

Zourabichvili Accuses Georgian Dream of Spreading 'Anti-European Propaganda'

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

5th President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili has sharply criticized recent remarks by Georgian Dream officials suggesting that visa-free travel to the European Union comes at the cost of Georgia's sovereignty. She called these statements part of a wider "campaign" designed to demoralize the public and create a false sense of conflict between European integration and national independence.

According to the Zourabichvili, this narrative is a "direct continuation" of developments that began on November 28, 2024, when Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze announced plans to pause Georgia's EU integration efforts until 2028. 5th President argued that the ruling party's rhetoric is aimed at isolating Georgia from Europe by stirring fear over potential suspension of the visa-free regime.

"This campaign does not come from Brussels or any other European capital, it comes from Tbilisi, from this regime, whose goal is precisely to stop visa liberalization," she said during an April 23 press briefing. She urged the public not to fall for what she described as propaganda and



called for reflection on who is truly responsible for distancing the country from Europe.

She went on to accuse the Georgian Dream leadership of employing tactics reminiscent of Russian governance to prepare citizens for international isolation.

"It is also an attempt to shift the blame onto Europe, to say they are punishing us," she added, placing responsibility on Bidzina Ivanishvili, Georgian Dream's honorary chair, and what she described as "the clan that rules this country accord-

ing to the Russian order." Zourabichvili's remarks come in response to recent claims from Georgian Dream officials, including Parliament Speaker Shalva Papuashvili, who said parts of the EU bureaucracy were using visa-free travel as a "tool of po-

litical pressure and blackmail." Similar sentiments were echoed by GD Deputy Speaker Nino Tsilosani and MP Sozar Subari, who stated that Georgia's sovereignty should take precedence over visa liberalization.

Government Introduces Immigration Law Reforms to Parliament

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The government has submitted a new package of immigration-related legislative changes to Parliament. The amendments, prepared by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, affect 18 different laws, including those dealing with international protection, the legal status of foreigners, criminal justice cooperation, and the issuance of identity and residence documents. Other changes apply to police regulations and the administrative and criminal codes.

According to the Ministry, the main goal of the reforms is to tackle illegal migration, prevent misuse of the asylum system, and tighten the rules for granting international protection to foreigners or stateless persons.

One of the key updates is the introduction of expulsion as a new legal and administrative penalty. This would allow authorities to deport foreigners and ban them from re-entering Georgia for a set period. Fines for violating immigration rules would also increase, and the process for deporting individuals who are in the country illegally would become more efficient.

To stop abuse of the asylum process, the reforms introduce an accelerated review for people who don't apply for asylum within one month of arrival. In cases where a foreigner is considered a threat to national security, asylum applications could be reviewed at the border, without letting the person enter Georgia.

The changes would also shorten the time allowed for reviewing and appealing asylum cases. A new electronic system is planned to help deliver decisions and track appeal deadlines more effectively. In addition, foreigners who are facing expulsion, or have already been ordered to leave, would no longer be eligible for a residence permit.

The legislative package has now been handed over to parliamentary committees for further discussion.



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The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Bachiashvili's Lawyer Alleges Death Threats, Calls for Global Protection



Robert Amsterdam, the international legal representative of Giorgi Bachiashvili, has released a public statement disclosing credible threats against his client's life. According to Amsterdam, the threats were identified through intelligence provided by two foreign agencies.

In response to the gravity of the situation, Amsterdam's legal team has called for immediate intervention by global law enforcement authorities. They are urging that Bachiashvili be granted protective measures and that a thorough investigation be launched to uncover those responsible for the alleged assassination plot.

Amsterdam noted that Bachiashvili personally approved the release of this

information.

Highlighting the severity of the case, Amsterdam stated: "We believe that the Georgian authorities would engage in virtually any level of violence necessary to

achieve their objectives of eliminating all credible political opponents and critics of the regime." He further suggested that external actors might also be involved, aiming to deepen instability in Georgia.

Giorgi Vashadze Fined 50,000 GEL, Calls Court Decision Politically Driven

Giorgi Vashadze, leader of the opposition's Strategy Aghmashenebeli party, was granted bail set at 50,000 GEL after being charged with failing to comply with a request from the Georgian Parliament's temporary investigative commission.

Following the trial, Vashadze sharply criticized the ruling, suggesting the outcome was predetermined. "The so-called

court, of course, 100% shared the position of the so-called prosecutor's office because the judge is powerless and she will do whatever the upper echelon of the

which is rapidly moving towards the European Union."

He added that the government's actions have only reinforced the opposition's



clan orders. I'm sorry for her," he said.

Vashadze framed the case as part of a broader political struggle and reaffirmed his commitment to democratic values. "I know exactly what I am fighting for and we all know exactly what we are fighting for. I am fighting for Georgia to be a strong, united country, a country of free people, to have a democratic system, where there are no political prisoners and

belief in its cause. "We are fighting a regime that wants to leave us alone without friends and partners. Let us consider that this is another line of this struggle and all such steps from the regime only strengthen us, unite us and convince us more that we are on the right path. Believe me, very soon we will all celebrate victory together," said Vashadze.

Kaja Kallas to visit Baku on 25 April

On 25 April, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission Kaja Kallas will be in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The High Representative will meet with the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev.

Kaja Kallas will also hold a meeting with Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov.

In the afternoon, the HR/VP

will meet with Young European Ambassadors (YEAs) in Azerbaijan.

The Young European Ambassadors (YEAs) initiative brings together socially engaged youth from

the six Eastern Partner countries, the European Union and the United Kingdom to foster dialogue and to raise awareness about the EU and its cooperation with its Eastern partner countries.



EU High Representative Kaja Kallas travels to Moldova

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission Kaja Kallas travels to the Republic of Moldova for a two-day visit.

Upon arrival in Moldovan capital, Chisinau, Kaja Kallas will meet with representatives from civil society organisations.

On 24 April, Kallas will meet the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mihai Pop?oi.

The EU High Representative will also review equipment provided to Moldova through the European Peace Facility and take part in the handover of EU-funded equipment to the National Police of Moldova.

Kaja Kallas will also meet with Prime Minister Dorin Recean and President Maia Sandu.

In the afternoon, Kaja Kallas will engage with Young European Ambassadors (YEAs) together with Foreign Minister Pop?oi.

The Young European Ambassadors (YEAs) initiative brings together socially engaged youth from the six Eastern Partner countries, the European Union and the United Kingdom to foster dialogue and to raise awareness about the EU and its cooperation with its Eastern partner countries.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Thursday, April 24

Day Mostly Cloudy
High: 24°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 13°C

Friday, April 25

Day Mostly Cloudy
High: 21°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 11°C

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