

President Zourabichvili Warns of Regime Dismantling if Election Dialogue Fails

By Liza Mchedlidze

On December 23, Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili delivered a stark message to the ruling Georgian Dream party and its honorary chairman, Bidzina Ivanishvili, urging him to engage in dialogue to set a date for new elections. She warned that failure to reach an agreement by December 29 would lead to the "dismantling" of the current regime.

"The dialogue on these issues should be with me as a mediator, and with someone who participated in the elections and observed them. On the other side is [Bidzina] Ivanishvili and the representatives appointed by him. I don't know how many representatives... It's okay if he comes alone; I'll be alone then," Zourabichvili said, emphasizing that the country's crisis requires immediate resolution.

She stressed the need for compromise, saying, "Why postpone? This week, until December 29, I'm ready and I'll host. Let's meet in any format, it will be very easy."

Zourabichvili laid out her plan if dialogue didn't occur. "From the 29th, if a compromise or dialogue is not reached... the second option is, we will still reach the elections, but through the dismantling of this regime," she stated unequivocally.

She described the regime as already in decline, with more societal groups –



including businesses and professionals – joining the protests. "This regime is already collapsing, and it seems that new segments of society, new officials from different fields, and new businesses are joining the protests every day," she said.

She added that the dismantling process

would result from the government's inability to act responsibly, because they "did not come to your senses in time," Zourabichvili declared.

The president announced the creation of a council to manage the transition if no dialogue takes place. "The mandate of

this council will be only one: to prepare for new elections," she explained.

Reaffirming her role, she said, "I remain the president of Georgia and will not abandon my legitimacy or my role as a representative of this country."

Georgian Dream's Prime Minister Holds Four-Hour Meeting with Business Leaders

By Liza Mchedlidze

Georgian Dream's Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze held a four-hour meeting with prominent business leaders at the government administration to address their concerns and provide clarity on the government's policies.

GD's Economy Minister

Levan Davitashvili described the meeting as productive, stating that "all the questions that worry Georgian business have been answered." He emphasized the government's commitment to its election promises, including its "dignified and peaceful" approach toward European integration.

"We touched on the extreme polarization in society and the

challenges related to stability in our country. Of course, business and all groups of society want peace," Davitashvili said. He also announced plans for future discussions with business leaders who hold differing opinions to clarify the government's policies.

Beso Orthoidze, director of Arsi construction company,

noted that the Prime Minister's positions were consistent with Georgian Dream's public stance but with more details discussed during the meeting. He added that topics such as demands for re-elections and the release of detainees were also raised.

Gaga Margvelashvili, head of Tbilvino, echoed this sentiment, highlighting the diverse opinions expressed during the meeting. "Many businessmen did not share our spirit, but there were those who voiced critical

thoughts, including about detainees, disproportionate force, and prisoner treatment," Margvelashvili said. He supported the idea of continuing such dialogues with critical groups.

Both Arsi and Tbilvino are signatories of the Free Business petition, which demands re-elections and the release of individuals detained during recent protests. These demands were reiterated before and during the meeting.

IRI Highlights Flawed Georgia Parliamentary Elections

By Messenger Staff

The International Republican Institute (IRI) has released its final report on Georgia's October 2024 parliamentary elections, describing the process as "fundamentally flawed" due to widespread irregularities and significant challenges to electoral integrity. Held amid "historic regional instability and domestic political tension," the elections reflected both Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations and "growing public frustration over

the deterioration of fundamental freedoms."

The report cited misuse of public resources by the ruling Georgian Dream party, which allegedly conducted "a widespread campaign to collect profiling data on citizens, reportedly using government resources, in violation of voters' privacy." These actions created an uneven playing field, with the ruling party also accused of leveraging state-funded events to promote

CONTINUED ON Page 2



Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.8128; Euro - 2.9236; GBP - 3.5289; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.7919; Swiss Franc - 3.1407

IRI Highlights Flawed Georgia Parliamentary Elections



CONTINUED FROM Page 1

candidates and pressuring public servants to participate in partisan activities.

Intimidation tactics were a major concern during the campaign, particularly in rural and

ethnic-minority areas, where “widespread and systematic political intimidation and coercion” compromised citizens’ freedom of speech and assembly. On election day, measures such as the use of video cameras in polling stations and special pens under-

mined voter secrecy and further eroded confidence in the process.

The IRI also highlighted the “state capture of electoral and judicial institutions,” noting that changes to the Central Election Commission, including removing the opposition-nominated

deputy chairperson, heightened concerns about partisanship. Coupled with biased judicial decisions and inadequate responses to electoral disputes, these issues contributed to the public’s rejection of the results.

“The democratic principle of citizens accepting election results is fundamental to the stability and legitimacy of any democracy but requires trust in institutions and the electoral process,” the report emphasized. Without such trust, the elections failed to provide a credible reflec-

tion of the people’s will.

In its recommendations, the IRI called on Georgia to prioritize reforms that enhance institutional independence and foster a more inclusive political environment. “Addressing these challenges will be vital to advance Georgia’s democratic progress, its aspirations for closer integration with Europe, and ultimately, to ensure elections are a genuine reflection of peoples’ will,” the report concluded.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Lithuanian MEP Urges Action to Support Georgian Democracy



Lithuanian MEP Rasa Juknevičienė has called President Salome Zurbishvili the “only legitimately elected leader of Georgia” in a post on the social platform X, emphasizing the need for urgent international action to address the country’s democratic challenges.

“This coalition of MPs and experts from Europe and the US

is united to help Georgians reclaim their democratic voice and European path. Time to act is now! President Salome Zurbishvili is the only legitimately elected leader of Georgia. Experts have noted that there is a serious risk: the president controlled by oligarchs could impose martial law, arrest and suppress people. Urgent international action is needed before December 29 to support Georgians against the creeping dictatorship,” she wrote.

Juknevičienė outlined steps the EU should take, including rejecting the results of the October parliamentary elections, declaring the parliament illegitimate, and recognizing Zurbishvili’s legitimacy until new elections can be held. “Pushing for free, fair and credible elections, sanctioning Bidzina Ivanishvili and those who are destroying democracy; organize visits by state leaders to Georgia to push for new elections. Georgians are rising, and the regime is weak,” she added.

Germany Suspends Euro237 Million in Projects with Georgia

Peter Fischer @Diplo_Peter · 3h
- with regret - stopped projects with state worth €237 million. @SvenjaSchulze68 @BMZ_Bund reacts to leaving EU path & crackdown on protests. We stopped finance of green hydrogen, energy grid, water infrastructure Batumi. Support for civil society & rule of law stays.



Germany has suspended development projects in Georgia valued at Euro237 million, according to a statement by Peter Fischer, the German ambassador to Georgia.

In a social media post, Fischer outlined the projects affected, including green hydrogen initiatives, energy infrastructure, and water infrastructure financing in Batumi. He attributed the decision to Georgia’s departure from the EU path and harsh measures

taken against protests.

“Germany has, with regret, suspended projects worth Euro237 million with Georgia,” Fischer stated. “We stopped the financing of green hydrogen, energy grid, water infrastructure in Batumi. Support for civil society and rule of law stays.”

Latvian President Calls for Dialogue to Ensure Georgia’s European Path

President of Latvia, Edgars Rinkevics, has expressed his support for dialogue between political forces in Georgia to secure the country’s European path.

Rinkevics shared his thoughts following a phone call with Georgian President Salome Zurbishvili regarding the ongoing situation in Georgia. He emphasized the importance of resolving the current crisis through political dialogue and condemned the threats made against President Zurbishvili.

“I support the proposal to launch a dialogue between political forces to ensure the European

path of Georgia and the resolution of the current crisis. Threats expressed against the President are unacceptable,” Rinkevics stated.

Estonian Foreign Minister Calls for Accountability Following

OSCE/ODIHR Report on Georgia’s Elections

Estonian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Margus Tsahkna, has called for accountability following the release of the OSCE/ODIHR report, which confirmed serious violations during the recent elections in Georgia.

Tsahkna highlighted that the report points to significant flaws in the election process, urging Georgian authorities to address the recommendations made by the OSCE/ODIHR. He also emphasized that those responsible for human rights violations must be held accountable.

“I also emphasize that threatening statements from the Georgian authorities are not acceptable,” Tsahkna wrote on social media.

Ambassador’s Commendation Ceremony of Ms. Irine Danelia

On December 20, at the Ambassador’s official residence, Ambassador Ishizuka presented the Ambassador’s Commendation Award to the Director of the National Botanical Garden of Georgia, Ms. Irine Danelia.

Ms. Danelia, after assuming her post in 2021, has contributed to the promotion of bilateral cultural exchange between Japan and Georgia by organizing the “Cherry Blossom Festival” in the Japanese Garden at the National Botanical Garden and also providing the venue for the “Tea Cer-

emony Lecture and Demonstration” organized by the Embassy.

On this day, Ambassador Ishizuka presented Ms. Danelia with a certificate of commendation in recognition of her

achievement in promoting friendship and goodwill between Japan and Georgia through cultural exchange. Deputy Director of the Botanical Garden, Ms. Tinatin Barblishvili and Head of

Administration, Ms. Rusudan Gogisvanidze were also present at the ceremony.

The Japanese Ambassador/Consul-General stationed in each country or region confers

this award on individuals or organizations that have contributed to the promotion of mutual understanding and friendship between Japan and their respective countries or regions.



Weather

Tuesday, December 24

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 13°C

Night Clear
Low: 2°C

Wednesday, December 25

Day Clear
High: 13°C

Night Clear
Low: 0°C

published by
The Messenger

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

The Messenger welcomes your contributions. If you are interested in submitting an article or news item please contact. All contributions should be submitted by e-mail.

The Messenger Georgia’s English language daily is an independent newspaper, and,

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.

The Messenger preserves the style of a source written in English where possible.