

Russia Says Mass Protests in Georgia Are Western Coup Attempt

By [AFP](#)

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Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. **Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

Moscow on Friday accused the West of fomenting days of mass protests in Georgia, likening them to an attempted coup designed to sow tension on Russia's borders.

Hundreds of Georgians rallied outside parliament for a fourth day on Friday, as lawmakers dropped a controversial new "foreign agent" law that triggered violent clashes between police and protesters earlier this week.

The days-long demonstrations point to turmoil over the future in Georgia, which aims to join the EU and NATO, much to the frustration of Moscow, which invaded the country in 2008 and recognized two separatist territories in the north of the country.

"There is no doubt that the law on the registration of non-governmental organizations ... was used as an excuse to start, generally speaking, an attempt to change the government by

force," Lavrov said in comments carried by Russian news agencies.

The protests, he added, "are of course being orchestrated from abroad" with the aim of creating "an irritant on the borders of Russia."

The Kremlin criticized remarks made by Georgia's president delivered from the United States and accused a third party of stoking "anti-Russian" sentiment in the country.

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"We see where the president of Georgia is addressing her people from," Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

Nevertheless, the mood was festive outside parliament in the capital Tbilisi on Friday as throngs of Georgians blew whistles, waved the red and white national flag, and held signs that read: "We are Europe."

Georgian lawmakers voted down the bill after its second reading with just one MP out of 36 backing it.

"This is a victory. We won thanks to our unity," said 21-year-old student Irina Shurgaia, demonstrating outside parliament.

"The whole world saw that Georgians are united in their resolve to be part of the European family," she told AFP.

Georgia applied for EU membership together with Ukraine and Moldova days after Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

EU leaders granted formal candidate status to Kyiv and Chisinau last June but said Tbilisi must implement reforms first.

The chairman of the ruling Georgian Dream party chairman, Irakli Kobakhidze doubled down on the motivation behind the bill even after lawmakers rejected it.

"Being an agent is shameful no matter whose agent you are," he told journalists, calling Georgian NGOs "agents of foreign influence."

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