

# **EPP STATEMENT on GEORGIA suggested by UNM**



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The European People's Party has observed with great concern in recent years a trend of democratic backsliding in Georgia. The country's informal, oligarchic rule has undermined good governance and resulted in the continued erosion of democratic institutions: including as regards an independent judiciary, media freedom, a level-playing field politically and free and fair elections.

The conviction, arrest, and subsequent inhuman, degrading treatment — including denial of essential medical care — and slanderous propaganda directed by the Georgian authorities against Mikheil Saakashvili, the third democratically elected president in Georgia's history, provides yet another vivid example of these tendencies. And the recent prison sentence announced for prominent media manager Nika Gvaramia only further underscores the threats to media freedom in Georgia and the shrinking space for speech critical of the government.

The EPP has always stood in the vanguard promoting Georgia's democratic path and Euro- Atlantic future. It is regrettable that Georgia, once the Eastern Partnership frontrunner, has lost its hard-earned democratic credentials and continues to raise doubts concerning its European aspirations.

With crucial decisions still pending with regard to the three associated countries' EU membership applications, the Georgian government must make clearer than ever its commitment to Georgia's European path — a path clearly chosen by the vast majority of the Georgian people.

The EPP reminds the Georgian authorities of their full responsibility for the former president's life and health. The Georgian government's refusal to uphold fundamental human rights and allow Mr Saakashvili's transfer to an EU Member State for adequate medical treatment and rehabilitation — as well, more broadly, as the government's weaponisation of the judiciary vis-à-vis its political opponents — seriously undermines the process of Georgia's European integration.

The EPP remains committed to supporting Georgia's democratic development and Euro- Atlantic integration.

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**If you have any question you would like to ask please contact us.**

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