

Josep Borrell Urges Georgian Political Leaders Not to Derail the Country from its European Path

By Liza Mchedlidze

Josep Borrell, the EU's high representative for foreign affairs, called on political leaders in Georgia to withdraw the "foreign agents" draft law and to refrain from diverting the country from its European path.

He emphasized that thousands of Georgian citizens have been peacefully demonstrating in recent weeks, demanding the withdrawal of the law on transparency of foreign influence. Borrell reminded that the ruling party and the government had previously promised Georgian citizens that such legislation would not return and urged Georgian political leaders to withdraw the draft law, stating that it goes against EU norms and values.

"Over the past weeks, thousands of citizens of Georgia have taken to the streets to exercise their right to peaceful demonstration, demanding once again that authorities withdraw the law on transparency of foreign influence.

We have seen impressive scenes from Georgia last year already. Citizens of all ages holding Georgian and European flags showing their strong attachment to democracy, to our shared European values and to Georgia's path towards the European Union. At the time, the ruling party and the government made a public pledge to the



Georgian citizens that such legislation would never come back.

I urge the political leaders of Georgia to withdraw the draft law. As it was the case last year,

it is clear that this legislation is incompatible with the EU norms and values. If adopted, it would jeopardise Georgia's progress on the EU path.

Georgians have a future in the European Union. The candidate status that was granted last December has brought our relations closer than ever before.

Our door is open, so I urge the Georgian leaders to mirror the expectations of the citizens and not derail the country from the EU path," Borrell said.

Public and Media Organizations Cease Cooperation with Government Until 'Agents Law' Withdrawal

By Liza Mchedlidze

Public and media organizations have issued a joint statement announcing their decision to cease cooperation with the authorities until the withdrawal of the "Agents Law." They're refusing to be listed in the National Agency of Public Registry under any circumstances.

"We will stop cooperating with the government until the government declares the Russian law; We declare that we will never register in the defamatory register in any way; We call on everyone to gather in Republic Square against the Russian law on Sunday, April 28, at 19:00. We also call on everyone to gather if the second plenary discussion is scheduled."

The statement's signatories accuse the government of veering from the country's established foreign policy. They argue that reconsidering the 'Russian law' goes against constitutional norms and betrays the desires of the Georgian people. They stressed the importance of align-

ing with the EU, echoing sentiments from international partners like the EU, NATO, and others. The signatories warn that adopting the Russian law threatens Georgian democracy and weakens its European ties, potentially leaving it to face Russia.

The public and media organizations have announced their refusal to engage in several key avenues of collaboration with the government. Among their decisions:

- They will no longer participate in meetings with government representatives
- They are withdrawing their involvement from working groups and advisory councils
- They reject any form of coordination with the government in international or other working formats

"We work only for the people. We serve only the people and will continue to work to protect the rights of children, women, workers, the disabled persons, and other vulnerable groups.

It is 80% of these people, especially civil servants, who



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support and work for Georgia to become a full-fledged member of the European Union. The Georgian Dream forces these people, against their will, to participate in the government's Russian march planned for April 29. With the government's Russian march, the government is trying to return us to the past, while our future is in Europe. The au-

thorities are confronting their children, future generations, civil servants, and the absolute majority of supporters of the European future of this country.

The answer from us and the Georgian people is:

We will never live by Putin's rules. The Russian law will never be the choice of the Georgian people.

Yes to Europe! No Russian law!" the statement reads.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

European Parliament Resolution: Sanctions on Ivanishvili, Visa-Free Regime Criteria Scrutinized, Calls for Saakashvili's Release

The European Parliament backed several key amendments:

- Urges the Council of the European Union and EU partners to impose sanctions on Bidzina Ivanishvili, accusing him of undermining Georgia's Western trajectory and acting against Georgian people's interests.



On April 25, the European Parliament passed a resolution regarding Georgia's draft law on transparency of foreign influence.

The resolution asserts that EU accession talks with Georgia cannot advance unless the 'Agents Law' is withdrawn. Moreover, the European Parliament supported amendments calling for sanctions against Bidzina Ivanishvili and the humanitarian release of Mikheil Saakashvili.

- Calls on the European Commission to evaluate the impact of the 'Agents Law' on Georgia's compliance with visa liberalization criteria, particularly concerning fundamental rights, a crucial aspect of EU visa policies.

- Urges the Georgian Dream party to withdraw proposed constitutional amendments that curtail LGBT rights, labeling it an assault on both the LGBT community and civil liberties.
- Calls for the humanitarian re-

lease of Mikheil Saakashvili by Georgian authorities, allowing him to seek medical treatment abroad.

The resolution garnered support from 425 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), while 25 opposed it. Additionally, 30 MEPs abstained from voting.

Kakha Kaladze Slams European Parliament's Resolution as 'Wastepaper' and 'Shameful'



Kakha Kaladze, the General Secretary of the party, criticized the European Parliament's resolution, labeling it as "wastepaper". During a briefing at the Georgian Dream office, he expressed strong disapproval, condemning the document as "shameful" and accusing Euro-

pean deputies of undermining European institution's integrity.

"Today, the European Parliament adopted yet another shameful resolution. The MPs who supported this piece of waste paper have once again insulted the European institution and the European idea, which is founded on principles of freedom, equality, transparency, and truth.

The Georgian people were told by the MPs involved in lobbying from start to finish that we should release Mikheil

Saakashvili, a criminal who instigated a vicious system of torture, murder, business racketeering, oppression, and rape in our country. It turns out that we should release Saakashvili, who deliberately and purposefully severed 20% of Georgia's territory and pushed the country into the depths of poverty," Kaladze said.

EU4Youth Alumni Network hosts IdeaLab in Tbilisi

Parallel to the European Youth Week, Tbilisi became a buzzing hub for innovation as 50 participants from across the Eastern Partnership region gathered for the EU4Youth Alumni Network's IdeaLab 2024 – the first face-to-face meeting for the new alumni after their



initial online meet-ups. Max Pijevskii from the EU4Youth Coordination and Policy Support project, and organiser of the event, said "the team tried to create an IDEAL IdeaLab".

Over four busy days, the

group, consisting of young people from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, joined workshops to build their skills, met new friends, and learned from experienced mentors. Everyone worked together,

talked about their own experiences, and planned exciting new projects that they will implement in their home regions over the coming months.

Valeriia from Ukraine said the event had been extremely useful: "I most liked those activities where we shared experiences with other participants, as well as creating the video about my initiative."

Mihail from Moldova learned something important too: "The two most important things I learned are that our initiative should be determined by the audience's main interests, not what I consider useful. I also learned how to present our ini-

tiative in different ways, both in-person or digital."

The new alumni have been busy in their hometowns, listening to young people's ideas and understanding their needs – especially those who don't have many opportunities. In Tbilisi, they used all this knowledge to design new projects at the IdeaLab, which they will start implementing in the next six months. These initiatives will be a team effort, with small groups of alumni leading the way in each country. They will run events and activities, help their communities, and share their knowledge both online and offline.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Friday, April 26

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 28°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 13°C

Saturday, April 27

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 28°C

Night Clear
Low: 14°C

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