

EU Countries Reject Georgian PM's Claims, Deny Support for Georgian Government's Actions

By Liza Mchedlidze

In a briefing at the government administration, Georgian Dream's Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze thanked Hungary, Slovakia, Italy, Spain, and Romania for allegedly opposing some members of the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) who called for sanctions against Georgian Dream officials. Kobakhidze framed these countries as defenders of the Georgian people, claiming they opposed measures that would penalize Georgian officials for their role in the country's recent political crisis.

However, Italy, Romania, and Spain have rejected Kobakhidze's statements, asserting that their positions have been misrepresented. Italy, in particular, reaffirmed its support for EU sanctions against those responsible for the violence and suppression of protests in Georgia, aligning with the proposal put forward by EU High Representative/Vice President Josep Borrell. While other member states did not approve the sanctions due to a lack of consensus, Italy made it clear that it continues to condemn the violence that has taken place in recent weeks. Italy also reiterated its stance on supporting the suspension of the diplomatic visa facilitation agreement for Georgian officials, a move approved by the FAC in response to the Georgian government's recent actions.

"The government of Georgia has presented a false narrative of our discussions," Italy's Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated. "We have been consistent in our condemnation of the violence in Georgia and continue to back sanctions to hold those responsible accountable. The sus-



pension of diplomatic visa agreements is a necessary step to demonstrate the EU's commitment to its values and the protection of the Georgian people's democratic rights."

Romania, too, rejected Kobakhidze's

portrayal of internal EU discussions, expressing disappointment over the misrepresentation of their position. The Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterated its deep concern over the Georgian government's decision to halt EU acces-

sion negotiations and its violent repression of peaceful protests. Romania emphasized the need for a unified and firm EU response to safeguard Georgia's democratic future and ensure the protection of human rights. Romania made it clear that the Georgian government's actions contradict its European integration goals and undermine democratic values.

"We are deeply disappointed by the inaccurate presentation of our position," Romania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated. "We remain committed to supporting Georgia's democratic aspirations, but the violent repression and the suspension of EU accession talks are deeply troubling. We will continue to urge the EU to act decisively in response to these developments."

Spain also rejected Kobakhidze's claims, reaffirming its grave concern about the situation in Georgia. Spain has been outspoken in its condemnation of the government's crackdown on civil rights and its role in spreading disinformation. Spain expressed strong support for the decisions made by the FAC, particularly regarding sanctions and measures to combat disinformation campaigns that undermine democracy. Spain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasized that protecting civil liberties and opposing disinformation is a matter of paramount importance for the EU.

"Spain has been clear in expressing its concerns about civil rights violations in Georgia," Spain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated. "We fully support the decisions adopted by the FAC and stand firm in opposing any actions that threaten the integrity of democratic institutions and freedoms in Georgia."

By Liza Mchedlidze

U.S. Senator Ben Cardin (D-Md.), Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has strongly condemned the Georgian Dream party for its continued violence against peaceful protestors following Saturday's controversial presidential election. The election, conducted by parliament, has faced widespread challenges from Georgian society and international observers.

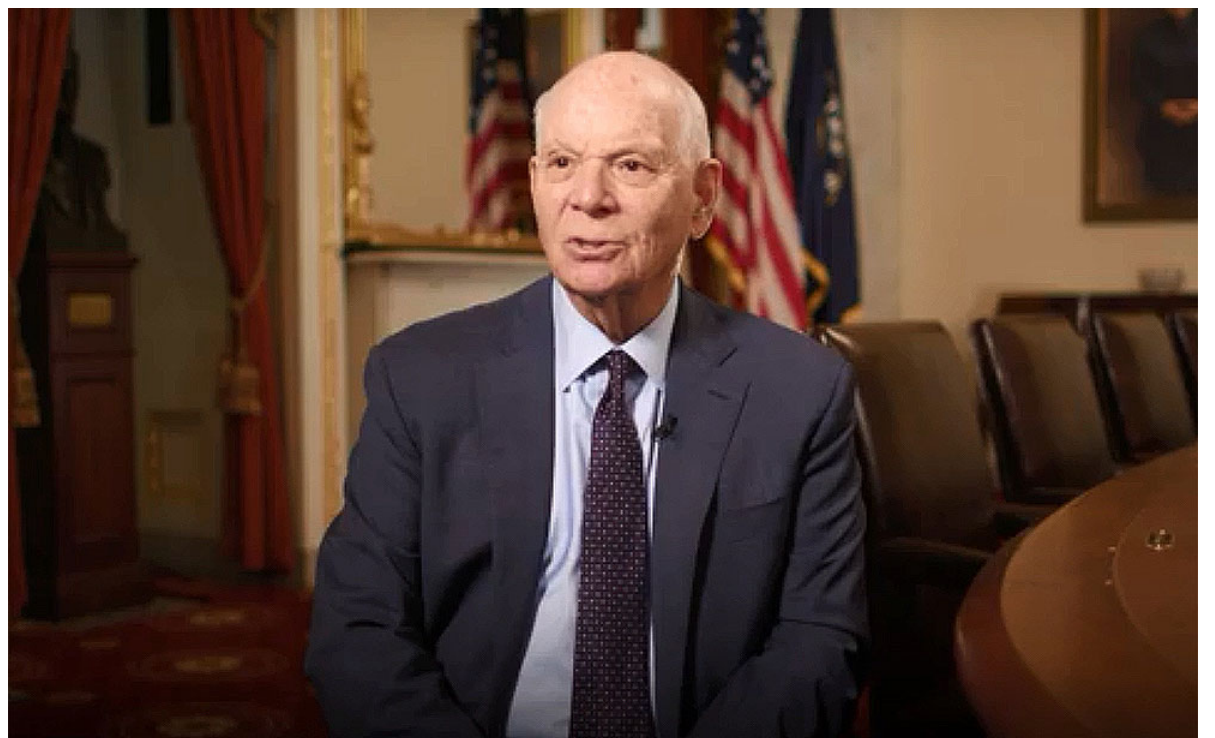
In a statement, Senator Cardin highlighted the escalation of attacks on protestors, which he described as a reflection of the ruling party's true nature. "Georgian Dream has once again revealed its true nature with the selection of notorious anti-American provocateur Mikheil Kavelashvili as its standard bearer," Cardin said. He pointed to Kavelashvili's role in Georgia's democratic backsliding, including his co-authorship of the Russian-style foreign agent law.

Cardin condemned the violent response to the protests, emphasizing reports of brutality against peaceful demonstrators. "When the Georgian people gathered in massive numbers on Saturday to protest the rise of an anti-democratic figure, security forces met them with torture and brutality. Georgian Dream must immediately end its violent assault on innocent citizens and release all detained protestors, including minors, held in their prisons," he said.

The protests come as Georgian Dream suspended the country's European Union accession talks on November 28, a move Cardin described as being at odds with Georgia's constitutional commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration.

Cardin called on President Joe Biden to hold those responsible for the violence accountable, including the use of Global Magnitsky sanctions. "Now is the moment for the United States and our allies to stand strong with the people of Georgia in their pursuit of democracy and freedom," he urged.

Chair Cardin Condemns Crackdown on Protestors After Georgian Presidential Election



Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.8117; Euro - 2.9483; GBP - 3.5686; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.7287; Swiss Franc - 3.1367

A New Wave of Repression

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

In response to mass protests that have engulfed not only Tbilisi but all of Georgia, the ruling Georgian Dream government is resorting to force. On the seventh day of protests, they launched a new wave of repression, beginning searches of political party offices and arrests of politicians and civilians. Bidzina Ivanishvili remains focused on suppressing the protests, with law enforcement agencies loyally serving him.

The protests began on November 28 after Irakli Kobakhidze announced Georgian Dream's decision to halt the EU accession process until 2028, claiming that Georgia will join the EU by 2030 "on its own terms and with dignity." This came after the EU refused to recognize the results of the October 26 elections and ruled out negotiations with Georgia regarding EU membership. Kobakhidze's statement clearly signaled a shift in Georgia's foreign policy course.

The main demand of the pro-

tests is simple: to hold new parliamentary elections in Georgia according to democratic standards. However, Georgian Dream has already activated a one-party parliament and refuses to compromise. The standoff between the opposing sides has turned into a test of endurance. Law enforcement officers, acting on orders from Georgian Dream, brutally beat protesters, shielded by masks and lacking identification numbers, making accountability impossible.

Protesters responded to police violence by participating in protests equipped with helmets and gas masks, using New Year fireworks against the police. In response, the government restricted the import of gas masks and sealed warehouses storing fireworks. Protesters are intercepted on their way to demonstrations and stripped of their gas masks.

The Constitutional Court could have theoretically de-escalated the violence and returned the situation to a legal framework by considering the case

filed by President Zurabishvili and opposition parties, which challenged the legitimacy of the October 26 elections. If the elections were declared fraudulent, new parliamentary elections would have been scheduled. However, hopes that the Constitutional Court would rule against the Georgian Dream were unrealistic. After long deliberation, the court dismissed the case on December 3, without ruling on the fairness of the elections.

On December 4, police raided several opposition party offices, seizing belongings and arresting several opposition figures, including Nika Gvaramia. Irakli Kobakhidze described the operation as preventive and threatened the opposition and NGOs, accusing them of being responsible for recent events. Kobakhidze also claimed that there was no "use of excessive force" by the police and argued that Georgian police operate under much higher standards than American and European forces.

The raid on opposition party

offices indicates that Georgian Dream intends to frame the ongoing protest wave as another attempt at a "government overthrow," supposedly orchestrated by the "Global War Party."

How should the situation in Georgia be assessed? This is no longer merely "a setback for democracy," as it is sometimes mildly described. Stronger and more critical evaluations have emerged. The current ruling power is "dragging Georgia toward a Russian-style autocracy," stated U.S. Senators Ben Cardin, Roger Wicker, and John Cornyn in a statement issued on December 3 by the U.S. Helsinki Commission. President Salome Zurabishvili described it as a "Russian puppet regime." "We are witnessing a transition to an authoritarian regime's dictatorship phase. The usurpation of power is taking place on a full-scale and comprehensive level," Nika Gvaramia declared shortly before his arrest. According to the opposition, Georgian Dream initiated a constitutional coup by rigging the October 26 elections. No legitimate institutions remain in the country except for the presidency, though Salome

Zurabishvili's term ends in late December.

Russian officials have occasionally expressed approval of Georgian Dream's actions. Russia's President Vladimir Putin personally praised the decision to halt EU negotiations, while Russian politicians have openly called for increased repression from the Georgian Dream. However, at times, they seem nervous that the Georgian Dream might lose its grip on power. Russian State Duma deputy Leonid Kalashnikov stated, "If the West intensifies unrest in Georgia, Russia is ready to help Georgians with troops against the barbarians."

A Russian provocation was suspected when rumors surfaced that the Georgian Legion fighting in Ukraine was planning to return to Georgia and join the protests. The Georgian Legion categorically denied this. This Russian provocation seemed aimed at creating a pretext for deploying Russian military forces to Georgia. President Salome Zurabishvili responded: "The only war is the one Georgian Dream has started against the Georgian people," she declared.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Opposition Leader Giorgi Vashadze Attacked During Protest Rally in Tbilisi

Giorgi Vashadze, a prominent leader of the opposition party Unity - National Movement, has reported being attacked during a protest rally on Rustaveli Avenue in Tbilisi.

According to Vashadze, the attacker was holding an object with iron spikes, which he used to strike the back of Vashadze's jacket before attempting to injure his throat. The person, yet to be identified, fled the scene, dropping the weapon as he ran away. Vashadze sustained a minor injury from the attack.

"I was standing, talking, and he attacked me. First, he hit me in the back, then he tried to strike me in the throat. I have a slight injury. It's unbelievable, I couldn't understand what he

wanted. He wanted to kill me when a person hits you in the throat with such a weapon," Vashadze told Formula TV.

The opposition leader expressed his disbelief at the attack, emphasizing that the actions of the attacker were in-

tended to cause serious harm. Vashadze also made a defiant statement, addressing Georgia's ruling figures: "I tell [Bidzina] Ivanishvili that they won't succeed, the people will definitely win."



Czechia Condemns Violence Against Georgian Protesters, Allocates Euro 230,000 in Emergency Support



Czechia has strongly condemned the recent violence against peaceful protesters in Georgia, reaffirming its solidarity with the Georgian people's pursuit of democracy and human rights. In a statement today, the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed its concern over the escalating repression in Georgia, which has seen violent crackdowns on demonstrations and civil rights abuses.

In response to the ongoing crisis, Czechia has committed Euro

230,000 in emergency funding to support Georgian civil society and independent media organizations. The funding aims to bolster efforts to uphold democratic values and ensure the free flow of informa-

tion in the face of increasing government suppression.

"We deplore the recent violence against peaceful protesters in Georgia, and we stand firmly with the Georgian people in their aspirations for democracy," said Czech Foreign Minister Jan Lipavský. "This funding will support civil society and independent media, which play a crucial role in maintaining transparency and accountability during these challenging times."

Weather

Wednesday, December 18

Day Cloudy
High: 7°C

Night Showers
Low: 4°C

Thursday, December 19

Day Mostly Cloudy
High: 8°C

Night Clear
Low: -1°C

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43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi,
0108, Georgia
Founded by Prof.

Zaza Gachechiladze
Tamar Gachechiladze
Publisher

Mob.: +995 599 565621; +995 577 760000
E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge
http://www.messenger.com.ge/

Nino Metreveli
Commercial Director

Mariam Mchedlidze
Editor-in-Chief

Khatuna Gogichaishvili
Layout Designer, Photographer

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