

Michael Roth Visits Tbilisi, Backs Protests and Calls for New Elections

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Michael Roth, Chairman of the German Bundestag's Foreign Affairs Committee, began his visit to Tbilisi on January 13, where he met with Georgian opposition leaders, media representatives, and attended a protest rally on Rustaveli Avenue. A vocal supporter of new elections in Georgia, Roth expressed solidarity with the ongoing protests and endorsed Western sanctions against members of the ruling Georgian Dream party.

Roth described Georgia's political crisis as a fundamental clash between autocracy and liberal democracy, emphasizing the need for new elections to restore trust. "The only chance to overcome this situation after rigged elections and breaches of the Constitution [...] is new, free, and fair elections to regain trust and confidence," he stated.

The German politician criticized the current regime, asserting that it has derailed Georgia's European aspirations. "With this regime, I don't see any chance to bring Georgia back on the European track. That is why we need new elections for a legitimate government and parliament that speaks on behalf of the people demonstrating on the streets for freedom," Roth declared.

Praising the protesters, Roth highlighted their fight for Euro-



pean values, remarking, "They don't demonstrate for higher pensions or a better welfare state. They demonstrate for European values, and that is why I say that Tbilisi is the true capital of Europe."

He also commended individual sanctions imposed on those responsible for human rights violations, electoral fraud, and breaches of the Constitution, urging the European Union to maintain its support for the

Georgian people. Roth lauded the opposition's unity around the demand for new, free, and fair elections.

Addressing rumors of potential U.S. support for Georgian Dream founder Bidzina

Ivanishvili during Donald Trump's presidency, Roth dismissed such speculation as "unreasonable." He noted that even politicians close to Trump had endorsed sanctions against Ivanishvili.



Emergency Resolution: Political Crisis in Georgia
Tabled by UNM
13 – 14 January 2025

- Guided by the European aspiration of the people of Georgia, as enshrined in Article 78 of the Constitution of Georgia;
- Noting that the parliamentary elections of 26 October 2024 were deeply flawed, held in total violation of democratic norms and standards and did not reflect the will of the people of Georgia, rendering the new "Parliament" and "President" elected by it devoid of democratic legitimacy;
- Taking note of the strongly negative assessment of local and international observation missions, including OSCE/ODHIR as well as the spirit of 28 November 2024 resolution on Georgia of the European Parliament;
- Condemning the 28 November 2024 statement of Irakli Kobakhidze regarding the suspension of Georgia's EU integration process;
- Condemning the crackdown, illegal detention, torture, and inhuman treatment of civilians participating in continuous peaceful protests since 28 November, 2024;
- Recalling that the United States has imposed sanctions on the leader of the Georgian Dream party Bidzina Ivanishvili.

We call upon all members of the EPP to:

1. Refrain from recognizing the self-proclaimed regime of the Georgian Dream as a legitimate government of Georgia. To this end, cease invitations for all official visits and participation of Georgian Dream officials in international fora; not recognize Georgian Dream credentials in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) so as to not render legitimacy;
2. Recognise Salome Zourabishvili as the legitimate President of Georgia and the sole legitimate representative of Georgia in international relations;

EPP Adopts Emergency Resolution Condemning Democratic Backsliding in Georgia

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The European People's Party (EPP) has adopted an emergency resolution addressing the escalating political crisis in Georgia. The resolution, tabled by the United National Movement (UNM) during the EPP's 13–14 January meeting, strongly criticizes the state of democracy and human rights under the ruling Georgian Dream party.

The EPP resolution draws attention to the flawed parliamentary elections held on October 26, 2024, which it describes as being in violation of democratic norms and failing to reflect the will of the Georgian people. Consequently, the resolution states, the new parlia-

ment and president lack democratic legitimacy.

It also condemns statements made by Irakli Kobakhidze, leader of Georgian Dream, regarding the suspension of Georgia's EU integration process, describing them as a betrayal of Georgia's European aspirations. Additionally, the resolution denounces the crackdown on peaceful protesters, reports of illegal detention and torture, and the general erosion of democratic standards.

The EPP resolution outlines a series of recommendations aimed at addressing the situation in Georgia:

1. Non-Recognition of Georgian Dream: The resolution urges EPP members to refrain from recognizing the Geor-

gian Dream regime as a legitimate government. It recommends ceasing formal interactions with Georgian Dream officials and denying their credentials in international forums such as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).

2. Support for New Elections: The EPP calls for new elections under improved conditions, overseen by an impartial election administration and with robust international observation.

3. Sanctions on Officials: The resolution advocates for targeted sanctions against Georgian Dream officials, including Bidzina Ivanishvili, Irakli Kobakhidze, and others, for their roles in democratic backsliding.

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.8448; Euro - 2.9182; GBP - 3.4661; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.7683; Swiss Franc - 3.1053

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

and human rights violations.

4. Human Rights Mechanisms: The EPP recommends leveraging international mechanisms through organizations like the OSCE, Council of Europe, and UN to investigate allegations of election fraud and violence against civilians.

5. Support for Civil Society: It highlights the need to

strengthen ties with Georgia's independent media and civil society organizations to counter authoritarianism.

6. Release of Political Prisoners: The resolution demands the release of all political prisoners, including former President Mikheil Saakashvili.

7. Euro-Atlantic Aspirations: The EPP reaffirms its support for the Georgian people's aspirations toward EU and

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NATO integration, emphasizing their resilience against the "Russian regime-style" governance.

The resolution calls for continued international attention to Georgia, emphasizing that re-

storing democracy is critical to maintaining the country's European future.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Journalist Mzia Amaghlobeli Remanded in Custody Amid Controversial Charges



Mzia Amaghlobeli, the founder and director of the independent newspaper Batumelebi and online outlet Netgazeti, has been remanded in custody by Batumi City Court Judge Nino Sakhelashvili. Amaghlobeli was arrested on January 12 and faces criminal charges for allegedly assaulting a police officer.

Despite her defense team's request for a bail amount of 100,000 GEL (approximately USD 35,340), the judge denied the plea and ordered her pre-trial detention,

a decision that has drawn criticism from her supporters.

The charges, brought under Article 353 Prima of Georgia's Criminal Code, accuse Amaghlobeli of assaulting Irakli Dgebuadze, the head of the Batumi City

Division of the Adjara Police Department. If convicted, she could face a prison sentence of four to seven years. The prosecution claims the alleged assault was an act of revenge and expressed concerns about the possibility of Amaghlobeli committing a repeat offense, which they cited as grounds to deny bail.

During the hearing, Amaghlobeli made a bold statement, holding up Maria Ressa's book *How to Stand Up to a Dictator: The Fight for Our Future*. Her

gesture was seen as a critique of the Georgian Dream authorities, likening their tactics to the repressive methods discussed in the book.

The court has scheduled a hearing in her case for March 4.

Journalist Guram Murvanidze Sentenced to 8-Day Detention in Batumi



Guram Murvanidze, a journalist with Batumelebi, has been sentenced to eight days of administrative detention by Judge Irma Togonidze. The decision follows accusations that Murvanidze disobeyed a police officer under the Administrative Code, a claim disputed by his

employer.

According to Batumelebi, video footage from the incident shows Murvanidze filming during the arrest process. The footage captures Batumi Police Chief Irakli Dgebuadze approaching the journalist. Murvanidze reportedly explained to Dgebuadze that he was performing his professional duties as a media operator for Batumelebi. Despite this, police arrested him on Dgebuadze's instructions.

The publication asserts that the footage demonstrates Murvanidze did not resist the police at any point during the arrest. His lawyer has also raised concerns about the circumstances of the detention.

Georgia: EU deplures repression against peaceful protesters in Batumi and Tbilisi

The European Union's Lead Spokesperson on foreign and security policy, Anitta Hipper, said on X yesterday that the EU "deplures the repression against peaceful protesters this weekend in



Batumi and Tbilisi, including the arrests of journalists and activists".

"Those unjustly detained must be released. There must be consequences for the officials involved in these illegal actions," Anitta Hipper said.

After the Georgian government announced on 28 November its intention to suspend the country's EU accession process until 2028, a new wave of mass protests began in the country.

In response, the Georgian authorities intensified the repression of demonstrators, media and political opposition.

On 20 December, the European Commission proposed to suspend part of the EU-Georgia Agreement on the facilitation of the issuance of visas. Earlier, it de facto halted the EU accession process for Georgia.

(eunighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Wednesday, January 15

Day Cloudy
High: 8°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 4°C

Thursday, January 16

Day Cloudy
High: 11°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 4°C

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