

President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili Criticizes Amendments to Citizenship Law

By Liza Mchedlidze

President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili criticized the amendments to the 'Law on Citizenship' and stated that the presented modifications do not genuinely ease the process of acquiring citizenship.

Speaking at the Orbeliani Palace on November 21, she highlighted the key request for simplified exams, particularly advocating for a less difficult Georgian language test, especially for young Georgians living abroad.

"The fee should be zero because we are restoring citizenship to these individuals, and all this was not taken into account. The only significant change is that you can now take the exams as many times as needed and pay the fee at any time. This is the main change," said Salome Zourabichvili.

The president also emphasized that Georgian citizenship should be automatically granted to individuals born in the occupied territories.

"If we had a bit of strategy and



a vision for our future relationship with the occupied territories, we should have announced the automatic restoration of citizenship to all those born on the territory of Georgia, without considering any procedures. This was a request that I believe, the state should have fulfilled," said Zourabichvili.

Salome Zourabichvili called on political parties to submit a relevant legislative initiative to the parliament, which will simplify the procedures for obtaining Georgian citizenship. Despite the criticism, the president signed the mentioned legislative changes.

Parliament adopted the amendment to the Law 'On Georgian Citizenship' on November 1st. The changes aim to improve and simplify the citizenship procedure.

According to the amendment, non-Georgian individuals who have been residing in the country for 5 years or more will now have the opportunity to obtain Georgian citizenship if they meet other conditions. Previously, it was required to live in Georgia for 10 years to qualify for citizenship.

European Parliament Issues Resolution Condemning the Murder of Tamaz Ginturi by Russian Occupation Forces

By Liza Mchedlidze

On November 22, a debate took place in the European Parliament concerning the resolution initiated by a group of deputies. This resolution addresses the killing of Tamaz Ginturi by Russian occupation forces in Gori Municipality.

European parliamentarian Anna Fotyga called for a debate in the European Parliament and

urged the adoption of a resolution regarding the murder of Ginturi.

The draft resolution is titled "Motion for a European Parliament resolution on the killing of Tamaz Ginturi, a Georgian citizen, by Russia's occupying forces in Georgia."

The resolution condemns the use of force by Russian occupation forces against Georgian citizens and emphasizes that these acts are direct consequences of

the Russian occupation. It underscores the need for continued support for Georgia's sovereignty, a peaceful resolution to the conflict, and compliance with international obligations by the Russian Federation, calling on the EU to remain committed to these goals.

"The European Parliament, having regard to its previous resolutions on Georgia, having regard to Rules

144(5) and 132(4) of its Rules of Procedure,

whereas on November 6, 2023, Georgian citizen Tamaz Ginturi was killed by Russian occupation forces near the occupation line in the village of Kirbali in Gori Municipality; whereas Levan Dotiashvili was abducted in the same incident;

whereas the Russian Federation continues to illegally occupy the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia, violating Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as the EU-brokered ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008;

whereas there is ongoing ethnic discrimination and other serious violations of the human rights of Georgians in the Russian-occupied territories of Georgia, the erection of barbed wire fences and other artificial barriers, long-term closure of the so-called border crossings on the occupation line, illegal detentions, kidnappings and murders of Georgian citizens by Russian occupation forces;

Extends condolences to the family of Tamaz Ginturi; strongly condemns the use of force by Russian occupation forces against Georgian citizens;

Stresses that the killing of Tamaz Ginturi as well as previous brutal murders of Georgian IDPs Archil Tatumashvili, Giga Otkhordia and Davit Basharuli, as well as the death

of Irakli Kvaratskhelia in the Russian military base in the occupied Abkhazia region, is a direct consequence of Russian occupation of Georgian territory;

Strongly condemns the illegal occupation of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia by the Russian Federation, which is a blatant violation of international law as well as the further illegal "borderization" of these regions; strongly condemns the discrimination against Georgian ethnic groups in the occupied territories, the violation of their right to access education in their native language, illegal detentions, kidnappings and restrictions freedom of movement that takes place along the administrative border;

Expresses its continued support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within the internationally recognized borders; calls for continued efforts towards a negotiated peaceful solution to the conflict and an end to the Russian occupation of Georgian territory;

Recalls that the EU remains committed to a peaceful conclusion of the Russian occupation of Georgian territory conflict and utilises using all available instruments, including the Special Representative for the South Caucasus region and the crisis in Georgia, the international Geneva talks, the incident prevention and

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.7122; Euro - 2.9558; GBP - 3.3965; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.0721; Swiss Franc - 3.0678

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

Georgia's Historic Moment: EU Candidate Status Sparks Political Divisions and High Expectations

November 8, 2023, became a day of historical significance for Georgia. The Georgian society and the polarized Georgian political spectrum agree on this. The European Commission has given a positive recommendation to grant Georgia the status of a candidate for EU membership. The European Council should take the final decision in this regard on December 15.

Regarding the receiving of the candidate status, there were positive expectations in the government and the opposition, at least they made such statements. The argumentation of such expectation was different. Government officials claimed that they had fulfilled all the requirements of the European Union, despite the fact that the European Union considered only 3 of the 12 recommendations as fulfilled. The opposition pointed out that the government had not implemented the recommendations, but they still expected the candidate status in the hope that the EU would "take into account the geopolitical situation."

The day before the decision of the European Commission was announced, on November 7, OC Media published the results of the research conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRRC) on October 4-8. It turned out that ordinary citizens were more skeptical than politicians. Only 33% believed that the country would be granted EU candidate status,

45% of the population was skeptical, and the rest were unsure about such a decision.

Party differences were also found. Opposition supporters strongly support EU integration (83% fully and 9% partially), but their expectations of candidate status were moderate, with only 24% believing Georgia would receive candidate status. Support for integration among Georgian Dream voters is low (54% fully support, 31% partially), but 47% were optimistic about receiving candidate status.

On November 8, the waiting phase was left behind. A new reality has arrived. As expected, the government team declared the positive recommendation of the European Commission to be entirely the merit of the Georgian Dream. The head of the government spoke at length about the steps taken by the government to implement the recommendations and also noted that "external and internal destructive forces" used all levers to prevent Georgia from receiving a positive recommendation.

The opposition representatives, in response to such statements of the government representatives, point out that the Georgian Dream, on the contrary, was doing everything to block the acceptance of candidate status, direct criticism and ac-

cusations of the West were accompanied by steps that distanced Georgia from the West. After receiving the candidate status, the opponents of the government demanded the Georgian Dream to fulfill the obligations imposed by the European Commission. Still, at the same time, they noted that under the conditions of the "Ivanishvili political clan" Georgia should fulfill these requirements and become a full member of the European Union.

On December 15, when the session of the European Council will be held, for Georgia to receive the status of a candidate, the leaders of all 27 EU states must be unanimous.

This will depend on the fulfillment of obligations assumed by Georgia. A little less than a month remains until December 15, and the Georgian authorities have received 9 reservations and an additional 119 technical requests.

The European Commission repeated the previously issued unfulfilled recommendations and added new requirements. First of all, the Georgian Dream must ensure the end of the disinformation campaign against the European Union, and continue with critically important reforms, Georgia's foreign policy on the security issue must be in line with the policy

of the European Union, and in the fall of 2024, the parliamentary elections in Georgia must be held fairly, without violations.

The European Commission made a geopolitical decision by granting Georgia candidate status. With this decision, Georgia was recognized as a part of Europe. The European Union is not going to give up Georgia. In the three decades since the restoration of independence, the European Union has done a lot to ensure the formation of the Georgian state and democratic development. Not only Georgia needs the European Union, but the European Union also needs Georgia. Recently, the citizens of Georgia have repeatedly confirmed their European choice with mass actions.

Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova applied for EU membership in March 2022. In June, Ukraine and Moldova received the candidate status, while Georgia received only the European perspective, and in order to obtain the candidate status, the country was instructed to fulfill 12 recommendations. On November 8, Ukraine and Moldova received the right to start negotiations on joining the European Union, and Georgia received the status of a candidate. Georgia remains in the "associate top three", neither not as a leader,

nor as an outsider.

Will the Georgian Dream fulfill the numerous reservations and technical requirements issued with the candidate status? The opposition considers this to be suspicious because the Georgian Dream will face the inevitable prospect of losing the government. In addition, the representatives of the current government claim that they have actually done everything.

According to the opinion of the opposition representatives, the government should change in the parliamentary elections of 2024, and only then will it be possible to fulfill the demands of the European Commission. Less than a year is left before these elections.

It is symbolic that November 8 is the birthday of Iliia Chavchavadze, the ideologist of modern Georgia, who strived to strengthen Georgia's European compass. Before the decision of the European Commission, the Russian forces killed another citizen of Georgia, who entered the church of his village, which was closed down by the occupation forces. Until December 15, new provocations from Russia and its agency are expected, because the advancement of Georgia on the European road means the defeat of imperial Russia.

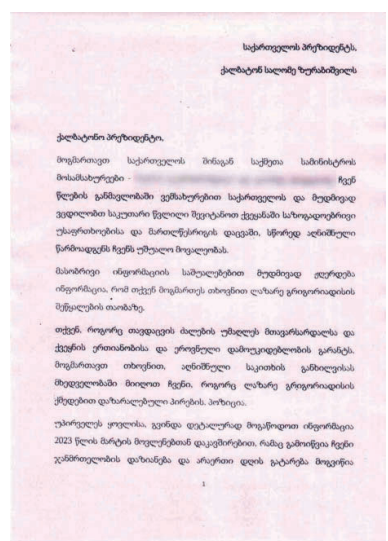
The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Police Officers Appeal to President Zourabichvili to Refrain from Pardoning Lazare Grigoriadis

Police Officers Appeal to President Zourabichvili, Urging Refrain from Pardoning Lazare Grigoriadis

According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, police officers affected by the March 7-8 protests have, with the support of the Ministry's legal department, appealed to President Salome Zourabichvili, urging her to refrain from pardoning Lazare Grigoriadis.



"The authors of the appeal are those law enforcement officers who, during the actions of March 7-8, 2023, while performing official duties, sustained various

serious bodily injuries, including arson," the agency stated.

The affected policemen believe that the president pardoning the individual who attacked them will create a perception in society that assaults on law enforcement officers will go unpunished.

They argue that this would not merely be an ordinary amnesty for someone who committed such a crime but rather a message to the public that state policy is tolerant towards acts of assault on the police, violence, and crimes against families.

According to the policemen, the mentioned action could raise doubts about the effectiveness of efforts made by state institutions in combating such types of crimes.

Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze Meets with US Ambassador to Georgia, Robin Dunnigan



Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze held a meeting with the United States Ambassador to Georgia, Robin Dunnigan. During the introductory session, the capital's mayor extended his best wishes for success to the new U.S. ambassador in her position and expressed optimism for the contin-

ued deepening of the longstanding strategic partnership and friendly relations between the two nations.

In return, Ambassador Dunnigan congratulated Mayor Kaladze on the positive recommendation from the European Commission regarding Georgia's status as a candidate country for EU membership. The meeting also delved into the significance of conducting next year's elections in a fair and democratic environment.

The Mayor of Tbilisi expressed gratitude to the Ambassador of the United States of America for the assistance and support extended by the country to Georgia.

At the conclusion of the meeting, both parties expressed their complete readiness to work diligently towards further enhancing the relationship between the two countries.

Weather

Thursday, November 23

Day Partly Cloudy High: 13°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 6°C

Friday, November 24

Day Mostly Cloudy High: 10°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 4°C

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response mechanisms, the EU monitoring mission in Georgia, as well as policies of non-recognition

and engagement;

Calls on the Russian Federation to fulfill its international obligations arising from the EU-brokered ceasefire agree-

ment of 12 August 2008, in particular, the commitment to withdraw all military and security forces to pre-conflict positions and to allow the European Union

Monitoring Mission to have unrestricted access to the entire territory of Georgia, in accordance with its mandate;

Instructs its President to forward this resolution to relevant authorities in Georgia, Russia and EU institutions." the resolution reads.

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