



Brussels, 15 December 2017

**To: Mr Giorgi Margvelashvili, President of Georgia
Mr Giorgi Kvirikashvili, Prime Minister of Georgia
Mr Irakli Kobakhidze, Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia**

We, the undersigned members of the European Parliament, have been strong supporters of Georgia, its sovereignty, territorial integrity and the European choice of its people. Since re-establishment of its independence in 1991, Georgia has come far. Today, Georgia is viewed as one of the most advanced in the context of democracy among Eastern Partnership countries. This is not least because it has vibrant pro-western opposition and free media outside government control.

For this progress to continue, it is important that the Georgian Government addresses some outstanding issues.

We urge the Georgian Government to respect with the final landmark the judgment of the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights on the case of former Prime Minister Vano Merabishvili, establishing that the Government breached Article 18 of the European Convention on Human Rights by pursuing “hidden agenda” and “ulterior motives” when arresting him. In today’s challenging international security environment, it is in the interests of the Georgian people that all political forces find common ground and look to the future. With this in mind, we call on the Georgian authorities to release Mr Merabishvili with no delay.

The role of parliament, but especially parliamentary scrutiny of the executive is a fundamental principle in every democracy. Prime Minister and ministers should not be avoiding parliamentary scrutiny. Opposition, including its ability to fundraise and compete, should be treated in line with standards to which Georgia aspires.

It is important Georgia preserves the pluralistic media landscape that offers diversity of views to its citizens. We have followed the effort to change its ownership of Rustavi2, the country’s most popular TV channel, and taken note of concerns expressed by interlocutors such as the OSCE Representative on Media Freedom.

We remain committed supporters of Georgia and its democratic, European future. However, the responsibility of ensuring that Georgia’s progress continues primarily rests on those whom the Georgian people elected to govern their country.

Yours sincerely,

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