maintaining the majority with great efforts. There is an expectation that the Geor-

gian Dream members will begin to fluctuate and at least a few MPs will leave the party. After noisy committee hearings of the agents' bill, it was said that Parliament would consider it in the first reading on March 9, but Georgian Dream immediately put it to the vote on March 7, after electing its preferred candidate for the public defender.

With the sudden adoption of the draft law, they probably thought that the public protest would not be big, however, the protest took on a large-scale character, and the Georgian Dream also made extensive use of pre-prepared police forces - raiding with gas, water jets, rubber bullets and batons. 66 people participating in the rally were arrested. The large-scale use of force against peaceful protesters is obviously not accidental. The 'line of defense' of the government runs through these police forces, and Georgian Dream wanted to show their strength and power by using it on a large scale on March 7. It was also noticed that a number of policemen were carrying out the received orders with joy and enthusiasm.

In the recent period and even today, the issue of what took the

Georgian Dream to introduce and accept the law of agents on the political scene is being actively discussed. What did they gain by doing so? Some think that this is a request received from Moscow and Bidzina Ivanishvili is being ordered to fulfill this request.

Moscow wants Georgia to openly defect to the Russia-Belarus camp and end talks about Euro-Atlantic aspirations. According to others, the Georgian Dream is preparing for the parliamentary elections of 2024 and with the law of foreign agents should destroy the non-governmental sector, whose existence and development took place with the support of the West during the past 30 years after the restoration of independence. The Georgian Dream has been fighting real political opposition for a long time, and in this regard, unfortunately, they have achieved significant success. Today, the non-governmental sector and independent media are the main barriers to maintaining and strengthening the government.

The current rhetoric of the Georgian Dream is also strange. On the one hand, they continue to talk about fulfilling the re-

quirements of the European Union and receiving candidate status. On the other hand, they have been openly cursing the MEPs and European structures for a long time. Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili calls the resolution of the European Parliament, which talked about Mikheil Saakashvili, 'shameful'. According to Gharibashvili, it turns out that the European parliamentarians "told us that Saakashvili is their agent, he was their servant", and now, according to him, "the time when politicians and authorities served the interests of foreign countries is over" in Georgia.

The main orator of the Georgian Dream Irakli Kobakhidze calls the 'radical opposition' foreign spies, who should be exposed and neutralized, he compares them to Sergo Orjonikidze and other Bolsheviks, who brought the Russian Red Army into Georgia in 1921, and declares the National Movement as agents of Russia.

Someone might get confused and not understand whether the leaders of the Georgian Dream are fighting Western spies or Russian spies. But we have to remember Kobakhidze's other statement about the Global War

Party and the desire allegedly coming from the West to involve Georgia in the war against Russia.

The adoption of the law on agents and the crackdown on a peaceful demonstration were followed by harsh statements from the West, which indicated that it would greatly harm Georgia's European perspective. However, such statements cannot scare Georgian Dream, whose representatives have already openly declared that they do not want 'such Europe'. Many strange phrases were heard from these people, for example, we heard that "betrayal of the motherland does not require reading a book". As strange as it may sound, this is the truth. It also turned out to be true that "getting an education in the West" is not a guarantee of possessing Western values at all.

Despite the tangible results shown by the mass protests and the official withdrawal of the "foreign agents" bill by the Georgian Dream, there is still uncertainty about how the government will address the public's clear opposition to its pro-Russian politics and reverse its current trajectory towards Russia.

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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

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Weather

Thursday, March 16

Day Mostly Cloudy

High: 20°C

Night Cloudy

Low: 11°C

Friday, March 17

Day Cloudy

High: 19°C

Night Showers

Low: 9°C