

Prosecutors office launches investigation into 'leaked files' with alleged blackmailing materials on clerics

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The Prosecutor's Office of Georgia has launched an investigation into the case of leaked documents containing information allegedly gathered on senior clergymen by State Security Service agents through spying, under Article 158 (1,2) of Georgia's Criminal Code: illegal recording or eavesdropping on a private conversation, unauthorized data acquisition using technical methods, and unlawful distribution of information, respectively.

The Prosecutor's Office has called on anyone who possesses the unlawful recordings and documents, including the media, to cooperate with the investigation and hand over the available evidence. It also encouraged everyone to refrain from disclosing private information publicly.

On September 13, an unidentified source leaked over 3,000 documents to the media, reportedly containing blackmail information about Georgian clergy. The link to the files is no longer searchable and available on the internet.

The media outlets received a link to the files from 'Hakim Pasha,' titled 'Georgian State Security Service's incriminating materials against Patriarchate.' Since 2014, the nickname has been used to leak information on multiple occasions. It is still unclear whether the same individual or a group stands behind the recently released files.

The anonymous sender left a note, saying that he had spent several years working for the SSS, which he describes as 'the biggest threat to the country, that listens to everyone and which has made the church one of the biggest evils in Georgia.'

The files allegedly contain data obtained via illegal surveillance since 2014,



Some of the documents published are supposedly briefs, reports, and dossiers prepared for the Security Service's Analytical Department. The veracity of the documents remains unconfirmed.

under the Georgian Dream government.

The files contain the personal data of top clerics. Some of the files point at alleged crimes like sexual relations with minors, taking bribes in exchange for mediation to pardon an inmate, spying for Russia, and other crimes. One of the files says that one top cleric received \$30,000 from a Russian citizen for information on the Tbilisi-based, US-built Lugar lab and on the meetings of Georgian Patriarchate Ilia II.

Spokesperson of the Georgian Patriarchate, Andria Jagmaidze says that 'it would be very bad if the information on illegal surveillance turns out to be true.' He claims that he has seen and heard a lot of 'fake news' and is in no hurry to make a comment.

Several Georgian journalists have confirmed that the alleged State Security Service files, leaked anonymously yesterday, contain briefs on their conversations with the clergy.

Eka Kvesitadze, a talk-show host of Mtavari Arkhi TV, wrote in a Facebook post that the files included details of her 2-year-old phone conversations with Bishop Iakob of Bodbe, who used to call her 'drunk' and tell stories from inside the Georgian Orthodox Patriarchate. She added that Security Service knows everything, that people write on Facebook, citing briefs that allegedly described her discussions with journalist Ninia Kakabadze about now-dismissed Metropolitan Petre of Chkondidi diocese.

Head of TV Pirveli's News, Nodar Meladze, editor of Tabula online media outlet, Levan Sutidze, and Formula TV reporter Nino Vardzelashvili confirmed that the files contained their conversation with different clergy.

The revelation came months after Nika Gvaramia, the director of Mtavari TV, aired purported Security Service memos involving spying on clergy, businesses, civil society leaders, and government officials.

On September 14, the State Security Service expressed readiness to cooperate tightly at every stage of the investigation with the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia. Domestic intelligence agencies called on media outlets and politically interested persons to refrain from disseminating inaccurate and unverified information, harming the dignity of security officers and the agency as a whole. The Agency did not comment on the authenticity of the released files.

Recall that the Georgian Dream leadership destroyed thousands of files containing unlawfully obtained personal information collected by the UNM government shortly after taking office in 2012.



PM Garibashvili says leaked files are 'UNM's dirty, anti-state provocation'.

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 3.1141; Euro - 3.6759; GBP - 4.3189; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.2689; Swiss Franc - 3.3761

EDF presented Georgia's hydro management roadmap to improve the quality of hydroelectric forecasts by GSE

French company EDF (Electricite de France) has presented to the Georgian State Electrosystem (GSE) a Hydro Power Roadmap that analyses the potentiality of hydroelectricity power from 2020 to 2035. This roadmap was co-financed by the Agence Francaise de Developpement (AFD), KfW and the European Union (EU).

On September 9, Electricite de France (EDF), a French state-owned company has presented the hydro management roadmap (Hydrology and Reservoir Guide Project) to the GSE. The online event was held in presence of His Excellency Mr. Diego Colas, Ambassador of France to Georgia.

The presented Hydrology and Reservoir Guide module was developed by EDF with the involvement of GSE staff. The aim of the module is to verify the possibility of predicting hydrology in Georgia on the example of the Rioni River. Based on the work done, GSE will be able to improve the management of the energy balance and the optimal use of available water resources.

"France is keen to support the energy sector in Georgia and has done so, in close partnership with the European Union and Germany, now for many years. The partnership between AFD and KfW, and between us and our Georgian partners GSE and the Ministry of Economy, is a very successful one. As part of this cooperation, EDF last year helped GSE develop the first Georgian national plan for the expansion of electricity production capacities over the next 15 years (2020-2035). As a follow up to the establishment of this plan, EDF and GSE prepared a roadmap to improve the quality of hydro forecasts in Georgia. The objective of this study is for Georgia to acquire the means to better develop forecasts of future hydro availability in Georgia, which can inform better programming of production and investment in this strategic sector. Better information mean better decision-making and better consultation with the public, which are key to modern, European, democratic development in Georgia." said H.E. Mr. Diego Colas, Ambassador of France in Georgia.

The Technical Assistance financed by the AFD started in 2019, in parallel with the Pub-

lic policy loan in the energy sector, co-financed by AFD, KfW and the European Union since 2018. The first activity was carried out until the end of the year 2020, with the implementation by GSE, and by the support of EDF, of the first national plan for the expansion of the electricity production capacity over fifteen years (2020-2035). The Hydro Road Map, roadmap linked to the use of water resources in regards with the hydroelectric production, is a second activity, that started in January 2021.

The goal of the project is to build a hydro management roadmap, which will define the priority list of actions to better evaluate expected river run-off and the streamflow:

- re-building a local hydrological measurement network

- hydrological model simulations based on local and recent dataset

- Building a forecast center

An objective assessment of Georgia's hydrological potential will facilitate the complex use of water resources and will have a positive impact on the country's economic development. Predicting hydrology will enable hydro-power plants in Georgia to carry out safe management of reservoirs, to use cascading effectively, to determine the optimization of water resources and energy, energy surplus and shortage.

"The work completed by EDF and GSE provides a useful assessment and roadmap for the improvement of water resources management in Georgia. The actions proposed will be included in the programming under preparation with the Government of Georgia, to be implemented start-

ing from 2022, with crucial impact on river monitoring and water management, necessary to address the increase demand of sectors as hydropower, irrigation, urban development, in the context of climate change." said the Director of the AFD regional agency for the South Caucasus, Mr. Raphael Jozan.

The online presentation was attended by: Ucha Uchaneishvili, General Director of the Georgian State Electric System, Davit Tvalabeishvili, Deputy Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia (MOESD), representatives of Energo-Pro Georgia and hydro-power plants, Georgian Energy Development Fund, Georgian National Energy and Water Supply Regulatory Commission



(GNERC), the National Environmental Agency (NEA), and also the independent experts specializing in the renewable energy.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY THE MESSENGER STAFF

Kobakhidze says if the National Movement dares spread footage showing private life, GD will respond 'accordingly'

"This is a campaign against the state and the church, and of course, this Bolshevik campaign must be properly responded to by the public, especially on October 2," GD Chairman Irakli Kobakhidze said at briefing about the secret materials allegedly spread by a Secret Security Service employee.

According to Kobakhidze, this is preparing the ground for the release of footage of private life by the National Movement.

"It is very difficult to watch the Bolshevik campaign, which we see through three televisions owned by the National Movement. This is a campaign against the state and the church, and of course this Bolshevik campaign must be properly responded to by the public, especially on October 2, when our voters will go to the polls.

Even more difficult for us was the information leaked from the National Movement that this Bolshevik campaign is preparing the background for the dissemination of certain private life recordings. These Bolshevik actions must, of course, be accordingly responded to.

As you know, we held a briefing on this topic and after that two representatives of the party TV stations, Nika Gvaramia and Diana Trapaidze, issued some statements, where they reaffirm and are fully aware of the recording that should be disseminated by the National Movement. Thus they create a kind of alibi. If they do not understand this, the society will give a worthy response.

All that we know is absolutely shocking, and only the Bolsheviks can think of spreading such recordings. The messages we saw from Gvaramia and Diana Trapaidze directly indicate that these two depraved people have direct information about everything that is planned by the National Movement," Irakli Kobakhidze said.

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A part of the files that were needed for the inquiry, were saved.

Georgian Public Defender Nino Lomjaria says that 'there is a high possibility that the state agencies are still illegally

collecting personal data and using it against individuals.

PM Irakli Garibashvili has stated that 'it is a dirty provocation of the United National Movement (UNM) opposition party against state institutions.' He argued the 'oppressor, evil force' of the UNM and ex-Presi-

dent Mikheil Saakashvili aims to discredit key institutions in the country, adding that the largest opposition party is in a permanent fight against the army, police, court to 'demoralize the public and discredit the system.'

The ruling party claims that

the UNM opposition party intends to release secret recordings of public figures' private lives or 'their fabrication' from abroad in the coming days in order to inflame tensions ahead of the October 2 municipal elections.

Weather

Wednesday, September 15

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 31°C

Night Clear

Low: 19°C

Thursday, September 16

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 30°C

Night Partly Cloudy

Low: 18°C

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