

EU Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi Responds to Prime Minister Kobakhidze's Accusation of Threats

By Liza Mchedlidze

European Commission - Statement



EU Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi responded to PM Kobakhidze, clarifying that his remarks regarding Slovakian PM Robert Fico were taken out of context. This came after the Georgian Dream leader claimed that the EU Commissioner threatened him, citing parallels to the recent assassination attempt on Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico.

The Prime Minister of Georgia stated that high-ranking "foreign politicians do not hesitate to engage in open blackmail".

"Even against the backdrop of long-term blackmail, the threat voiced during a telephone conversation with one of the European Commissioners was surprising. Specifically, during a conversation with me, the European Commissioner listed a number of measures that Western politicians can take after overcoming the veto on the transparency law. While listing these measures, he said, "You saw what happened to Fico, so you should be very careful," the Prime Minister said.

Kobakhidze wrote, "When the Prime Minister of Slovakia, who suffered a terrorist attack a few days ago and is still undergoing treatment, is mentioned in the context of blackmail related to the Transparency Law, it is extremely disturbing to us."

The Prime Minister mentioned the "Global War Party" once again, without specifying whom or what he was referring to, and alleged that they are responsible for the assassination attempt on the Slovak Prime Minister.

"I would like to emphasize that, according to preliminary information, traces of the special service of one of the countries, particularly closely connected with the global war party, are behind the attack on the Prime Minister," wrote Kobakhidze.

EU Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi responded to PM Kobakhidze's claims, expressing regret that a portion of their phone conversation had been taken out of context. Várhelyi clarified that, as a

Commissioner responsible for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, regular communication with government officials of portfolio countries is essential for direct political exchanges.

Várhelyi highlighted his efforts to dissuade Georgia's political leadership from adopting the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence, which he believed could jeopardize Georgia's path to EU integration. In the context of Georgia's political situation, Várhelyi emphasized

the importance of avoiding further polarization and potential unrest in Tbilisi. They referenced the recent tragic events in Slovakia as an example of where such polarization could lead.

"Being fully aware of the very strong pro-EU sentiment of the Georgian society, during my phone conversation I felt the need to call the attention of the Prime Minister on the importance not to inflame further the already fragile situation by adopting this law which could lead to fur-

ther polarization and to possible uncontrolled situations on the streets of Tbilisi. In this regard, the latest tragic event in Slovakia was made as an example and as a reference to where such a high level of polarization can lead in a society even in Europe," Várhelyi's statement reads.

The Commissioner reiterated disappointment over the misrepresentation of their phone conversation and emphasized their continued support for Georgia's European aspirations.

Statement by Commissioner Várhelyi

Brussels, 23 May 2024

With reference to the statement made by the Prime Minister of Georgia on 23 May 2024, hereby I would like to express my very sincere regret that a certain part of my phone conversation was taken out of context.

As a Commissioner responsible for Neighbourhood and Enlargement I am in regular contact with Government officials of my portfolio countries, since communication channels always have to be kept open for direct political exchanges.

In the current political situation of Georgia, I have been investing major efforts in dissuading the Georgian political leadership to adopt the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence which can undermine Georgia's EU path.

Being fully aware of the very strong pro-EU sentiment of the Georgian society, during my phone conversation I felt the need to call the attention of the Prime Minister on the importance not to enflame further the already fragile situation by adopting this law which could lead to further polarisation and to possible uncontrolled situations on the streets of Tbilisi. In this regard, the latest tragic event in Slovakia was made as an example and as a reference to where such high level of polarisation can lead in a society even in Europe.

Once again, I regret that one part of my phone call was not just fully taken out of context but was also presented to the public in a way which could give rise to a complete misinterpretation of the originally intended aim of my phone call.

I am still urging the Georgian authorities not to adopt this law.

I ask this also as a well known and so far respected friend of Georgia.

I am continuing to support Georgians working towards a European future.



The Minister of Justice Welcomes European Court's Decision on Saakashvili's Case

By Liza Mchedlidze

Minister of Justice Rati Bregadze responded to the decision of the Strasbourg Court on the case "Saakashvili v. Georgia" at a briefing. Bregadze assessed the decision of the European Court, stating, "The Georgian state has won completely".

According to the Minister of Justice, Saakashvili is serving a six-year prison sentence for the cases involving the severe beating of Valery Gelashvili and pardoning the killers of Girgvliani,

as per the verdict of the Georgian court.

"The convict disagreed with the decision of the Georgian court and argued in Strasbourg about the bias of the judge, insufficient evidence, and political persecution," Bregadze said.

Saakashvili additionally stated that he was sentenced for something which represented the discretionary right of the president, and this could not become the basis of criminal liability.

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.7268; Euro - 2.9578; GBP - 3.4704; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.0172; Swiss Franc - 2.9847

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“The European Court refused Saakashvili’s requests on all these grounds. The court fully supported the government’s legal position with the evidence provided and found that the investigation, prosecution, and conviction of Saakashvili in the cases of Girgvliani and Gelashvili are fully compliant with the standards of

the European Convention. The judge’s impartiality is not in doubt, and in both cases, there was a combination of credible, clear, and well-substantiated evidence that proves his commission of crimes,” Justice Minister said.

According to Rati Bregadze, the court proceedings were fair, and the conviction was well-founded. Additionally, the minister stated that the European Court

also supported the Georgian government’s position, asserting that the president’s right to pardon does not represent absolute discretion, and its misuse may be punishable under criminal law.

“Regarding Saakashvili’s claims of political persecution,” the Strasbourg court deemed this charge inadmissible and did not see the need to review it,” Bregadze noted.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Prosecutor General Irakli Shotadze Resigns



Prosecutor General Irakli Shotadze resigned, citing complications with his health as the reason. Shotadze published the relevant statement on the website of the General Prosecutor’s Office.

“I have had to make the most difficult decision based on the recommendations of the doctors. The treatment process will likely

last for several months, and I have been abroad for more than a week for this purpose. Therefore, considering the current situation, it is impossible for me to serve as the Prosecutor Gen-

eral. That is why I have already submitted a statement of resignation to the Parliament of Georgia,” Shotadze stated.

Saakashvili’s Lawyers to Appeal to Grand Chamber of European Court of Human Rights

Former Georgian president

Mikheil Saakashvili’s lawyers plan to appeal to the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg



within the set time frame under the European Convention. Saakashvili’s lawyer, Beka Basilaia, announced this during a press conference in response to the court’s decision, which found no violations in Saakashvili’s cases.

“Unfortunately, the court did not find our arguments sufficient and did not identify a violation. However, it should be emphasized that two judges held a different opinion, which indicates that our claim was justified and our demands were lawful, in line

with the European Convention,” said Beka Basilaia.

He firmly believes that Saakashvili is being “persecuted

with political motivation”, that his right to a fair trial was violated, and that he was convicted for an act not considered a crime by law.

Prosecutor’s Office Officially Recognizes UNM’s Levan Khabeishvili as Assault Victim

After 23 days since the physical assault, the

prosecutor’s office officially recognized Levan Khabeishvili, leader of the United National Movement, as a victim.

According to the statement from the UNM, Khabeishvili was informed by the investigator of the Special Investigation Service about the issuance of the relevant resolution.

Khabeishvili was subjected to severe beating by employees of the Department of Special Tasks of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia on May 1, 2024.



The European Union has provided Euro2.5 million to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) to support its efforts to bolster access to education and immunisation for children in the East and South of Ukraine.

The EU funding will help UNICEF to refurbish and rehabilitate shelters in educational institutions to provide safe and conducive spaces for learning. In addition, teachers and educators will undergo training, enabling them to effectively deliver catch-up learning interventions and

EU contributes Euro2.5 million to support UNICEF in education and healthcare for children in Ukraine



support the educational needs of vulnerable children.

This funding will also be channelled to improve the access of children and adults to routine vaccination in Eastern regions. UNICEF will facilitate the procurement of cold chain equipment and to upgrade storage capacities.

“The war in Ukraine has significantly restricted the access to education and health services for numer-

ous Ukrainian children,” said Claudia Amaral, Head of European Union Humanitarian Aid in Ukraine. “The European Union is fully committed to providing immediate assistance to the children of Ukraine, as they are one of the most vulnerable groups.”

Since the beginning of the full-scale war in Ukraine in February 2022, the EU has allocated over Euro53 million to support UNICEF Ukraine.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Friday, May 24

Day Showers High: 19°C

Night Light Rain Low: 13°C

Saturday, May 25

Day Showers High: 16°C

Night Light Rain Low: 13°C

published by

The Messenger

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On the occasion of 76th Independence Day of the State of Israel, the Ambassador of Israel H.E. Hadas Meitzad held a solidarity event of planting olive trees on May 21st at Rike Park.





