

# Georgian Dream Rejects EU's Kaja Kallas' Concerns Over Arrests and Protests

By Liza Mchedlidze

The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Kaja Kallas, has expressed concern over the arrests of individuals in Georgia, stating that pressure is being put on those who are using violence against peaceful protesters.

"We have been putting pressure on those who are actually conducting violence against peaceful protesters," Kallas noted.

In response to Kallas' statement, Georgian officials dismissed her remarks as unfounded. Kakha Kaladze, the Secretary General of the Georgian Dream party and Tbilisi Mayor, labeled the EU High Representative's statements as based on "lies," asserting that they "have no value."

Kaladze added, "We hear such unfair statements very often. This is not new to us. Basically, the statements made by them are based on lies, falsehoods, and have no value."

Kaladze also addressed media reports suggesting that 15 countries are calling for new elections in Georgia, describing it as "ordinary nonsense" and urging foreign officials to focus on their own countries instead of interfering in Georgia's domestic affairs.



"This is ordinary nonsense. It is better for them to take care of their own countries and stop interfering in Georgia's domestic affairs."

Levan Makhashvili, the chairman of the parliamentary

committee on European integration, also criticized Kallas' remarks, calling them "not serious." He suggested that there is a specific interest in the issue of

Georgia from certain individuals who are trying to create an "alternative agenda" and assist the opposition in radicalizing its actions.

"At least it is not serious. In general, where this statement was made – at the Foreign Relations Council, for the first time in recent years, the agenda is what actually the problem of the European Union is. These are all the crises, wars, and political tensions that exist both inside and outside the European Union. Georgia is not logically on this agenda, because Georgia has not been and will not be the main problem that the European Union will focus on – Georgia was, is, and will generally be a reliable partner of the West in this region," Makhashvili said.

He further claimed that the focus on Georgia by certain EU officials is motivated by personal interests and attempts to fuel "radical opposition" actions.

"What is evident is the personal interest of specific individuals in the issue of Georgia and their interest in creating an alternative agenda and helping the radical opposition in further radicalizing their steps. We are only observing this. Nothing else interesting is coming from her or her colleagues," Makhashvili added.

cations escalated into violence. The Prosecutor's Office alleges that demonstrators damaged government buildings, private property, and police vehicles while using incendiary substances, Molotov cocktails, and other dangerous items against law enforcement officers. Officials report that at least 55 individuals were injured, most of whom were police officers.

Authorities also claim that organized groups within the protests were systematically supplied with respirators, gas masks, helmets, and other protective gear, allegedly to enhance their ability to confront law enforcement. They argue that financial transactions linked to the accused organizations indicate a pattern of deliberate funding for such activities.

In addition to funding individuals allegedly engaged in violent acts, the Prosecutor's Office states that the seized funds were also used to assist the families of arrested individuals, pay legal fines, and cover other expenses. Officials contend that this financial support not only facilitated unlawful actions but may have encouraged further participation in criminal activities.

The investigation, covering the period from November 28, 2024, to the present, suggests that some protests held in front of the Parliament and other lo-

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## Prosecutor's Office Accuses Several Foundations of Funding Violent Protests, Seizes Bank Accounts

By Liza Mchedlidze

The Prosecutor's Office of Georgia has announced the seizure of bank accounts belonging to several organizations, accusing them of financing individuals involved in violent protests and criminal activities. Based on a court ruling, the accounts of the "Nanuka Foundation," "Prosperity," "Fund for Each Other 24/7," "Shame," and "Tbilisi Human Rights House" have been frozen in all banking institutions across Georgia.

According to the Prosecutor's Office, these organizations directed financial resources toward activities that allegedly incited and facilitated unlawful actions. Officials claim that the funds were used to support individuals involved in protests, purchase equipment, and provide financial aid to those accused of organizing group violence. Some transactions reportedly included descriptions such as "necessary equipment for protests," "what is needed for the fight," and "purchase of pyrotechnics."

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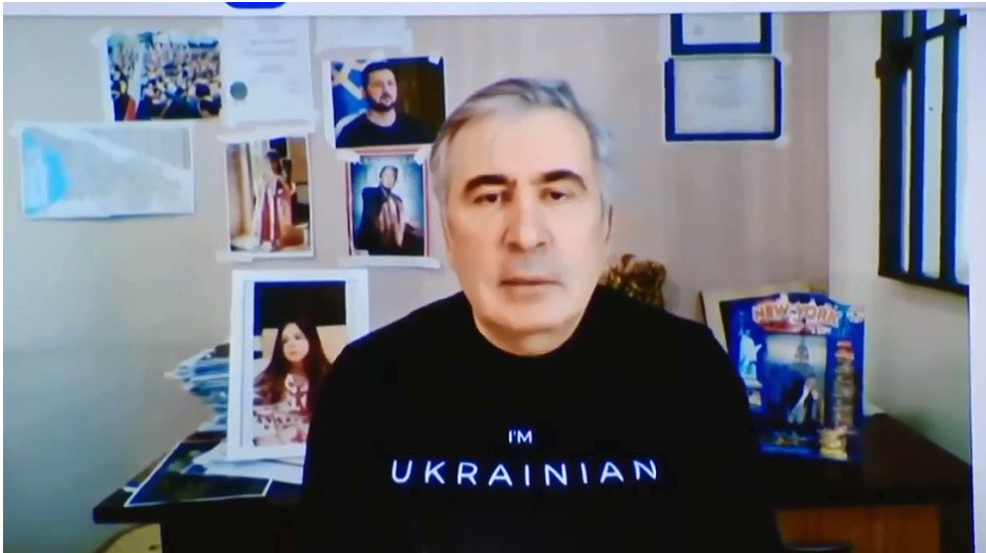




The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Court Sentences Mikheil Saakashvili to 12.5 Years in Prison for Border Crossing and Embezzlement



The Tbilisi City Court has found Mikheil Saakashvili, the third president of Georgia, guilty of illegally crossing the state border, sentencing him to 4 years and 6 months in prison. Additionally, he was sentenced to 8 years for embezzling state funds, bringing the total sentence to 12 years and 6 months.

In response to the court's decision, Saakashvili condemned what he called a series of illegal and "shameful" actions by the government, which he accused of using the judicial system to destroy him physically while behind bars. He referred to the court ruling as an act of "destruc-

tion under the guise of a court order," claiming that it was intended to intimidate both his supporters and the Georgian public.

Saakashvili further argued that the ruling was also meant to send a threatening message to Ukrainian President

Volodymyr Zelensky. "They are telling him that the same fate awaits him if he does not surrender Ukraine," Saakashvili stated.

Bokuchava emphasized that Zourabichvili's refusal to use her consti-

tutional power to pardon Saakashvili, despite international calls, directly contributed to the harsh sentence. She further stated, "No matter what anyone thinks today and what political taste they have, it will definitely be written in the

pages of Georgian history that the fifth president of Georgia, who tried to resist the Russian occupation regime with the European flag, did not pardon the third president of Georgia, who first raised the European flag in Georgia."



UNM Chair Bokuchava Criticizes Zourabichvili for Not Pardoning Saakashvili

Tinatin Bokuchava, the Chairperson of the Unity - National Movement, strongly criticized the decision by President Salome Zourabichvili not to pardon former President Mikheil Saakashvili. During a briefing at the party office, Bokuchava accused Zourabichvili of shar-

ing responsibility for the "historical injustice" against Saakashvili, who was sentenced to 12.6 years in prison for illegal border crossing.

Bokuchava emphasized that Zourabichvili's refusal to use her consti-

tutional power to pardon Saakashvili, despite international calls, directly contributed to the harsh sentence. She further stated, "No matter what anyone thinks today and what political taste they have, it will definitely be written in the

Bokuchava concluded by assuring Saakashvili that the United National Movement would continue to fight for his freedom. "We will be as united as ever, and we will have your words today as a torch - 'We fight and we win.'"

Canada more than triples its contribution to EU-managed Energy Support Fund for Ukraine

The Canadian government has significantly increased its contribution to the Ukraine Energy Support Fund, raising it from CAD 20 million (Euro12.8 million) to CAD 70 million (Euro44.8 million).

The increased contribution will enable the Energy Community Secretariat, co-chaired by the European Commission, in collaboration with the Ministry of Energy of Ukraine, to address the most pressing needs of Ukraine's energy sector.

Ukrainian energy companies suffering from targeted Russian attacks will be able to replenish



cifically towards securing energy supplies for critical social infrastructure in the healthcare sector, with a particular focus on the deployment of solar power systems with battery energy storage.

"Canada's increased contribution is a powerful demonstration of international solidarity at a time when Ukraine's energy infrastructure faces daily attacks from Russia," said Artur Lorkowski, Director

of the Energy Community Secretariat.

The latest Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA4) estimates that damage to Ukraine's energy sector has reached US\$20.51 billion as of 31 December 2024 — more than double the damage recorded in the previous assessment.

Since its launch in April 2022, the Ukraine Energy Support Fund has mobilised over Euro 1 billion from more than 30 donors, enabling the repair of power generation, transmission, and distribution infrastructure, and the supply of vital equipment to over 56 energy companies across 21 regions of Ukraine.

On 27 February, the Energy Community Secretariat received a formal notification from USAID regarding the termination of its Grant Agreement with the Ukraine Energy Support Fund, valued at US\$ 75 million.

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their critical inventory of essential energy equipment such as transformers, generators, gas infrastructure components, and

repair materials, ensuring the stable operation of the country's energy system. Part of Canada's contribution will be directed spe-

cifically towards securing energy supplies for critical social infrastructure in the healthcare sector, with a particular focus on the deployment of solar power systems with battery energy storage.

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

Weather

Tuesday, March 18

Day Mostly Cloudy

High: 26°C

Night Cloudy

Low: 9°C

Wednesday, March 19

Day Cloudy

High: 11°C

Night Showers

Low: 4°C

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As part of the traditional event, dedicated to the promotion of Italian architecture and design in the world and now in its ninth edition, the event organized by the Italian Embassy in Georgia in collaboration with the Agency for the promotion abroad and the internationalization of Italian companies (ICE-ITA) was held in Kutaisi on March 10.

The event held at the Kutaisi International University (KIU) with the participation of many important players in the field of architecture and design, experts, scholars and academics, was inaugurated by the Italian Ambassador H.E. Massimiliano D'Antuono and the Rector of the University Giorgi Khubua.

"This year's edition, entitled "Inequalities. Design for a better life" linked to the theme of the XXIV International Exhibi-

# Celebration of the IX<sup>th</sup> edition of the Italian Design Day in Georgia

tion of the Triennale Milano, is a perfect opportunity to reflect and debate on the role of design in reducing the impact of inequalities on the well-being of individuals in everyday life", explained Ambassador D'Antuono.

The highlight of the celebrations in Georgia of #IDD2025 was the launch of the first three-year degree course in Design of the School of Architecture, Urban Planning and Design at the International University of Kutaisi, established in collaboration with the University of Naples Federico II, with double recognition of the

title. "This initiative, the result of collaboration between the Georgian university and the historic Neapolitan university, one of the oldest public universities in the world, thanks to the great commitment of the Rector Matteo Lorito, will contribute to strengthening the ties and exchanges of know-how between Italy and Georgia", underlined Ambassador D'Antuono.

The event, which continued first with the speech of Carla Langella, Associate Professor of Design at the University of Naples Federico II, and then with the

Lectio Magistralis "Conscious Design: Poetic Expressions and Suggestions of the Italian Project" by Matteo Vercelloni, a well-known Italian architect and designer, concluded with the launch of the second edition of the competition "Italy Meets Georgia: a Fusion of Aesthetics and Innovation", organized by the Istituto Marangoni in collaboration with the Italian Embassy, which provides scholarships to talented young Georgians to study in the Fashion and Design courses at the Istituto Marangoni, one of the best Italian institutions in training in the sector.





