

Zourabichvili Urges Europe: Will You Speed up the Transition or Will You Let it Prolong Throughout Winter?

By MESSENGER STAFF

Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili delivered a speech, addressing the European Parliament, calling on Europe to intensify its support for Georgia amid rising political tensions and civic unrest.

"The only time when people in Georgia massively take to the streets is when they feel it's an existential question – and that is the case today," Zourabichvili declared.

"This is a very peaceful, massive civil disobedience movement demanding two things: 'Give me my voice back,' due to the stolen elections, and 'Give me my European future back,' by calling for new elections."

Rejecting claims of internal division, she asserted, "There are no two parts of Georgia. There are the Georgian people on one side and the repressive apparatus of one party on the other."

Zourabichvili framed Georgia's future as a critical strategic issue for Europe, highlighting the nation's historical role as a geopolitical buffer against Russian expansion.

"It's about Europe's strategic interest. Georgia is, has been, and, I'm sure, will be the Wests and Europe's foothold in the region. One that Russia is trying to take over because Russia remembers its imperial times and its generals who used to say – that who holds Tbilisi, holds the



Caucasus. And that, for Russia, hasn't changed."

The Georgian president stated in her speech that "Europe has not fully lived to the moment."

"Europe has, so far, met the challenge halfway. The last Foreign Affairs Council meeting was a first step, but much more can and should be done," she emphasized.

Zourabichvili concluded her address with a direct challenge: "The question I came here to ask is simple – will you speed up the transition, or will you let it pro-

long through the winter? Georgians will not waiver, but they expect Europe to step up so we can defend Europe and its values together," Zourabichvili said.



Kobakhidze Claims EU Allies Retracted Support Under Pressure

By LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Prime Minister of Georgian Dream, Irakli Kobakhidze, expressed gratitude to five EU countries – Hungary, Slovakia, Italy, Spain, and Romania during a December 17 press conference, claiming they supported the Georgian people at the European Union Council. The comments followed the EU foreign ministers' meeting in Brussels on December 16, where it was agreed to suspend visa-free travel for Georgian diplomatic passport holders.

However, later on December 17, Romania, Italy, and Spain publicly rejected Kobakhidze's claim of their support.

In response, Kobakhidze alleged that these countries faced external pressure to change their stance. When asked if the countries' statements were false, Kobakhidze replied, "It shouldn't be said that way," but insisted the countries had to withdraw their positions.

"We made a statement that was based on very reliable and trustworthy information, but see, this was also followed by speculation from the opposition. I

would like to once again thank all those countries that supported the Georgian people at the Council session," said Kobakhidze.

Pressed for clarification on the "reliable source" behind his claims, Kobakhidze stated:

"We had reliable and trustworthy information and based on this information we made this statement. We had information from our sources. We have the right not to specify these sources."

Kobakhidze denied lying, reiterating his belief that pressure had been applied to Romania, Italy, and Spain.

"Don't believe me, I'm telling you what the facts were... I don't want to say [they're lying], but there was actually pressure that they had to take back the position that they put on the board. You can call it a lie, I don't want to call it a lie. It's their choice, they can do it that way, but the fact is that they have expressed their anti-sanctions stance, thanks again to them. Then they had to present this decision in a different way, it was their decision. I cannot call it a lie," Kobakhidze concluded.

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.8023; Euro - 2.9416; GBP - 3.5598; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.7209; Swiss Franc - 3.1360

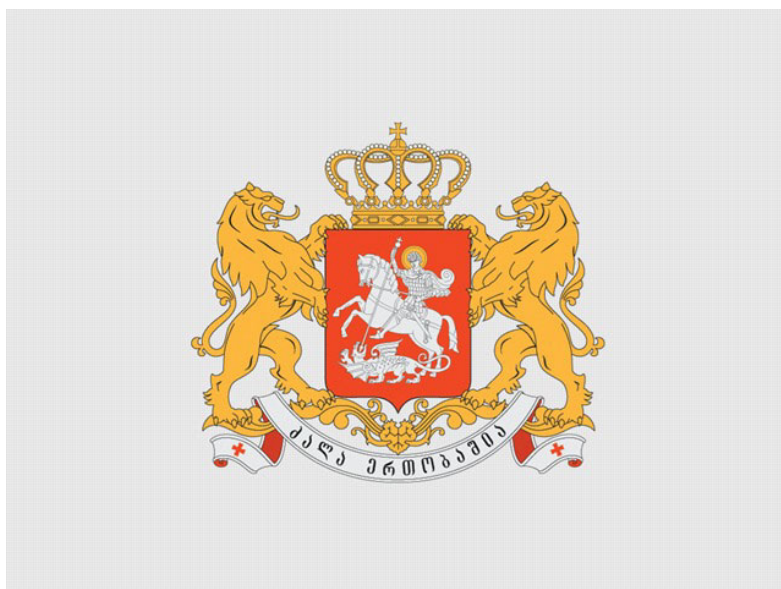
President's Administration Criticizes Public Broadcaster for Not Airing Strasbourg Speech

By Liza Mchedlidze

The administration of President Salome Zourabichvili has expressed criticism of the Georgian Public Broadcaster's first channel for not airing her speech at the European Parliament in Strasbourg live.

In a statement, the administration highlighted the importance of the President's address and questioned the broadcaster's commitment to its legal obligations under Georgian law.

"Georgian Public Broadcaster did not broadcast today's speech of the President of Georgia at the plenary session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg," the



statement said.

The administration emphasized the broadcaster's duty to promote European integration, referencing Article 16 of Georgia's Law 'On Broadcasting'. The law mandates the Public Broadcaster to serve as a balanced and objective source of information, particularly in matters of national importance.

"The public broadcaster, which, according to Article 16 of the Law of Georgia 'On Broadcasting', has the obligation to promote integration into the European Union and which claims to be a balanced and objective media, does not cover the address of the President of Geor-

gia to the European Parliament live," the statement continued.

The President's administration also contextualized the omission, pointing to the current political climate in Georgia.

"This is happening in the background of a deep political crisis and unprecedented public protests in the country, at a time when the country's European future is to be saved," the statement noted.

The statement concluded with a critique of the broadcaster's general approach to covering President Zourabichvili.

"Regarding the President of Georgia, the public broadcaster still does not inform the public fully and objectively," it stated.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Robin Wagener Visits Georgia, Urges for Sanctions Against Individuals Responsible for Escalation



Robin Wagener, the Federal Government Coordinator for Inter-Societal Cooperation with the Countries of the South Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Republic of Moldova, issued a statement following his visit to

Georgia.

The statement indicates that the German government will reconsider its cooperation with Georgia and emphasizes the need for targeted sanctions against individuals "responsible for this escalation."

The Georgian people were promised a European future. Shortly after this promise, Georgian Dream ultimately turned its back on democratic values and Europe. The use of force against peaceful protesters and the arrests of opposition members and journalists are categorically unacceptable and strongly condemned. For instance, I was informed about how masked individuals beat a journalist while he was covering a demonstration live.

For this reason, the German government will reconsider its cooperation with Georgia and has already canceled the first aid projects. Targeted sanctions are necessary against those responsible for this escalation. In this situation, decisive measures are essential.

I was deeply moved by accounts of how people from various generations took to the streets even in small settlements because they perceive a concrete threat to their future. Georgian Dream must respect the will of the majority of the population and return to the European path outlined by Georgia's constitution," stated Wagener.

The Coalition for Change has accused Georgian Dream of using the visit of Council of Europe Secretary General Alain Berset for "propaganda and disinformation", falsely suggesting European recognition of its legitimacy.

The statement claims Bidzina Ivanishvili's regime spreads false narratives against international partners and Georgia's President Salome Zurabishvili, aiming to maintain its image domestically. The coalition warns that such visits, without a clear message on new elections or

Georgia's political crisis, risk enabling the regime's propaganda.

They express hope that Berset's visit will help improve Georgia's human rights situation, particularly by securing the release of political prisoners.

Berset has met with Georgian Dream's Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze, oligarch Ivanishvili, and Georgian Dream's Speaker Shalva Papuashvili. He also plans to meet with the opposition and civil society representatives.

Wagener stated that "Georgian Dream must respect the will of the majority of the population and return to the European path outlined by Georgia's constitution."

"The desire for liberal democracy among Georgian citizens has violently clashed with the increasingly autocratic repression of the ruling party Georgian Dream. We stand with those Georgians who aspire to see their future within the European Union. During this visit, I intend to make this position clear.

Coalition for Change Warns Against Georgian Dream's Propaganda Amid Council of Europe's Visit to Georgia

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განცხადება

ახალი ბიზნისი ქომა!

Weather

Thursday, December 19

Day Mostly Cloudy High: 8°C

Night Clear Low: -1°C

Friday, December 20

Day Clear High: 7°C

Night Clear Low: -2°C

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therefore, the opinions expressed in some articles do not necessarily coincide with those of the newspaper. We take no responsibility for any claims made in advertisements.

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On the occasion of presenting the Mihály Zichy Award (named after the famous Hungarian Illustrator of the Georgian epic poem “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin”) to a Georgian contemporary artists Lia Shvelidze and Zurab Gabunia, the Ambassador of Hungary H.E. Anna Mária Sikó held the award presenting ceremony on December 17.



