

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

## President Zourabichvili Vetoes Election Code Amendments

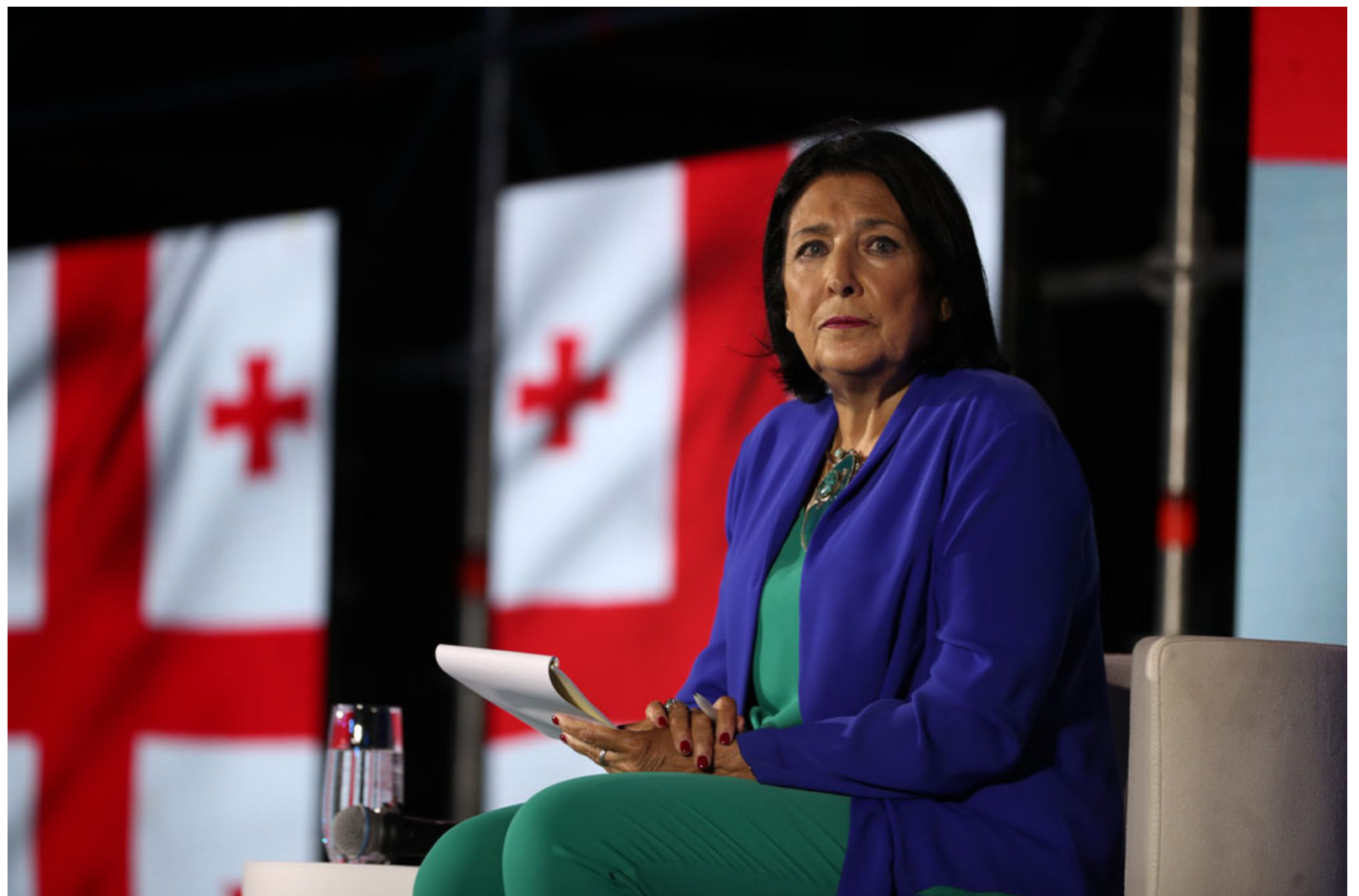
President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili, vetoed the amendments to the Election Code. She stated that the changes in the code create the possibility for the ruling party to make unilateral decisions.

"The quorum of 2/3 necessary for making decisions of the CEC is reduced to a majority of the full composition. With this change, the need for consensus between the parties to make decisions in the CEC is eliminated, giving the ruling party the opportunity to make decisions practically on a single-party basis," the president's statement said.

The President also signed a package of amendments to the "Anti-Corruption Law". However, Zourabichvili believes that these changes are superficial and fragmented, failing to meet the European Commission's requirements—one of the nine conditions for joining the European Union and opening negotiations. These requirements include further enhancing the effectiveness of the anti-corruption bureau and strengthening its institutional independence and impartiality.

According to Zourabichvili, the reform to genuinely increase the independence of the Anti-Corruption Bureau is detailed in the Georgian Charter she developed. Her proposed reform includes granting investigative powers to the bureau and having its head elected by the parliament.

"Currently, the head of the



bureau is appointed by the Prime Minister, and the bureau is empowered to carry out several measures of special administrative proceedings in relation

to election subjects, including the questioning of a natural person and questioning before a magistrate judge.

Requesting personal infor-

mation, including special categories of personal data, requires even more justification to ensure that the law is not used selectively and the bu-

reau does not become a punitive tool against parties in the hands of the government," the statement reads.

## EU Condemns Intimidation and Disinformation in Georgia

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Peter Stano, Lead Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, released a statement expressing the European Union's deep concern over the increasing reports of intimidation, threats, and physical assaults targeting civil society representatives, political leaders, civil activists, and journalists in Georgia. The EU strongly urges Georgian authorities to halt these negative developments and conduct thorough and timely investigations into documented acts of violence and intimidation.

Furthermore, the EU calls upon Georgian political actors to refrain from using divisive language that could exacerbate polarization within the country.

The EU also expresses ongoing concern about the widespread dissemination of disinformation regarding EU values and its relationship with Georgia. It calls on Georgian authorities to avoid making inaccurate statements that contradict Georgia's aspirations for EU integration, as such actions

negatively impact relations with the EU and its Member States.

Regarding recent legislative actions in Georgia, including the adoption of the law on "Transparency of Foreign Influence", the EU states that it is currently evaluating all response options to measures that undermine democracy and the rule of law.

The EU urges the Georgian government to reaffirm its commitment to the path towards the EU. The EU emphasizes its steadfast support for the Georgian people's choice in favor of democracy and their European future.

"The European Union regrets the increasing number of reported acts of intimidation, threats and physical assaults on civil society representatives, political leaders, civil activists and journalists in Georgia. The EU, once again, calls on the Georgian authorities to put an end to these negative developments and investigate the documented acts of violence and intimidation thoroughly and in a timely manner.



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EEAS > Georgia: Statement by the Spokesperson on the continued acts of intimidation, threats and assaults on civil society

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### Georgia: Statement by the Spokesperson on the continued acts of intimidation, threats and assaults on civil society

12.06.2024 EEAS Press Team

The European Union regrets the increasing number of reported acts of intimidation, threats and physical assaults on civil society representatives, political leaders, civil activists and journalists in Georgia. The EU, once again, calls on the Georgian authorities to put an end to these negative developments and investigate the documented acts of violence and intimidation thoroughly and in a timely manner. We also call upon Georgian political actors to refrain from using language which could further fuel the extreme polarisation in the country.

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.8693; Euro - 3.0991; GBP - 3.6664; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.2665; Swiss Franc - 3.2020

# EU Condemns Intimidation and Disinformation in Georgia

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We also call upon Georgian political actors to refrain from using language which could further fuel the extreme polarisation in the country.

The EU also remains deeply concerned about the widespread disinformation about the EU and its values. It calls on Georgian authorities to refrain from statements which are inaccurate and not in line

with Georgia's stated EU aspirations, and that negatively impacts Georgia's relations with the EU and its Member States.

The EU is currently considering all options for responding

to the adoption of the law on 'transparency of foreign influence' and other actions undermining democracy and the rule of law in Georgia.

We urge the government to recommit to the EU path. The

EU continues to stand with the Georgian people and their overwhelming choice in favour of democracy and of Georgia's European future," the statement reads.

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

### Public Defender Urges Dialogue and Action After Balda Village Incident

ing increasingly tense and dangerous day by day.

Thus, it is necessary for the state to take all effective steps to ease the situation and find ways out of the crisis. There

ented dialogue," the public defender said.

### President Zourabichvili Plans to Honor National Football Team in September

awarding a few days before the awards are presented. This was also the case this time: on May 23, 2024, the President of Georgia issued decrees (n:23/05/02 and n:23/05/01), awarding the nominated persons with an Order of Honor and a medal.



The public defender responded to events in Balda village, where members of a protest movement against planned construction in Balda Canyon were attacked on June 11, resulting in one resident being wounded. He urged the heads of the Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, and the Agency for Protected Areas of the State of Georgia, to organize a meeting with the public soon, using all available resources, and fostering a dialogue based on trust and results.

"The public defender is concerned about the events in the village of Balda and believes that the current situation is becoming

is no alternative to dialogue and mediation with the participants of the protest to achieve this.

Considering the crisis situation in Balda village of Martvili municipality and the special importance of the issue under discussion, the Public Defender of Georgia calls on the heads of the Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, as well as the Agency for Protected Areas of the State of Georgia to use all available resources and ensure a meeting with the interested public in the coming days, taking into account the preferred format of the meeting by the population, and promote a trust-based and result-oriented



In response to Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze's statement that President Salome Zourabichvili appears reluctant to honor members of the national football team and representatives of the national football federation, the president's administration clarified that she issued the decree to award them in May, with the ceremony scheduled for September.

"According to the existing practice, the President of Georgia issues the act of

An official awarding ceremony was planned for the end of May at the Orbeliani Palace, but it could not be held due to the absence of the national team members in Georgia," the statement reads.

The administration stated that President Salome Zourabichvili will present awards to the members of the national team and representatives of the football federation at the beginning of September in Orbeliani Palace.

### New EU-funded project for rural empowerment through digital inclusion kicks off in Georgia

The kick-off event of the new EU-funded project 'REDI: Rural Development Through Digital



Inclusion' was held on 11 June, at Tech Park Ozurgeti, Georgia.

REDI is one of the highlight projects of the Team Europe Initiative 'Balanced Territorial Growth', launched in June 2023 and implemented by Estonia (eGovernance Academy/eGA) and Poland (Solidarity Fund PL/SFPL).

The project will enhance local development and foster economic growth by bridging the digital gap between rural and urban areas in Georgia through improved connectivity infrastructure and enhanced digital literacy.

The launch event was attended by representatives of civil

society, local government, business, state agencies, youth and civic leaders of the Guria region and locals from different areas of Guria.

The presentation was followed by the Digital Fair, where participants took part in numerous activities, such as travelling to a virtual world with VR glasses, participating in a robotics workshop and drone show, taking part in quizzes about the European Union and its member states, and learning how the EU support promotes digitalisation in the regions of Georgia.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

### Weather

Friday, June 14

Day ☀️ Clear High: 32°C

Night 🌙 Clear Low: 19°C

Saturday, June 15

Day ☀️ Clear High: 31°C

Night 🌧️ Partly Cloudy Low: 20°C

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