

## President Zourabichvili Commends Defense Forces, Denounces Misrepresentation of Western Allies

By Liza Mchedlidze

The President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili delivered a speech at a ceremony commemorating Defense Forces Day, praising the Georgian armed forces as the defenders of the country's sovereignty and freedom.

In her address, Zourabichvili emphasized the pivotal role of the Georgian army as the guardians of the nation. She hailed their dedication over the past 33 years, highlighting their crucial contribution to maintaining Georgia's independence.

"I address the army, whose chief command I proudly hold. I am addressing you, the Georgian army, as the guardians of our country and our reliable shield. I came to you today because you are a symbol of Georgia's independence and protection of freedom. You have been serving this purpose for 33 years. The same purpose was served by the independent army in 1918-1921; served by cadets, served by Georgia's guards for centuries, which brought us to this day.

I appeal to you because today the dark forces have been activated, a country that couldn't be brought to its knees through inciting ethnic conflicts, through inciting conflicts between brothers, or through direct war and occupation, couldn't be made to surrender," Zourabichvili said.

The President warned against attempts to divide Georgian society, stressing the importance of unity in the face of external challenges. Zourabichvili reaffirmed Georgia's commitment to its European aspirations, citing it as essential for the nation's development and progress.

"Today, once again, they are trying to divide society. The enemy knows very well that Georgia's weakness is only caused by the appearance of cracks in society. For more than 30 years, this country and its society have been united around one goal: the European perspec-



tive as the only way to our independence, sovereignty, identity, diversity, tolerance, peace, and development.

During these 33 years, there have been many crises, passions, and different political movements, but until now, no one has questioned this goal," the president said.

The Georgian President honored the sacrifices made by Georgian soldiers in international missions, particularly in the fight against terrorism and condemned the attempts by some individuals to depict longstanding allies and partners as an anonymous and hostile force. She la-

beled such portrayals as deceitful and detrimental.

"The Georgian army knows best who the enemy is and who the ally is; who has tried to destroy us and who has helped us build a modern defense force. The Georgian army knows best why we participated in international missions to make our contribution, a worthy contribution, to global security. How many of our soldiers died with dignity for this humanitarian goal - the fight against terrorism?"

Today, some people want to portray our 30-year-old allies and partners as some

unknown and faceless war party that challenges Georgia to adventure and confrontation. This is a big lie and detrimental.

We, and first of all you, all know very well, not only from the example of the last 30 years, who the restless enemy of Georgia's statehood and independence is. Who fought against the Georgian language starting from the 19th century, who constantly fought against the Georgian church and faith, and who fought against all efforts for Georgia's independence," Zourabichvili said.

## U.S. Congressional Leaders Express Concern Over 'Foreign Agents' Law

By Liza Mchedlidze

On April 29, Co-Chairs of the U.S. Congressional Georgia Caucus, Rep. Gerry Connolly and Rep. Austin Scott, expressed their concerns about Georgia's proposed 'Foreign Agents' law.

The U.S. representatives expressed deep concerns about Georgia, a democratic ally and EU candidate, adopting a law that mirrors Russia's restrictive measures.

The statement from the Caucus Co-Chairs emphasized the importance of Georgia maintaining its democratic course toward Euro-Atlantic integration. They stressed continued U.S. support for Georgia's journey towards inclusion in European and Atlantic institutions and highlighted the critical role of an unimpeded civil society, an independent judiciary, and a corruption-free government in achieving these goals.

The introduction of the For-

eign Agents Law in Georgia, according to the representatives, poses a serious threat to the democratic processes and deviates from the country's path toward further integration with the West. They strongly urged Georgian officials to reconsider the proposed legislation and to listen to the public's demand for a transparent and accountable governance structure.

"In 2012, after taking power for a third term, Vladimir Putin signed Foreign Agents Law to require organizations engaged in political activity and receiving foreign funding to register as foreign agents. Putin used this 'Foreign Agents Law' to drastically curb free speech, all but eliminate Russian civil society, and further solidify his brutal rule as a dictator. It is incredibly concerning for the Republic of Georgia, a democratic partner of the United States that has received EU candidate status, to introduce

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Georgia Caucus Co-Chairs Statement on Georgia's 'Foreign Agents Law'

Washington, April 29, 2024



Congressman Gerry Connolly (D-VA) and Congressman Austin Scott (R-GA), the Co-Chairs of the Congressional Georgia Caucus, released

# U.S. Congressional Leaders Express Concern Over 'Foreign Agents' Law

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and advance legislation that mimics Putin's same anti-democratic instrument. We continue to support the Georgian people in their path to Euro-Atlantic inclusion and urge leaders to heed their calls for a flourishing and unim-

ped civil society, independent judiciary, and a government that respects the rule of law and holds those who engage in corruption accountable.

Unfortunately, a "Foreign Agents Law" similar to that of Vladimir Putin's, diverts Georgia from that path," the statement reads.

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

### Georgian Young Lawyers Association Condemns Illegal Dispersal of Peaceful Protesters

tional standards, and to halt the illegal practice of dispersing rallies.

The organization called on the riot police to: adhere to the guidelines for the behavior of internal affairs officers during gatherings and demonstrations regarding the basis and manner of using

### EU Spokesperson Urges Government to Address Concerns Over 'Foreign Agents' Law

transparency of foreign influence. The candidate status granted in December has brought our relations closer than ever before. Our doors are open, and therefore the European Union calls on Georgia's



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DISPERSAL OF RALLY AT THE PARLIAMENT OF GEORGIA IS UNLAWFUL  
2024-04-30 23:04



On April 30, 2024, during the rally against the "Russian law" and after the announced repressions, in the vicinity of the Parliament of Georgia, the members of the special forces squad used an active special means of "pepper spray" from close range, without prior warning, illegally and disproportionately (21:43). The footage also shows facts of physical violence by members of the special forces against citizens, including women (21:43). According to the participants of the demonstration, they did not have enough space to leave the area and avoid the places where the police force used pepper spray. The tactic of the police force, which detains or surrounds the participants and prevents them from leaving the area, violates international norms and the right to peaceful assembly. Also, in this situation, the number of mobilized emergency medical teams is disproportionately low.

Riot police used pepper spray, tear gas, and water cannons to forcefully disperse peaceful protesters who were demonstrating against the 'Foreign Agents' law outside the parliament building. The police also engaged in physical assaults on the citizens.

According to the assessment of the Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA), the dispersal of the protest near the Parliament is deemed illegal.

The organization called on the Ministry of Internal Affairs to ensure the development of an action plan for the safety of gatherings and demonstrations according to national legislation and interna-

special means; refuse to obey illegal orders and refrain from using violent methods against peaceful demonstrators.

"Since the goals of the organizers and participants of the gathering are peaceful, aimed at protecting the country's Western orientation, and contributing to the development of democratic processes, such expression is protected, as shown by the practice of the European Court. Moreover, the law has already been considered in the second reading in the parliament, and the parliamentary work process is not hindered. Peaceful protest is a tool citizens use to promote democratic processes. Any effort to suppress it is unconstitutional," GYLA stated.



Peter Stano, spokesperson for EU High Representative Josep Borrell, voiced concerns about 'Foreign Agents' law. He urged Georgian leaders to meet citizens' expectations and uphold European values to advance their candidacy for EU membership. Stano emphasized the importance of Georgia addressing nine recommendations outlined in the enlargement report and warned that any negative developments could impact its progress towards EU membership.

"The foreign ministers of the EU and its member states have expressed concerns regarding Georgia's law on the

leaders to respond to citizens' expectations and not derail the country from the path to the European Union.

In its enlargement report, the Commission emphasized the work that Georgia needs to do, including implementing nine recommendations. Georgia, as an EU candidate country, is expected to meet the Copenhagen criteria, which include adherence to democratic principles, the rule of law, and human rights. Any negative developments in the country will be reflected in the upcoming enlargement report, scheduled for release in the autumn," said Stano.

### European Commission Director General to visit South Caucasus

European Commission Director General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, Gert Jan Koopman, today starts a visit to Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan.

Between 30 April and 4 May, he will discuss bilateral and regional cooperation and launch new initiatives.

Today, Koopman will visit Armenia. His visit comes as a follow-up to the high-level EU-US-Armenia meeting on 5 April and the announcement of a Resilience and Growth Plan for Armenia. During the mission, the Director General will discuss the next steps for the strengthening of EU-Armenia relations, including stepping up sectoral cooperation and EU investments in the country and EU support to reforms and to the integration of displaced people. He will meet

with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, a number of government members and National Assembly deputies, and representatives of business and civil society.

Gert Koopman will also launch a joint EU-German project to improve access to energy efficiency and sustainable energy solutions in rural communities in Armenia.

On 1 and 2 May, Koopman will be in Georgia to discuss EU-Georgia cooperation, including the work on the 9 steps linked to Georgia's EU candidate status. He will meet President Salome Zourabichvili, Prime

Minister Irakli Kobakhidze, and a number of ministers, representatives of parliamentary parties and civil society, as well as investment partners.

Koopman will launch several EU-funded projects to help rehabilitate Georgia's irrigation network, to foster investments in renewable energy generation capacities and to support local currency lending for Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises.

On 3 and 4 May, Koopman will visit Azerbaijan to discuss with government officials EU-Azerbaijan cooperation, including regional connectivity and

renewable energy in the run-up to the COP29 climate change conference, which Azerbaijan will host in November.

The Director General will launch – together with representatives of EU Member States – a Team Europe initiative on mine action in Azerbaijan to help address issues such as capacity building, mine risk education, and victim support building.

Together with the EIB, the Director General will also launch an initiative to improve the financial inclusion of Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

### Weather

Wednesday, May 1

Day ☀️ Clear  
High: 27°C

Night 🌧️ Partly Cloudy  
Low: 16°C

Thursday, May 2

Day 🌧️ Mostly Cloudy  
High: 24°C

Night 🌧️ Showers  
Low: 13°C

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therefore, the opinions expressed in some articles do not necessarily coincide with those of the newspaper. We take no responsibility for any claims made in advertisements.

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In a collaborative effort to invigorate tourism and cultural awareness, the Movement for Cultural Heritage, supported by the Tetrtskaro Municipality Tourism Service, hosted an informative tour through the historical Khrami River Valley. The event spotlighted the culturally significant Fitareti Monastery and Khuluti Castle, aiming to elevate their profiles among tourists and promote the development of local tourist routes.

Attendees, including representatives from various tourist companies, guides, and academics, were introduced to the

# Movement for Cultural Heritage Raises Awareness on Khrami River Valley

Fitareti Monastery's 13<sup>th</sup>-century origins and recent restoration efforts, revealing plans to enhance its accessibility as a tourist destination. The tour continued at the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Khuluti Castle Hall, which has undergone its own transformation, serving as a venue for discussing the expansion of tourist routes in

Kvemo Kartli.

Nino Burchuladze, a representative of the Movement for Cultural Heritage, highlighted the unique appeal of Khrami Valley's heritage sites. She emphasized the dual challenge of increasing tourism while preserving these historical monuments, acknowledging the need for strat-

egies that protect these treasures amid growing visitor numbers. The ongoing dedication of the Movement For Cultural Heritage in monitoring and maintaining these sites ensures they remain not only historical landmarks but pivotal elements of Georgia's cultural narrative.



