



Georgian Association

IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, INC

Statement about the recent legislative developments in Georgia

March 2, 2023

The Georgian Association in the United States is troubled by the recent trends in Georgia, which appear to undermine the country's western aspirations. Recent proposal of bills aimed at controlling and restricting civic space is among a succession of events that worries those of us who care deeply about Georgia and its future.

The Georgian community in the United States has championed close ties between the two countries and advocated for the irreversible course towards building a strong, independent, democratic nation for almost one hundred years. We have been steadfast in this cause through the 70 years of Soviet occupation, supported the emerging democracy after the fall of the Soviet Union, and continue to foster close political, economic and cultural links between the two countries. We are concerned that the restrictions proposed in the draft bills in view of the current context of war and malign influences in the region will isolate the Georgian civil society and population, and will make linkages with the West more difficult and frail.

As an organization focused on close ties between the two countries, we are all too familiar with the effects of the cold-war era constraints and censorship on connections with "the West " that will only disrupt Georgia's ability to be a master of its own democratic destiny. Georgia deserves better. The people have already enshrined this desire in the Constitution under article 78 and we must stand with them to counter attempts to thwart the hard-earned progress of 30 years on this path to a fully functioning democracy.

We call upon the reason and conscience of the authorities in Georgia and the United States to reflect upon the experiences of similar laws in Russia and act without delay to protect the country's civic space, independence, and democratic aspirations.

As Ronald Reagan once said, "Freedom is a fragile thing and it's never more than one generation away from extinction. It is not ours by way of inheritance; it must be fought for and defended constantly by each generation." Let us work together to ensure that Georgia's future is one of freedom, democracy, and prosperity.

- *The Board of Directors, The Georgian Association in the United States*

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