

MEPs Express Deep Concern Over Draft Law on 'Transparency of Foreign Influence'

By Liza Mchedlidze

MEPs David McAllister, Sven Mikser, and Marina Kaljurand issued a joint statement expressing deep concern over the reintroduction of the draft law on "Transparency of Foreign Influence" by the ruling party in Georgia, which they see as an attack on independent media and civil society organizations. According to MEPs, this law contradicts EU values and democratic principles, potentially jeopardizing Georgia's ambitions for EU membership and Euro-Atlantic integration.

The members of the European parliament urged the government and parliament to consider the aspirations of Georgian people and collaborate with both national and international partners to support civil society organizations.

They also expressed alarm over reports of riot police using force to disperse protesters opposing the law, emphasizing the importance of the right to peaceful protest—a right crucial for a country aspiring to EU membership. They called on Georgian leaders to protect freedoms of expression and assembly and to prevent any escalation of violence.

MEPs reaffirmed their support for the Georgian people's European aspirations and reminded the Georgian leadership that they must still implement

European Parliament

2019-2024



Joint statement by

- the Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, MEP David McAllister,
- the Chair of the Delegation for relations with the South Caucasus, MEP Marina Kaljurand, and
- the European Parliament's Standing Rapporteur on Georgia, MEP Sven Mikser

on the reintroduction of the draft law on "Transparency of Foreign Influence" in Georgia

We are deeply concerned by the re-introduction of the draft law on "Transparency of Foreign Influence" by the ruling party in Georgia. This law, which passed its first reading in the Parliament yesterday, is an attack on independent media and civil society organisations. It is incompatible with EU values and democratic principles. It runs against Georgia's ambitions for EU membership and jeopardises the country's Euro-Atlantic integration. We call on the Georgian Government and Parliament not to disappoint the aspirations of the majority of Georgian people and to engage with the national and international partners on ensuring an enabling working environment for civil society organisations.

We are worried about the reports of riot police using force to disperse protesters demonstrating against the controversial draft law. The right to peaceful protests is a fundamental right and needs to be rigorously respected, especially in a country aspiring for the EU membership. Any indiscriminate use of force against peaceful protesters cannot be justified. We call on the Georgian leadership to ensure the protection of freedoms of expression and assembly and to avoid any escalation of violence.

We reiterate our unwavering support to Georgian people's legitimate European aspirations and remind that the relevant steps, as identified by the European Commission, still need to be implemented.

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Influence' by the ruling party in Georgia. This law, which passed its first reading in the Parliament yesterday, is an attack on independent media and civil society organisations. It is incompatible with EU values and democratic principles. It runs against Georgia's ambitions for EU membership and jeopardises the country's Euro-Atlantic integration. We call on the Georgian Government and Parliament not to disappoint the aspirations of the majority of Georgian people and to engage with the national and international partners on ensuring an enabling working environment for civil society organisations.

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We reiterate our unwavering support to Georgian people's legitimate European aspirations and remind that the relevant steps, as identified by the European Commission, still need to be implemented," the statement reads.

Amnesty International Condemns Police Actions During Protests in Tbilisi

By Liza Mchedlidze

The human rights group Amnesty International has strongly criticized the police response to the ongoing protests in Georgia against the proposed 'Foreign Agents' law. The organisation

described the police intervention during a peaceful demonstration in Tbilisi as a "brutal retribution against people for exercising their right to protest peacefully."

According to their statement, the authorities are behaving as though it is their prerogative to

decide the appropriateness of public demonstrations, using riot police to disperse crowds and arbitrarily arrest protesters with undue force. Reports indicate that police chased, surrounded, and severely beat fleeing protesters, raising serious

human rights concerns.

Amnesty International has called for a swift, impartial, and thorough investigation into the use of force by police, insisting on accountability for any unlawful actions. The organization has also reiterated the importance of the right to peaceful assembly, urging the Georgian government to adhere to international human rights obligations.

Furthermore, Amnesty International has renewed its call for the Georgian authorities to abandon the controversial bill "On transparency of foreign influence." The organisation wrote that the bill aims to undermine the freedom of association and unduly restricts and discredits independent civil society organizations and their operations.

"What we witnessed in Tbilisi yesterday was a brutal retribution against people for exercising their right to protest peacefully. The authorities act as if it

is their prerogative to decide when people can or cannot protest and deploy riot police to disperse and arbitrarily arrest the protestors using violence. On several occasions, police were seen chasing and hitting fleeing protesters with truncheons, surrounding and beating them mercilessly while on the ground."

"Instead of facilitating a peaceful demonstration, the police have carried out what appears to be a punishment operation. We urge a swift, impartial and thorough investigation into all instances of force used, and accountability for those found responsible of unlawful use of force. We also remind the Georgian authorities that the right to peaceful assembly is fundamental, and the government of Georgia must comply with the country's international human rights obligations.

"Amnesty International also reiterates its call to drop the bill "On transparency of foreign influence," which seeks to restrict the right to freedom of association and is clearly intended to smear and restrict independent civil society organisations and curb their activities," the statement reads.



Photo: Mirian Meladze/Anadolu via Getty Images

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

President Salome Zourabichvili Vetoes Law Eliminating Gender Quotas



სალომე ზურაბიშვილი / Salome Zourabichvili 175K followers + 3 following

The President of Georgia vetoed the laws passed by Parliament that aimed to eliminate gender quotas.

President Salome Zourabichvili stated that she will veto any laws that contradict Georgia's European path.

"As the President of Georgia has repeatedly stated, she will veto all laws that contradict Georgia's European path. The abolition of gender quotas is another step backwards on Georgia's path to European integration because the issue of gender quotas was part of the ninth point of the

12-point plan established by the European Commission, which the Commission considered to be fulfilled," the President's Administration wrote.

The Georgian Parliament has started discussions on the President's veto.

Opposition MPs Demand Accountability for Violence Against Politicians

Parliamentary opposition MPs are demanding accountability for the violence against politicians. According to Salome Samadashvili, in addition to Aleko Elisashvili, the police assaulted Lelo member Irakli Kupradze.

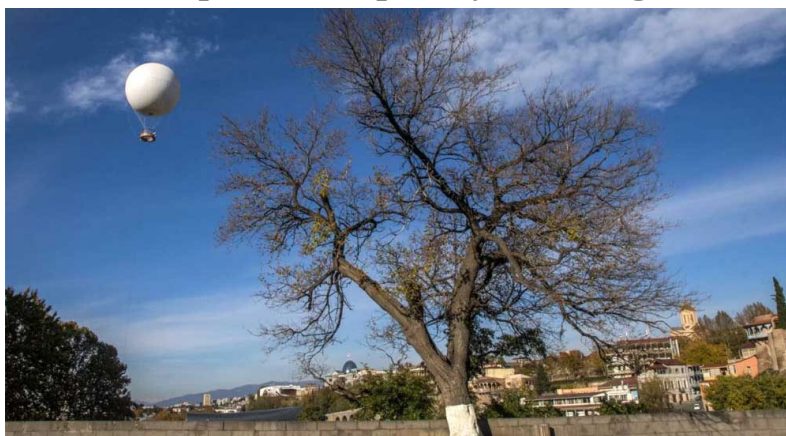
Kupradze was arrested at the rally held on April 16 and has not been released yet.

"The Russian government has already normalised political violence. In Russia, opposition politicians are not only beaten but also killed. If Bidzina Ivanishvili thinks he can follow the same path and intimidate someone, he is gravely mistaken. We all remember the attack on

Mr. Tariel Nakaidze, general secretary of Lelo, who was beaten... No one is afraid of any violence, and we demand a response to all cases, including the shameful attack against Aleko Elisashvili," said Samadashvili.



EU, UN and Austria launch new project to improve air quality in Georgia



The European Union and three UN agencies, together with the Environment Agency Austria (UBA), have launched a new project to improve air quality and to safeguard public health across Georgia.

The United Nations are represented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Health Or-

ganization (WHO), and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

The project's goals include strengthening the air quality surveillance network and enhancing air quality monitoring, modelling, and forecasting capacities.

The project will also assist Georgia in establishing a national reference laboratory and implementing efficient strategies to regulate industrial emissions in alignment with international practice.

With a total budget of Euro 4 million, the project will run until 31 December 2027.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Special European Council says Ukraine urgently needs air defence systems and other military assistance

On the first day of the Special European Council, taking place in Brussels on 17 and 18 April, EU leaders underlined the need to urgently provide air defence to Ukraine and speed up and intensify the delivery of all the necessary military assistance. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has joined the Council through video conference.

Recalling its conclusions of March 2024, the European Council reiterated its full unwavering support to Ukraine, its people and its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders.

The European Council also strongly condemned Russia's continued air and missile attacks against Ukraine's civilians and civilian and critical infrastructure, including the recent intensified targeting of the energy sector.

The Council said in its conclusions that the EU and its

Member States would intensify the provision of humanitarian and civil protection assistance, including equipment such as power generators and power transformers.

EU leaders also underlined the need to urgently provide air defence to Ukraine and to speed up and intensify the delivery of all the necessary military assistance, including artillery ammunition and missiles. They called

on the Council of the European Union, notably at its upcoming meeting, and on Member States to ensure the necessary follow-up.

EU leaders also welcomed progress on the proposals to direct extraordinary revenues from Russia's frozen assets to benefit Ukraine, and called for their swift adoption.

(euneighbourseast.eu)



Weather

Friday, April 19

Day Clear High: 29°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 15°C

Saturday, April 20

Day Partly Cloudy High: 27°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 14°C

published by The Messenger

43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi, 0108, Georgia

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