

President Zourabichvili Criticizes Government Over Lavrov's Relatives' Visit and Calls for Sanctions

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Following reports in Georgian media, protests erupted in the capital Tbilisi and the Kakheti region when it was revealed that family members of Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, including his daughter Ekaterina Vinokurova, had visited Georgia for the wedding of his son-in-law's brother.

Lavrov's daughter, Ekaterina Vinokurova, who is married to Alexander Vinokourov, has faced sanctions from the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada, while her businessman husband has been sanctioned by the European Union.

Nineteen individuals participating in the protests were apprehended by the authorities. Sixteen of them were arrested during the rally that took place outside the Kvareli Lake Resort Hotel, the venue where the wedding occurred. Later, in Telavi, the opposition leader Elene Khoshtaria of the Droa party and two members of the United National Movement were arrested.

Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili stated that the Minister of Internal Affairs, Vakhtang Gomelauri, had informed her that Lavrov's relatives had departed from the country. However, no specific information regarding their arrival and departure dates was provided.

During the briefing, Zourabichvili expressed strong disapproval of granting entry to sanctioned individuals, particularly those closely associated with Russian President Vladimir Putin, who is internationally recognized as a war crim-



inal. She called upon the Georgian government to obtain the lists of sanctioned individuals from Georgia's international partners and take appropriate actions based on that information.

Zourabichvili questioned the government's knowledge and implied that they should have been aware of the entry of sanctioned individuals, es-

pecially those who are closely connected to Russian President Vladimir Putin. Her rhetorical question, "How did we not know who entered?", suggested her disbelief and criticism towards the government's lack of vigilance in monitoring and controlling the entry of such individuals. Zourabichvili's statement highlighted that the government

should have had information about such individuals entering the country. She emphasized the Georgian Dream party's responsibility to protect the country, particularly considering its geopolitical situation, and expressed disappointment in the lack of adequate measures taken in this regard.



Georgian Dream Leaders Condemn President Zourabichvili's Call to Impose Personal Sanctions based on International Sanctions Lists

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

In a recent press conference, Irakli Kobakhidze, Chairman of the Georgian Dream party, discussed the criteria for allowing people to enter the country. He emphasized that Georgia does not participate in imposing sanctions and that the customs service follows the law on occupation as their guiding principle.

Kobakhidze stated that when Georgia does not join sanctions, it includes personal sanctions as well. The country does not impose sanctions on the Russian Federation, as it goes against their clear position. He added that sanctioning family members is contrary to human rights

standards, and personal sanctions should only apply to individuals who have directly committed specific criminal acts.

Responding to a question about President Salome Zourabichvili, Kobakhidze asserted that she does not have the right to speak on behalf of the Georgian people. He criticized the president for characterizing the disruption of a wedding as a victory for the Georgian people, labeling it a xenophobic campaign. He argued that it is unacceptable to disrupt the wedding of someone who has not committed a crime and that such actions are incompatible

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.5340; Euro - 2.7352; GBP - 3.1510; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.1665; Swiss Franc - 2.8084

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with Georgian culture. "She said that the second day of the wedding failed and this is the victory of the Georgian people. First of all, Salome Zourabichvili has no right to speak on behalf of the Georgian people when it comes to any topic, for one simple reason - the people of this country have given the legitimacy of policy determination to the "Georgian Dream" government, parliament, and leadership.

"When the President initiates a xenophobic campaign and evaluates the disruption of the second day of the wedding as a victory for the people, it is simply shameful," said Kobakhidze. Mamuka Mdinardze, the Executive Secretary of the Georgian Dream, reiterated Kobakhidze's statements. He also clarified that Georgia has not imposed personal sanctions on anyone, including the family members of the Russian Foreign Minister. Mdinardze highlighted that there is no database of sanctioned

individuals in Georgia. Mdinardze mentioned that no state is exempt from making mistakes, but Georgia has a specific database for tracking violations of the law on occupation. If a person flagged in this database is confronted by a border guard, they will be denied entry into the country. Mamuka Mdinardze also accused President Zourabichvili of spreading lies and refuted the claim that Minister of Internal Affairs Vakhtang Gomelauri promised to "postpone the wedding."

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

President of Georgia Declares Boycott of Georgian Airways Over Founder's Pro-Russian Remarks and Flights to Moscow



During the briefing, the President of Georgia declared her decision to boycott Georgian Airways following remarks made by the company's founder, Tamaz Gaiashvili, who expressed support for the Russian President's decision to lift the visa requirements for Georgian citizens and reinstate direct flights between the two countries. Furthermore, the President's announcement came after Georgian Airways initiated regular flights between Tbilisi and Moscow, which began on May 20.

Salome Zourabichvili acknowledged that the boycott may not have a significant impact, but she encouraged others to join her.

According to President Zourabichvili's statement, she believes that "Georgian Airways" is a company that takes full ad-

vantage of the state in order to accumulate wealth.

'Georgian Airways' is a company that takes full advantage of the state to accumulate wealth. This has been the case under all governments, including during the Covid pandemic. Now, they are trying to exploit the new situation, which is un-

acceptable to a significant portion of our population. Additionally, I will refrain from using their services until the company's ownership changes, as I do not wish to contribute to their enrichment. It is evident that "Georgian Airways" is willing to do anything for money, as seen from the statements made by its leadership," stated Zourabichvili.

In response to the boycott an-

nounced by the President of Georgia, "Georgian Airways" has declared President Salome Zourabichvili as persona non grata and has prohibited her from utilizing their services.

Elene Khoshtaria, Leader of Droa Party, Released from Detention Center and Declines Court Attendance

Elene Khoshtaria, the leader of the "Droa" party, has been released from the pre-trial detention center after being arrested in Kakheti under an administrative procedure. She has stated that she will not be attending court.

Elene Khoshtaria stated that after witnessing the police's behavior in Kvareli, she traveled to Kakheti where she personally witnessed the chief of police physically expelling a lawyer and activists from a building. In response, she confronted the police chief physically. Khoshtaria emphasized that when the police protect Lavrov at the expense of abusing and violating the rights of their own citizens, they should expect a similar response. She justified her actions by stating that the police chief deserved it for mistreating citizens and

prioritizing Lavrov's protection. "What happened in Kvareli, how the police behaved—after that, naturally, I went to Kakheti and, directly in front of me, I believe it was the chief of

According to Khoshtaria, she has no intention of cooperating with the court.

"I do not cooperate with the court at any stage because, in my view, it is not a legitimate



police, physically expelled the lawyer and activists from the building. That's why I confronted him physically. I want to emphasize that the police, who are protecting Lavrov, are abusing their own citizens and trampling on their rights. Yes, they will receive a similar response. Yes, I confronted the police chief, who deserved it because he mistreated citizens and protected Lavrov," said Khoshtaria.

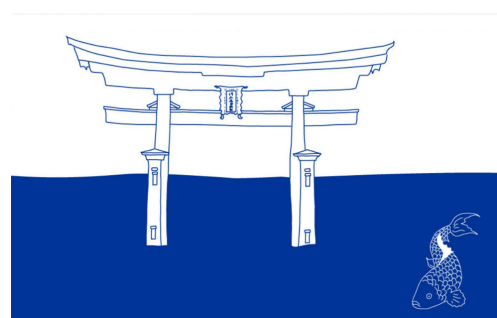
court but rather a sanctioned 'clan' group. I do not mean to offend anyone individually, but as a system, it operates like a slave system. Therefore, I will not attend, pay the fine, or cooperate in any way," said Khoshtaria.

All 17 individuals, including Lasha Parulava, a member of the political council of the United National Movement, and Giorgi Lomidze, who were arrested during the protests near Kvareli Lake Resort Hotel, have been released.

G7 Summit in Hiroshima to reject military aggressions, use of nuclear weapons, and violation of international law

Russian aggression against Ukraine will be one of the main topics of the G7 summit to be held from 19-21 May in Hiroshima, Japan.

The leaders will also discuss nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, economic sustainability and security, climate, energy and environment, food, health and development. The EU will be represented by



the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, and the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen. The G7 summit is a forum that plays an important role in shaping global responses to global challenges, complementing

the global economic coordination carried out by the G20. It brings together leaders from the EU and Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. Leaders have been meeting in the G7 format since 2014, following the Russian Federation's violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

According to the EU press release, at the summit in Hiroshima, Japan would like to demonstrate the G7's strong de-

termination to categorically reject military aggressions, any threats or uses of nuclear weapons, as well as attempts to overthrow the international order.

"The international community is now at a historic turning point, having experienced the COVID-19 pandemic and being faced with Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which has shaken the very foundation of the international order," said Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida.

The last G7 summit was held in Schloss Elmau, Bavaria, Germany, in June 2022.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Monday, May 22

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 26°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 15°C

Tuesday, May 23

Day Mostly Cloudy
High: 27°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 16°C

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