

EU Ambassador Condemns Violence in Georgia, Warns of Consequences

By Liza Mchedlidze

EU Ambassador to Georgia H.E. Pawel Herczyński condemned the recent violence against demonstrators and journalists in Tbilisi, saying that the European Union is considering all options for consequences for the Georgian authorities. These will be discussed during the EU foreign ministers' meeting on December 16, with sanctions and suspension of visa-free travel for certain passport categories among the measures under consideration.

"We are shocked by the violence. It is absolutely unacceptable," Herczyński said, standing in solidarity with the people of Georgia who aspire to a better future and EU membership. He emphasized that the current situation calls for reflection on Georgia's long-standing relationship with the EU.

Herczyński noted that while preparatory work on sanctions has begun, the process requires unanimous approval from all 27 EU capitals, which may be challenging due to the severity of the violence. He also discussed the possibility of suspending visa-free travel for certain passport holders, stressing that the goal is to hold the authorities accountable, not to punish the people supporting EU values.

The Ambassador reminded that Georgia had placed itself under EU scrutiny by applying



for membership, committing to reforms like holding free and fair elections. He criticized recent irregularities in the elections and laws, including the controversial Foreign Agents law and anti-

LGBTQ+ legislation, stating that such laws will not bring Georgia closer to EU membership.

Herczyński further condemned the violence against peaceful protesters and journal-

ists, particularly the beating of young people for waving Georgian and EU flags. He called for investigations into these actions and the prosecution of those responsible.

"My message to the people of Georgia is 'do not lose hope'. Your voice is being heard," he said, urging authorities to take action against those responsible for the violence.

UK Announces Reduced Support for Georgian Government Over Violence Against Protesters

By Liza Mchedlidze



The United Kingdom has announced a significant reduction in its support and engagement with the Georgian government, citing concerns over violence against protesters and journalists.

UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy condemned the actions of the Georgian authorities, describing them as unacceptable. "The shocking scenes of violence towards protesters and journalists by the Georgian authorities are unacceptable and must stop," Lammy stated.

He emphasized that such actions undermine Georgia's international reputation and contradict its constitutional commitment to pursuing a European future. "These actions tarnish Georgia's international standing and fly in the face of Georgia's constitutional commitment to a European future," Lammy added.

In response to the ongoing developments, the UK has decided to:

- Suspend all program support to the Georgian government.
- Restrict defence cooperation with Georgian authorities.
- Limit engagement with representatives of the ruling Georgian Dream party until the country halts its deviation from European democratic norms and freedoms.

Despite these measures, the UK affirmed its continued support for the people of Georgia. "The UK will continue to stand by the people of Georgia in supporting their right to choose their country's future," the Foreign Secretary said.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Georgian Dream Proposes Amendments to Civil Service Law



On December 9, Mamuka Mdinardze, executive secretary of the Georgian Dream party and parliamentary majority leader, announced plans to amend the Law on Civil Service to streamline public sector reorganizations. Mdinardze described the initiative as a measure to “ensure the health of the public sector.”

“There will be an amendment to the Law of Georgia on Public Service, which will simplify the issues of reorganization in the public sector. This solution ensures the health of the public sector,” Mdinardze stated.

The announcement follows a wave of dissent from civil servants opposing Georgian Dream’s controversial decision to

halt the country’s European Union membership bid. The proposed changes have raised concerns among critics, who fear the amendments could be used to remove dissenting voices within the public sec-

tor under the guise of reorganization.

Proposed Amendments to Police Law Allow Minister to Bypass Recruitment Competition

The Georgian Parliament is reviewing proposed amendments to the Law “On Police,” granting the Minister of Internal Affairs authority to hire personnel without a competitive process and independently establish rules and conditions for such recruitment.

Currently, the law mandates that police employment is contingent upon pass-

ing a special competition. The proposed changes, however, introduce an exception, stating that while competition will remain the standard procedure, the minister can authorize appointments without it through specific regulations.

If adopted, the amendments would take effect on January 1, 2025.

posed law.

The bill, which includes amendments to the Code of Administrative Offenses, is being fast-tracked for consideration. It sets fines and penalties for violations, such as unauthorized sales, improper use, and non-compliance with licensing conditions.

Under the proposed legislation, engag-



Parliament to Discuss Tightened Controls on Pyrotechnics Use and Sale

The Georgian Parliament will discuss a bill this week introducing strict regulations on the import, export, production, and sale of pyrotechnic products. According to a press release, these activities will require a permit or license under the pro-

ing in import, export, production, or sale without a permit will result in a 5,000 GEL fine and confiscation of items, with repeat offenses incurring a 6,000 GEL fine and confiscation without compensation. Breaching licensing conditions will lead to a 2,000 GEL fine, while selling pyrotechnics to unauthorized individuals will result in a 2,000 GEL fine.

European Commission publishes recommendations on visa-free regime with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine

On 6 December, the European Commission published its seventh report under the visa suspension mechanism, which provides assessment of the EU’s visa-free regime with third countries, including EU candidates Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine.

The main purpose of the visa exemptions that the EU has granted to third countries is to facilitate travel by ensuring visa-free entry and short stays in the Schengen area for a maximum period of 90 days in any 180-day period.

Georgia

“Taking into account recent developments in Georgia, there are ongoing reflections on the possible activation of the visa suspension mechanism in relation to certain categories of persons,” the report says. “In order to continue fulfilling all visa liberalisation benchmarks and to avoid the possible activation of the suspension mechanism, Georgia needs to take further urgent action to address the Commission’s recommendations.”

The recommendations include among others:

Ensure and uphold the protection of fundamental rights of all Georgian citizens.

Avoid and repeal any legislation that may restrict fundamental rights and freedoms, go against the principle of non-dis-

crimination and contradict relevant European and international standards.

Align Georgia’s visa policy with the EU list of visa-required third countries, in particular with regard to countries presenting irregular migration or security risks to the EU.

Adopt a new anti-corruption strategy and action plan, ensuring adequate resources for their implementation and pay special attention to investigation, prosecution, and adjudication of high-level corruption cases.

Align the Law on Personal Data Protection with the EU acquis.

Ukraine

Overall, Ukraine continues to fulfil the visa liberalisation requirements and has taken action to address some of the

Commission’s previous recommendations, the report says.

However, further efforts are needed, where possible in the current context:

Align Ukraine’s visa policy with the EU list of visa-required third countries, in particular with regard to countries presenting irregular migration or security risks to the EU.

Continue strengthening efforts in the fight against organised crime, with a special focus on countering the smuggling of firearms and drugs, combatting trafficking in human beings and the financial dimension of organised crime, despite the war-related challenges.

Continue strengthening the anti-corruption framework, ensuring that anti-corruption institutions are fully independent and able to deliver a real and sig-

nificant output, also in view of long-term reconstruction efforts.

Moldova

The report says that Moldova has taken action to address the Commission’s previous recommendations.

However, further progress is needed, and the following issues need to be addressed:

Align Moldova’s visa policy with the EU list of visa-required countries, in particular with regard to countries presenting irregular migration or security risks to the EU.

Continue efforts to combat organised crime, with particular attention to tackling smuggling of firearms and drugs, combatting trafficking in human beings and the financial aspects of organised crime.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Tuesday, December 10

Day ☁ Cloudy
High: 7°C

Night ☁ Mostly Cloudy
Low: 0°C

Wednesday, December 11

Day ☁ Cloudy
High: 10°C

Night ☁ Mostly Cloudy
Low: 3°C

published by

The Messenger

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