

Rep. Joe Wilson, *South Carolina*
Chairman



Sen. Benjamin L. Cardin, *Maryland*
Co-Chairman

April 20, 2023

President Salome Zourabichvili
Orbeliani Palace
25 Atoneli Street
Tbilisi, Georgia 0114

Dear President Zourabichvili,

We, the bipartisan and bicameral leadership of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, thank you for your pivotal role to prevent the enactment of the recently proposed foreign agent law. You convincingly demonstrated the power of your principles as a guardian for Georgian democracy. In that same spirit, we request that you intercede on behalf of Georgia's sadly growing roster of political prisoners and wrongfully jailed political figures.

We enjoyed meeting you in April 2022 in Washington, where we discussed our shared commitment to democratic values and human rights. Our Commission has raised concerns about democratic backsliding in Georgia but expressed confidence in your efforts to promote your country's democratic future. As a vocal proponent for Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration and the protection of its democracy, we believe that your assistance in stemming what are seemingly politically motivated persecutions would be a critically important step along that path.

One particularly notable case that we see as especially galling is that of Mr. Nikoloz Gvaramia. Mr. Gvaramia, as an outspoken media figure and pro-democracy activist, was jailed on what appeared to be spurious charges after years of the ruling party's harassment. We believe his continued imprisonment is a violation of his human rights as well as a threat to Georgia's democracy and prospects for Euro-Atlantic integration.

It was unfortunate that the European Union did not provide Georgia with candidate status in 2022, which would have been an important acknowledgment of the sacrifices that ordinary Georgians have made across the decades for their pro-Western choice. Candidate status would have also been a powerful mechanism for reinvigorating democratic development in Georgia. That said, the EU did provide a "European perspective" and 12-point criteria to fulfill in order to receive candidate status in 2023. One of these criteria includes ensuring justice for media owners.

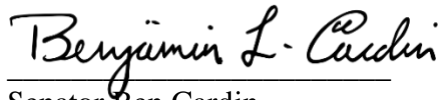
Over the course of your presidency, you have been an outspoken and principled leader for Georgian democracy, Euro-Atlantic integration, and human rights. To that end, we believe that breaking the cycle of political prosecution in Georgia, such as securing Mr. Gvaramia's release in particular, is not only an important humanitarian gesture and the correction of an injustice, but a critical step toward securing Georgians' much deserved EU candidacy.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to continuing to work with you to promote the values that are so important to both of our countries.

Sincerely,



Congressman Joe Wilson
Chairman



Senator Ben Cardin
Co-Chairman



Congressman Steve Cohen
Ranking Member



Senator Roger F. Wicker
Ranking Member