

## President of Georgia Emphasizes European Choice as the Sole Viable Option in European Parliament Address

By Liza Mchedlidze

During her speech in the European Parliament, President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili asserted that Georgia's European choice is not only legitimate but also the only viable option. She emphasized that Georgia's values, history, attitude, and vision for the European future align with joining the European family.

Zourabichvili highlighted that the Georgian constitution mandates all state structures to take necessary measures in support of European integration.

The President of Georgia expressed her strong commitment to seeing a free Georgia in a free Europe, which she believes is essential for Georgia's independence and its citizens. She emphasized the importance of establishing a tangible connection between Europe and Georgia.

According to Zourabichvili, she is dedicated to overcoming both internal and international challenges and facilitating Georgia's path towards European integration and firmly believes that Georgia must be granted the status of a candidate for EU membership as the only way forward.

She acknowledged the tragic history that Georgia has endured for two centuries, including Tsarist rule, Russification, Soviet totalitarianism and repression. The President expressed the unwavering solidarity of the Georgian population with the Ukrainian people, recognizing their courageous defense of not only their own territory but also the values of Europe, security, freedom, and Georgia's security and European future. Zourabichvili conveyed her deep respect and admiration for President Zelensky and the Ukrainian people.

"Madam President, Georgia has endured a tragic history spanning over 200 years, marked by the Tsarist Empire, Russification, Soviet totalitarianism, repression, and recurring Russian aggression, as we witness in Ukraine today. I



wish to reaffirm the unwavering solidarity of the Georgian people with their Ukrainian counterparts. We fully recognize that Ukraine is not only defending its own territory but also shedding blood for the sake of Europe, its security, freedom, as well as Georgia's security and European future.

I want to express my personal respect and admiration for President Zelensky and the Ukrainian people. I firmly believe that in the near future, both our nations will have representatives in this esteemed assembly, sitting side by side," stated Salome Zourabichvili.

During her speech, Salome Zourabichvili appealed for support and

recognition, urging the European Union to consider Georgia as a valued family member. She acknowledged that some progress has been made in implementing certain recommendations out of the 12, but emphasized that there is still much more to be accomplished.

The President of Georgia called upon the government to listen to the people and stay committed to their promises in the journey towards Europe. She urged for collective efforts in the coming months to ensure that the second chance is not missed, as it is an opportunity that the Georgian people will not forgive.

Salome Zourabichvili emphasized that despite the Russian war and occupation,

Georgia has remained steadfast in its commitment to its European course:

"Despite the Russian war and occupation, Georgia has never retreated or changed its European course. European integration is not just a foreign policy orientation; it is an existential way and a part of our DNA. Hundreds of thousands of citizens have emigrated to Europe, and Georgians study English, French, and study in cities like Paris and Berlin. Our pro-European position reflects the strength of European soft power. For them, Russia has become an anachronistic past, and Europe is unquestionably the future of Georgia," said President Zourabichvili.



## Shalva Papuashvili Addresses 'Unjust' Criticism from the West

By Liza Mchedlidze

Shalva Papuashvili, the Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia, took to Twitter to release a comprehensive statement addressing Irakli Gharibashvili's perspective on the motives behind Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In his statement, Papuashvili argued that Georgia faces unwarranted criticism from the Western countries and emphasized the importance of interpreting Gharibashvili's remarks accurately.

According to Papuashvili, Georgia has the right to question the inconsistent and sometimes 'hypocritical' treatment it has received from certain friends and critics. He pointed out that Georgia's independence and security have been constantly endangered, starting from the Soviet era, with Russian-incited separatism, followed

by a direct invasion 15 years ago, and ongoing challenges such as illegal borderization, the abduction of Georgian citizens, and the gradual annexation of Georgian territories.

"We have the right to question the duplicity of some of our friends' and critics' attitude because many times now, Georgia was subject to unfair, almost hypocritical treatment.

Since the Soviet times, Georgia's independence and security has been jeopardized: First by Russian-incited separatism, and then by outright Russian invasion 15 years ago, and then again, with illegal borderization, kidnapping of Georgian citizens, and creeping annexation of Georgian territories," Papuashvili wrote.

CONTINUED ON Page 2



Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.5972; Euro - 2.7733; GBP - 3.2122; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.2021; Swiss Franc - 2.8525

# Shalva Papuashvili Addresses 'Unjust' Criticism from the West

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

Papuashvili highlighted the perceived indifference of the West towards Georgia's precarious situation under foreign occupation. He pointed out that Western countries imposed an effective arms embargo on Georgia shortly after the 2008 war, followed by a 'reset' in relations with Russia.

He criticized the increase in foreign trade between the West and Moscow, which he believes subjected many Western economies to Russian energy dominance. Furthermore, Papuashvili stated that many Western countries are hesitant to label Russia's actions in the occupied Georgian territories as occupation, even to this day.

"Meanwhile, despite Georgia's precarious existence under the foreign occupation and daily experience of threats and harassment, the West remained unfazed.

Western countries imposed a de-facto arms embargo on Georgia immediately after the 2008 war and soon declared 'reset' with Russia. In subsequent years, the West increased foreign trade with Moscow to unprecedented levels, subjugating many Western economies to Russian energy diktat. Many Western countries, to this day, are afraid of calling Russian actions in the invaded Georgian territories its proper name – occupation," Papuashvili wrote.

The Chairman pointed out the shift in dynamics following the repeated Russian invasion of Ukraine. He expressed confusion over the criticism Georgia has faced for allegedly being 'pro-Russian', despite its unwavering pro-Western stance. Papuashvili emphasized that Georgia has maintained a responsible policy of strategic patience towards Russia, refraining from imposing bilateral

sanctions and not reciprocating Russia's decision to resume direct flights to Georgia. He argued that this approach aimed to lift the unjust punishment imposed on the Georgian people.

"Only now, after the repeated Russian invasion of Ukraine, the situation has changed dramatically. However, even though Georgian policy was and remains steadfastly pro-Western, Georgia is now, inexplicably, criticized for being 'pro-Russian'! All Georgia did was to continue its responsible policy of strategic patience towards Russia, scrupulously practiced for many years now. This policy implies not imposing bilateral sanctions on Russia and not sanctioning Russia back for the latter's decision to resume direct flights to Georgia, thus lifting the unfair punishment against our people." Shalva Papuashvili wrote.

According to Papuashvili, Georgians have negative perceptions towards the inconsistent and unfounded criticism by Western partners. He highlighted several points of concern.

Firstly, he noted that the aggression against Georgia during the war was just as brutal and devastating as the Russian invasion of Ukraine. However, it received

little Western backlash at the time, leading to a sense of unfair treatment.

Secondly, despite Georgia lacking security guarantees from the West, the country is often urged to act boldly. Papuashvili argued that this expectation is unrealistic, as Georgia cannot mount the same level of resistance as NATO-protected countries under Article 5.

Thirdly, Papuashvili addressed the criticism faced by Georgia for not imposing bilateral sanctions on Russia. He explained that such sanctions would disproportionately harm Georgia's economy while causing minimal damage to Russia. Moreover, he emphasized that any retaliation from Russia would be detrimental to Georgia's economy and statehood.

Lastly, Papuashvili expressed disappointment that countries that recently joined NATO and the EU, gaining geopolitical security, are now the ones voicing the most concerns about Georgia's struggles. He highlighted the lack of reciprocal steps from the West despite Georgia's continuous efforts to join NATO and the EU. Papuashvili mentioned that Georgia was even denied candidate status last year, despite being a clear frontrunner among the Associated Trio.

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

### Mayor Kakha Kaladze Defends Prime Minister's Speech at Global Security Forum



Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze, General Secretary of 'Georgian Dream', told reporters that there is no statement from the Prime Minister indicating Georgia's abandonment of NATO or its European future.

He highlighted that Irakli Gharibashvili's speech at the Global Security Forum in Bratislava, along with his responses to questions, were focused on safeguarding national interests.

"I want to emphasize that all the statements and answers given by our Prime Minister, Irakli Gharibashvili, on various international platforms were fully aligned with the national interests of our country and its

people. Every sentence and word he spoke regarding Georgia holds great importance and is well-received. The sensationalism and deliberate speculation that we witnessed yesterday are disgraceful and shameful. Irakli Gharibashvili did not utter anything that has not been stated by our Western partners before. The circumstances were always acknowledged and addressed in their statements. Therefore, there is nothing new or groundbreaking in this regard.

You are lying, you cannot present any statement by the Prime Minister with similar content anywhere, suggesting that Georgia rejects NATO or its European future," stated Kaladze.

### Lelo Party Leader Davit Usupashvili Comments on President Zourabichvili's Speech as Progress in EU Integration



Davit Usupashvili, the leader of the Lelo Party, commented on President

Zourabichvili's speech in Brussels, stating that it was a step forward on the country's European integration path. However, he expressed dissatisfaction with the statements made by the Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili in Bratislava, as according to Usupashvili, they did not align with Georgia's European aspirations.

According to Usupashvili, the President aimed to present Georgia as it truly is, a country with a European choice and a population that shares European values. He questioned whether the President's speech would be sufficient to compensate for the government's past failures and inadequacies, such as disregarding the Charles Michel agreement and taking actions that posed a significant threat to Georgia's European future.

Usupashvili speculated that if Georgia had adhered to the Michel agreement and stayed within its framework, the country could have attained the same status as the previous year. While he acknowledged that the President touched upon the right topics, he noted that opinions may vary and that the context should be considered. He also mentioned that the President's tone was less critical of the government compared to a week ago. Usupashvili concluded that the Brussels platform was not the appropriate venue for an extensive analysis of internal political processes.

"The President's speech in Brussels was a step forward on

the country's path towards European integration, which I cannot say about the statements made by the Prime Minister in other European capitals.

The President aimed to present Georgia to Europeans as it truly is – a country with a European choice and its people sharing European values. Will this speech be sufficient to compensate for the government's shortcomings and mistakes, starting from rejecting the Charles Michel agreement and continuing with actions that have posed significant challenges to the country's European future? If we had adhered to the

Michel agreement last year and followed the agreed processes, we would have maintained the same status as the previous year.

Zourabichvili addressed the right topics, but opinions vary, and we must consider the context in which these statements were made. I believe the President could not have been more specific than that. It's worth noting that just a week ago, the President expressed much stronger criticism of the government. The Brussels platform was not the appropriate venue for the President to delve into the internal political processes in greater detail," Usupashvili said.

## Weather

### Thursday, June 1

Day Partly Cloudy  
High: 28°C

Night Mostly Cloudy  
Low: 16°C

### Friday, June 2

Day Partly Cloudy  
High: 27°C

Night Light Rain  
Low: 17°C

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

ROYAL DISTRICT THEATRE  
MAKA MAKHARADZE'S BALLET STUDIO AND ETERI ANDJAPARIDZE'S "PIANOTHEATRE"  
present

Sergei Prokofiev

## PETER AND THE WOLF

(Musical Fairy Tale)

Samuel Barber

## SOUVENIRS

(The Plaza Hotel Divertissement)

Cast:  
Eteri Andjaparidze & Datuna Aladashvili  
Piano Duo

„Vera District Dance Class“ Students  
Actors: Maka Makharadze,  
Nata Murvanidze, Tamar Makashvili,  
Nika Tetradze

Choreographer: Gvantsa Gavasheli  
Costume designer: Anka Kalatozishvili  
Manager: Nino Metreveli  
Project Director: Maka Makharadze

Performances are dedicated:

<b>Thursday, 1 June</b> To International Children's Protection Day	<b>Friday, 2 June</b> to Lexo Toradze	<b>Saturday, 3 June</b> to Temur Chkheidze
--	--	---

20:00

Royal District Theatre,  
10 Gia Abesadze Street, Tbilisi

Tickets: <https://biletebi.ge/maka-makharadze-ballet-studio/Schedule>

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.