

**Joint Open Letter
to the President of the European Council, to the President of the European Commission
and the President of the European Parliament**

October 18, 2021

Your Excellencies,

Following the Rose Revolution in 2003, a new Georgian government championed reforms that sought to deliver the westward security, economic, and political integration that the Georgian people wanted. Almost 20 years on, it is easy now to forget the remarkable progress in the following years. There was still plenty of work to be done when Russia invaded Georgia in 2008. In 2012, voters decided it was time for a different ruling party to have a chance to deliver on much-needed justice reforms and onward progress toward full Western integration. Then-President Mikheil Saakashvili played a significant role in setting a regional precedent: he oversaw a free and fair election that handed his own party an electoral defeat and handed power to the new government in a peaceful, democratic transfer of power.

On October 1, 2021, President Saakashvili returned to Georgia and was immediately arrested to serve the prison sentence to which he had been convicted in absentia. The charges are known to be politically motivated. Saakashvili was one of dozens of former officials tried and convicted by their successors. Despite his conviction, the charges were never internationally recognized, and no one moved to detain or extradite him as he continued to work and travel abroad, because these charges were known to be part of an established pattern of political persecution.

The arrest of the former President Saakashvili serves only to deepen the political crisis Georgia faces following years of extreme polarization that have resulted from attempts to control the free press; to intimidate and surveil journalists, opposition politicians, activists, and even foreign diplomats; and to limit the space and resources for political opposition to the government.

Every day that the Georgian government continues to pursue the politically motivated prosecution and imprisonment of its political rivals and predecessors is another day that worsens the cycle of extreme political polarization in Georgia, making unity of political forces for the sake of strategic national priorities impossible. Extreme political polarization erodes the democratic institutions that are Georgia's best security from the existential threats it still faces. We know where this pattern leads. There is no option of silence now.

Considering the pending application to the European Court of Human Rights by President Saakashvili, and to ensure the recovery of Georgia's democracy from the current political crisis, Saakashvili's imprisonment should be suspended until he faces trial, in fair judicial proceedings, for any charges levied against him. With no public trust in the justice system in Georgia, some element of international observation must be put in place to help calm tensions as this process moves ahead. The era of politically motivated justice should finally end in Georgia. This was clearly stated in the EU-US negotiated agreement of April 19, which was later rejected by Georgian Dream. President Saakashvili should be released to pave the way for a renewed stabilization

agreement that aims to end the crisis in Georgia and restore the course that the Georgian people want to see for their nation.

Sincerely,

1. Valdis Zatlers, Former President of Latvia
2. Viktor Yushchenko, Former President of Ukraine
3. Carl Bildt, Former Prime Minister, Former Foreign Minister of Sweden
4. Anna Fotyga, MEP, Poland
5. Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, MEP, Poland
6. Antoni Legutko Ryszard, MEP, Poland
7. Raffaele Fitto, MEP, Italy
8. Elżbieta Rafalska, MEP, Poland
9. Carlo Fidanza, MEP, Italy
10. Witold Jan Waszykowski, MEP, Poland
11. Ladislav Ilčić, MEP, Croatia
12. Elżbieta Kruk, MEP, Poland
13. Dace Melbarde, MEP, Latvia
14. Roberts Zile, MEP, Latvia
15. Beata Mazurek, MEP, Poland
16. Charlie Weimers, MEP, Sweden
17. Sergio Berlato, MEP, Italy
18. Adam Bielan, MEP, Poland
19. Bogdan Rzońca, MEP, Poland
20. Raffaele Stancanelli, MEP, Italy
21. Dominik Tarczynski, MEP, Poland

22. Hermann Tertsch, MEP, Spain
23. Veronika Vrecionová, MEP, Czechia
24. Anna Zalewska, MEP, Poland
25. Kosma Zlotowski, MEP, Poland
26. Patryk Tomasz Jaki, MEP, Poland
27. Zbigniew Kuźmiuk, MEP, Poland
28. Rasa Juknevičienė, MEP, Lithuania,
29. Raphaël Gluksman, MEP, France
30. Prof. Raimundas Lopata - Chair of the Committee for Future, Chair of the Group for Inter-Parliamentary Relations with Georgia, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
31. Jonas Jarutis, Deputy Speaker of the Board of the Seimas, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
32. Žygimantas Pavilionis, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
33. Laurynas Kasčiūnas, Chair of the Committee on National Security and Defence, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
34. Laima Liucija Andrikienė, Deputy Chair of the Committee on European Affairs, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
35. Arminas Lydeka, Deputy Chair of the Committee on European Affairs, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
36. Algirdas Butkevičius, Deputy Chair of the Committee on Budget and Finance, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
37. Valentinas Bukauskas, Deputy Chair of the Committee on State Administration and Local Authorities, MP, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
38. Lukas Savickas, MP, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
39. Romualdas Vaitkus, MP, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
40. Andrius Vyšniauskas, MP, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
41. Rimantė Šalaševičiūtė, MP, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
42. Laima Nagienė, MP, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania

43. Algirdas Sysas, MP, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
44. Kęstutis Vilkauskas, MP, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
45. Emanuelis Zingeris, MP, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
46. Algirdas Stončaitis, MP, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
47. Valdemaras Valkiūnas, MP, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
48. Tomas Tomilinas, MP, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
49. Silva Lengvinienė, MP, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
50. Rima Baškienė, MP, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
51. Linas Jonauskas, MP, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
52. Edita Rudelienė, MP, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
53. Vilija Targamadžė, MP, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
54. Kęstutis Masiulis, MP, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
55. Rita Tamašunienė, MP, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
56. Paulė Kuzmickienė, MP, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
57. Michał Kamiński, Deputy Speaker of the Senat, Poland
58. Pavel Fischer, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defense and Security, Senate Czech Republic
59. Eerik Kross, MP, Riigikogu of Estonia
60. Vytis Jurkonis, Lecturer, Institute of International Relations and Political Sciences, Vilnius University
61. Marius Laurinavičius, Independent Analyst, Lithuania
62. Ben Hodges, LTG (Retired) Former Commander US Army Europe
63. Daniel Hamilton, Conservative Party, UK
64. Walburga Habsburg Douglas - Former Member of Swedish Parliament
65. Gabriela Habsburg, Former Ambassador of Georgia to Germany
66. Vladimir Kara-Murza, Opposition Politician, Former Deputy Leader of the People's Freedom Party, Russia
67. Eka Tkeshelashvili, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Georgia
68. David Sikharulidze, Former Minister of Defense, Georgia

69. Batu Kutelia, Former Ambassador of Georgia to the USA, Former Deputy Minister of Defense of Georgia
70. Elene Khoshtaria, Politician, Georgia
71. Tornike Gordadze, Senior Fellow at IISS, Professor at Paris Institute of Political Studies
72. Shota Gvineria, Former Ambassador of Georgia to the Kingdom of Netherlands