

U.S. Senators Introduce MEGOBARI Act

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

FOREIGN
RELATIONS COMMITTEE

U.S. Senators Jim Risch (R-Idaho) and Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.), chairman and ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, have introduced the Mobilizing and Enhancing Georgia's Options for Building Accountability, Resilience, and Independence (MEGOBARI) Act. This bipartisan bill aims to support the people of Georgia as their government continues violent crackdowns on peaceful protestors and to reaffirm U.S. backing for Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

"Friends of Georgia from around the world have been shocked and dismayed by the government's descent into authoritarianism and the violent crackdown on pro-democracy protestors," said Chairman Risch. "This bill will send a strong message that the U.S. supports the Georgian people as they struggle for the right to self-determination and will give the U.S. tools to help Georgians restore fairness to their political system."

Ranking Member Shaheen echoed this sentiment, emphasizing the importance of bipartisan support. "The Georgian people have made clear their Euro-Atlantic aspirations, and the U.S. must continue to support them against Georgian Dream efforts to erode their

democratic institutions," she said. "At a time when Russia seeks to undermine democracies across the region, we cannot turn our backs on a key partner striving for a free and democratic future."

Key Provisions of the MEGOBARI Act:

- Conduct a full review of U.S.-Georgia relations, including all assistance programs.
- Recognize the Georgian people's commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration as enshrined in their constitution.
- Mandate sanctions against Georgian Dream officials

- and their enablers involved in corruption, undermining Georgia's sovereignty, or destabilizing the country.
- Strengthen U.S.-Georgia defense cooperation and people-to-people ties when Georgia realigns with its constitutional commitments.

- Reaffirm U.S. support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity amid Russia's continued illegal occupation.
- Bolster civil society organizations advocating for democratic governance and constitutional order in Georgia.

MARCH 10, 2025

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen Introduce Bill to Hold Georgian Officials Accountable After Assault on Georgian Democracy, Violence Against Protestors

WASHINGTON—U.S. Senators Jim Risch (R-Idaho) and Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.), chairman and ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, last week introduced the Mobilizing and Enhancing Georgia's Options for Building Accountability, Resilience, and Independence (MEGOBARI) Act. This bipartisan legislation supports the people of Georgia as their government continues its violent assaults on peaceful protestors and reaffirms U.S. support for Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration.

Georgian Dream Proposes Changes to Strengthen Investigative Commission

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The Georgian Dream (GD) has proposed amendments to the Parliament's procedural rules, aiming to expand the powers and functions of temporary investigative commissions. The changes are specifically designed to enhance the effectiveness of the commission established to investigate alleged wrongdoings by the previous United National Movement (UNM) government.

The new amendments would allow the commission to assign a single member to gather information from individuals who voluntarily wish to provide testimony. Under current rules, at least three members, including an opposition representative, must be involved in such questioning.

The amendment would also mandate that individuals providing explanations are informed of the legal consequences of making false statements.

The commission will be permitted to hold meetings on days when the Parliament's plenary sessions are scheduled, but not during the plenary sessions themselves. This change is designed to ensure the

commission's work proceeds without disrupting the parliamentary agenda.

The commission would gain the ability to raise the issue of starting an investigation at any stage of its activities if there is reasonable suspicion of illegal conduct. This includes the option to initiate administrative or disciplinary action.

The proposed changes have been introduced by members of Georgian Dream and People's Power. The MPs behind these amendments include Shalva Papuashvili, Davit Matikashvili, Giorgi Kakhiani, Irakli Shatakishvili, Greta Tsitsava, and Guram Macharashvili.

The investigative commission, led by former Justice Minister Thea Tsulukiani, is tasked with reviewing the actions and decisions of the government during the UNM's rule. Tsulukiani highlighted the need for additional powers during a commission meeting on February 14, citing the large volume of materials under investigation.

Opposition parties, especially Unity-UNM, have firmly



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opposed the commission's work. Tina Bokuchava, chair of Unity-UNM, stated that the party would not engage with the commission, even after GD MP Davit Matikashvili warned that re-

fusal to cooperate could lead to criminal liability. Giga Bokeria, leader of the Federalists party and former UNM official, rejected the commission's activities, calling it a "clown show" and indicating he would not participate.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Three Georgian Citizens Illegally Detained by Russian Occupation Forces

Three Georgian citizens were unlawfully detained by Russian occupying forces near the village of Plavismani in the Gory municipality, located within the occupied territory. According to the State

the other two remain in illegal detention.

The SSSG reported on March 11 that after learning about the incident, it promptly activated the "hotline" managed by the EU Monitoring Mission. Additionally, the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions (GID) and international partners were notified of the situation.

Efforts are underway to secure the

bility for such unlawful actions in Georgia's occupied territories and along the occupation line falls on the occupying power.

Batumi Protesters Fined for Walking on Zebra Crossing



Batumi City Court Judge Mariana Fomaeva has fined 18 protesters GEL 5,000 each for walking on a zebra crossing, according to Batumelebi.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs accused the protesters of obstructing traffic by creating an artificial barrier at the

crossing.

The publication noted that the judge did not provide a clear explanation for the decision to impose fines.

The case stems from a rally on January 31, 2025, when police officers told demonstrators that their numbers were

insufficient and ordered them to clear the roadway. The Georgian Young Lawyers Association, which represented the protesters, argued that their actions were fully within the scope of freedom of expression.



Security Service of Georgia (SSSG), one of the detainees has been released and is now in Tbilisi-controlled territory, while

swift release of the detained Georgian citizens, with all available mechanisms being utilized, according to the SSSG.

The agency emphasized that responsi-

To improve availability of quality data about the state of population in Georgia, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has hosted a working meeting on March 11.

Head of UNFPA Georgia Country Office Mariam Bandzeladze, Chief of Population Unit of UNECE Lisa Warth, and Head of Health Policy Division of the Ministry of IDPs, Labor, Health, and Social Affairs Ketevan Goginashvili, welcomed the participants.

Availability and needs assessment of ageing-related data and statistics in Georgia

During the event, UNECE consultant Tengiz Tsekvava, in-



introduced the results of data availability assessment analyses, followed by the group discussion on the results and recommendations as well as on priorities and further next steps for improvement of quality data availability and accessibility.

The meeting aimed to support the implementation and monitoring of the State Policy on Population Ageing and related action plans and to strengthen the evidence base for ageing-related policies in Georgia.

In Georgia, nearly one in six persons in the country are aged 65 or older. Population ageing

touches nearly every aspect of society and has the potential to transform economies, labour markets, as well as social protection, education and health systems.

The data availability and needs assessment aims to take stock of relevant ageing-related data collected in Georgia, including official statistics and administrative data, covering overall trends in population dynamics and demographic change as well as the situation of older persons across different age groups and domains of life.

Weather

Wednesday, March 12

Day ☀️ Clear
High: 23°C

Night 🌙 Clear
Low: 6°C

Thursday, March 13

Day ☀️ Clear
High: 25°C

Night 🌙 Clear
Low: 8°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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