

## Central Election Administration Reports Alleged Pressure on Employees and Illegal Use of Personal Data

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The Central Election Administration spoke about alleged pressure on employees and attempts to illegally use their personal data. However, the CEC did not specify the cases under discussion, although it stated that information would be provided to international partners.

"It seems that the targeted discrediting campaign of the election administration of Georgia and its employees is moving to a new stage. Unethical attempts to obtain and use their personal information, allegedly dishonestly, including attempts to intrude into the personal lives of election administration employees and obtain personal information from them, have been recorded," the statement reads.

The CEC noted that such campaigns and efforts aim to "overshadow and depreciate the significant progress" achieved recently. They view this as psychological pressure on election administration employees, hindering their professional activities. It remains unclear which campaigns the election administration is referencing.

"The election administration will use all legal means to prevent violations of its employees' rights, intrusion into their personal lives, and the unlawful dissemination of personal information."



The employees of the administration will continue their activities in accordance with the law and with dignity to ensure the elections are conducted at a highly professional level. The election administration will continue to uphold the legal interests of its employees, and it will take all measures provided by law to address any violations of these interests. This includes

informing all international partners of such violations."

The CEC expressed concern that certain individuals or groups in the country are prioritizing personal or party interests over the broader goal of enhancing the election process. The CEC urged all parties to adhere to ethical and legal standards, emphasizing the importance of conducting the 2024 elections in

line with international standards, as the elections are a matter of collective concern and responsibility.

"Today, with Europe focusing on establishing high standards for the reputation, activity, and image protection of election administration employees, some parties in our country are acting based on narrow personal or partisan interests. This behav-

ior hinders the crucial process of election modernization and damages the electoral environment. We urge everyone to adhere to ethical and legal standards and not obstruct the 2024 elections from proceeding in line with international standards, as these elections are a matter of collective concern," the CEC stated.

## DRI Reports Alleged Russian Truck Traffic Crossing Enguri River

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The Democracy Research Institute reported, according to their sources, that last week

there was allegedly active truck traffic with Russian license plates observed crossing the Enguri River into Georgia and back, specifically in the Gali re-

gion. "Some cars were escorted to the Enguri Bridge by vehicles from the State Auto Inspection, also known as GAI, of the de facto

Ministry of Internal Affairs of Abkhazia. Additionally, trucks crossed the 'border' checkpoint after 7:00 PM Moscow time, following a ban on movement imposed by both the Russian and Abkhaz sides, primarily affecting residents of the Gali region.

Abkhazia de facto and Russian security services are searching local residents to confirm that they did not capture the movement of these trucks on photo or video material," DRI statement reads.

Democracy Research Institute stated that the meeting between the first deputy speaker of the Georgian Parliament, Giorgi Volski, a leader of the Georgian Dream, and businessman Davit Khidasheli, who has close ties to the Russian government, as well as the subsequent disclosure of their conversation details in the Georgian media, reignited concerns about why the Georgian

authorities are turning a blind eye to the movement of cargo to and from Russia through the territory of Abkhazia, which is occupied.

"The leaders of the Georgian Dream may present this negative trend as indicative of the rise of the Georgian economy through increased freight turnover with Russia, or perhaps as a policy aimed at integrating Abkhazia into Georgia. However, common sense prompts us to consider how willing Russia, and even more so its satellite Abkhazia's de facto government, would be to prioritize Georgia's interests.

Obviously, the only logical conclusion here is that the political power in Georgia is guided only by its narrow interests when cooperating with Russia. In this context, a rhetorical question arises: how different is the policy of the Georgian government from the de facto government of Abkhazia, which it labels as a proxy regime of Russia?" DRI stated.



The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

PM Kobakhidze: 'Anti-Chinese' Campaign Backed Questionably



In response to a question about the "anti-Chinese" campaign, the Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Kobakhidze, stated that certain entities are carrying it out with questionable financial backing, as reported by the government administration.

"The purpose of such campaigns is to

damage our state interests. Last year, we signed an agreement on strategic partnership with China, which is of great importance for realizing our state interests and deepening cooperation between

Georgia and China in various areas, including economic development.

When specific forces with dubious funding are conducting an anti-Chinese campaign under such circumstances, of course, this is also worrying. Therefore, it is very important that everyone takes a proper stance on all acts directed

against the interests of the state. Any such anti-state action is very concerning," Kobakhidze stated.

PM Kobakhidze Stresses Need for 'Concrete Tangible Results' in US Partnership



Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Kobakhidze, underscored the necessity for 'concrete tangible results' within the context of the partnership with the United States of America. Specifically, he highlighted visa-free travel and the enhancement of trade relations.

"Our wish is that the partnership has concrete, tangible results. What could these results be? We have discussed this many times - it is the deepening of trade relations, for which a free trade agreement would be very important; This is visa-free travel, which can be done freely;

These are direct flights.

Naturally, progress in this regard would be a concrete example of how the partnership can become tangible for our citizens. I hope that we will make progress in this direction," Kobakhidze said.

European Commission disburses first Euro 4.5 billion of bridge financing to Ukraine under Ukraine Facility

On 20 March, the European Commission disbursed the first Euro 4.5 billion of support under the EU's new Ukraine Facility.

"Through this exceptional bridge financing, the EU is providing much needed liquidity to Ukraine, to help finance the functioning of the state, such as public wages, pensions, and the provision of basic public services, so that the country can continue focusing efforts on winning the war," says a press release by the Commission.

On the same day, Ukraine has also submitted its official Ukraine Plan that paves the way for regular payments under the Facility, conditioned to the

reform and investment agenda of Ukraine for the next four years.

"The plan maps out how Ukraine can get back to rapid growth and start to recover the

losses that the war has caused. With it, Ukraine has laid a solid foundation for the EU's support,

right up until the end of 2027," said European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

She added that in April, once Ukraine fulfils the conditions agreed, the EU will make a second disbursement of the bridge financing of Euro 1.5 billion.

As a next step, the Commission will now swiftly assess the Ukraine Plan and submit a proposal for a Council of the European Union implementing a decision to approve it as conditions to access regular payments.

The Ukraine Facility of up to Euro 50 billion will provide stable and sustainable financing to support Ukraine's recovery, reconstruction, and modernisation, including key reforms necessary on its EU accession track for the period of 2024-2027. This amount is composed of up to Euro 17 billion in grants and up to Euro 33 billion in loans.

(euneighbourseast.eu)



Weather

Friday, March 22

Day Light Rain High: 7°C

Night Light Rain Low: 3°C

Saturday, March 23

Day Mostly Cloudy High: 15°C

Night Rain Low: 4°C

published by

The Messenger

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