

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

## NGOs Seek Constitutional Court Action to Revoke 'Foreign Agents' Law

Non-governmental organizations have applied to the Constitutional Court, requesting the repeal of the "Foreign Agents" law. The organizations have stated that if the Constitutional Court does not act promptly, they will resort to alternative legal actions. Additionally, they are preparing to submit a complaint to the European Court of Human Rights.

"Georgian non-governmental organizations continue the legal battle against the Russian law. We declare that we will not live by the rules of this law and will use all domestic and international mechanisms to impede its operation until it is unconditionally repealed.

We are preparing a lawsuit to be submitted to the Constitutional Court, which we will address in the near future. The Constitutional Court can use the powers granted by the Constitution to suspend the operation of the relevant articles of the law.

However, we do not consider the Constitutional Court to be the only way to fight. Our legal efforts will continue in other directions as well if the court does not act promptly and within the constitutional framework. We will pursue alternative legal dispute paths. At the same time, we are preparing to submit a complaint to the European Court of Human Rights, which we will address at the appropriate time.

All non-governmental organizations and media affected by this law can become participants and join us. Together, we will win. No to the Russian law, yes to Europe!" the statement reads.

Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze responded to the statement made by NGOs



regarding the Strasbourg court. He stated that the management team has thoroughly examined the practices of the Strasbourg court before initiating the "Transparency on Foreign Influence" law and assured that the law passed by the Parliament of Georgia fully aligns with

Strasbourg's practices.

Kobakhidze was asked by journalists whether the government would adhere to the decision of the Strasbourg court should the court decide to suspend the law. In response, Kobakhidze referenced the "Rustavi 2 case", stating that

Strasbourg "made the decision under political influence" at that time.

"I hope that the Strasbourg court will not be under such political influence, and therefore, everything will proceed in the best interests of our state," said the Prime Minister.

## Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Strongly Condemns Prime Minister Kobakhidze's Remarks on Ukraine

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine has issued a statement strongly condemning the remarks made by Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze who vowed that Georgia would never experience a Maidan and claimed that external forces influenced the Ukrainian government without taking responsibility for subsequent events.

"Regarding the parallel between Maidan and the ongoing

processes in Georgia, I want to emphasize that no one will see a Maidan in Georgia. Let me remind everyone of the consequences of Maidan for Ukraine. At that time, the Ukrainian government was appointed from outside forces, first once and then a second time. Ultimately, those responsible for appointing the government from external sources did not take responsibility for the events that unfolded in the country.

Until 2013, Ukraine was a country with territorial integ-

riety, and its economy was \$200 billion. Today, this country has fallen. After many years, its economy has significantly diminished. Also, 20% of Ukraine's territory is occupied, and tens of thousands of people have died. Who is going to take responsibility for this? - No one. Therefore, the most important thing we should be careful about is Georgia's independence because no one else can take responsibility for protecting the interests of our country. This was best demonstrated by the

example of Ukraine," Kobakhidze said.

The Ministry found these remarks unacceptable and regretted their resemblance to Russian narratives. Ukraine urged Georgian politicians to refrain from aligning with such narratives and reaffirmed its commitment to Georgia's territorial integrity and the aspirations of Georgian people.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine condemns unfriendly statements of the Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Kobakhidze and his distorted assessments of the events in Ukraine.

The statements of the head of Georgia's Government regarding our state, the Revolution of Dignity, heroism and struggle of the Ukrainian people for freedom and independence are unacceptable and outrageous.

Not Ukraine, which is defending itself, but exclusively Russia, which treacherously attacked our land, is responsible for thousands of lost lives, destruction of Ukrainian cities and villages. It is notable that the

word "Russia" was never mentioned in the statement of the Georgian official.

It is regrettable to observe the consistent and permanent degradation of political statements of the Prime Minister of Georgia, which have recently become difficult to distinguish from the statements of the Russian leadership.

The Russian Federation must be punished for all the crimes committed in Ukraine, Georgia and other countries during the last decades.

We call on Georgian politicians to refrain from making such statements against our country, which replicate Russian narratives, and from using Ukraine in the internal political struggle in Georgia.

Ukraine will continue to support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia and the aspirations of the Georgian people for peace, freedom, strengthening their own statehood and ties with other free countries of the world," the statement reads.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine

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### Comment of the MFA Press Office on recent anti-Ukrainian statements of the Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Kobakhidze

30 May 2024 18:10

GEORGIA

# US Set to Reveal Russian Agents Within Georgian Government

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

Before the veto was overridden, Radio Liberty reported that the US would disclose information it holds regarding Russian agents within the Georgian government, accompanied by sanctions, should the Georgian Dream succeed in overcoming the president's veto and ultimately enact the Russian law.

"The US possesses information that can destroy the reputation of the Georgian political elite" - a member of the team working on the MEGOBARI Act told the journalist of the Washington bureau of Radio Liberty on the condition of anonymity.

As per the source, the revelation of Russian agents within the Georgian political elite, alongside instances of Chinese influence, is poised to undermine the narrative of the Georgian Dream, which contends that the "foreign agents bill" safeguards Georgia's sovereignty. Should this transpire, it can be inferred that the exposure of Russian agents ahead of the 2024 parliamentary elections could wield considerable influence over the country's internal political dynamics.

The scandalous revelations from Radio Liberty prompted swift reactions from both the government and the opposition in

Georgia. The opposition eagerly awaits the publication of this information. Nika Gvaramia, co-chairman of the "Ahali" party, asserts that one of the reasons Georgian Dream is afraid to give up power is the fear of exposure. The incoming government, born out of the elections, will be compelled to reveal Russian agents within Georgian politics. According to him, Bidzina Ivanishvili's speech at the rally on April 29 was "the statement of a Russian agent," requiring very little interpretation.

Government officials appear to downplay the concern. They assert that they are not afraid of any information to be disclosed. "They can make public whatever information they want," responded Georgian Dream MP Anri Okhanashvili to the news.

Tbilisi Mayor Kakhi Kaladze dismisses discussions about the presence of Russian agents in the Georgian government as "nonsense", stating he has no intention to comment on such matters. Conversely, representatives of the Georgian Dream faction accuse the Americans of resorting to blackmail, deeming it unacceptable to engage with Georgia using such tactics.

According to Irakli Kadagishvili, a Georgian Dream

MP, genuine partnership is absent when discussions revolve around the disclosure of information. He questions why, if such information exists, it hasn't been revealed until now.

Despite the assertions of Georgian Dream representatives, they have legitimate reasons for concern. On September 14, 2023, the US imposed sanctions on over 150 companies and individuals, including Otar Fartskhaladze, the former Prosecutor General of Georgia and an individual closely associated with Bidzina Ivanishvili's entourage.

At that time, representatives of Georgian Dream declared that Fartskhaladze had been absent from government circles for 9-10 years, emphasising his status as a private individual unaffiliated with the government. Meanwhile, the opposition called for an immediate investigation and stressed that Fartskhaladze might not be acting alone, urging the identification of other potential Russian agents.

At the time, Zurab Japaridze, the leader of Girchi - More Freedom, remarked "We have Russians in power; this is not only evident from Fartskhaladze's exposure, but also from their entire modus operandi. As long as they remain in power, their every move seems dictated by a desire

not to provoke Russia. In essence, they serve Russian interests, and this is a regrettable reality."

Georgian Dream did not pursue any investigation into Fartskhaladze's case. Instead, they shielded him from sanctions. Georgian media has frequently drawn direct connections to the activities of the Russian agency within the country. Moreover, they highlight that Georgian Dream has not disclosed any Russian agents since assuming power.

The impact of the Russian agency's actions is evident. For instance, in 2022, Georgians fighting in Ukraine publicly disclosed that their personal information, including copies of military credentials and other documents, had been obtained by Russia. This isn't the initial instance of Russia obtaining personal information from Georgian fighters and soldiers, with accusations pointing towards representatives from the Georgian side for the handover of such documents.

In 2021, the former Chief of the General Staff, Gigi Kalandadze, stated that shortly after the Georgian Dream came to power in 2012, the network of the agency in Russia and the occupied territories was collectively apprehended by Russian

intelligence, with the list provided to Russia by Georgian authorities.

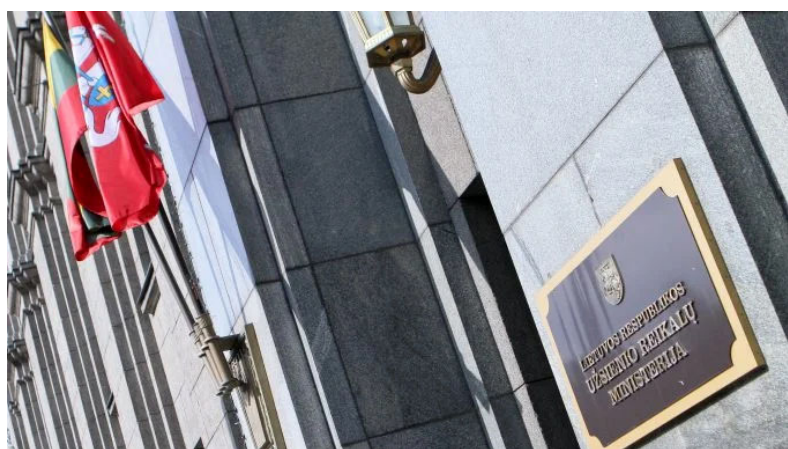
When viewed within a broader context, Georgia's post-Soviet history is replete with discussions about Russian agents and reciprocal allegations concerning Russian agency. Virtually every politician in Georgia has faced accusations of being a Russian agent. During his tenure, Mikheil Saakashvili often accused his political adversaries of having ties to Russia. However, once the crisis subsided, no investigations were initiated. Conversely, Saakashvili's opponents levelled accusations against him, alleging that he acted in favour of Russia. Simultaneously, none of the authorities in the country implemented the Lustration Law. While the topic was actively debated during Saakashvili's rule, it failed to yield any tangible results.

The exposure of Russian agents, coupled with sanctions, now seems inevitable with the impending enactment of Georgian Dream's "Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence". While Georgian Dream may attempt to discredit potential whistleblowing materials, it's unlikely to prevent the active discussion of the Russian agency in the media.

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

### Foreign Ministry of Lithuania Summons Georgian Ambassador Over Passing of "Transparency" Law



The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania stated that after the President's veto on the "Transparency of Foreign Influence" law was overridden and the law was passed on May 29, the Georgian ambassador was summoned.

The Ministry noted that the

European Union.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed its deep sorrow regarding the steps taken by the ruling party of Georgia and other actions aimed at intimidating and restricting the activities of civil society in the country.

These actions fundamentally contradict the country's aspirations for EU and NATO integration [...]

Several other legislative initiatives incompatible with EU integration have recently been introduced in the country. Anti-Western propaganda spread, and mass protests followed the government's campaign of intimidation and violence against civil society representatives.

Lithuania is deeply concerned about these events and is discussing possible countermeasures with its partners," the statement reads.

### Georgian Parliament Amends Election Code: Dissolves CEC Advisory Group, Alters Decision-Making

In an expedited manner dur-

ing the third reading, Georgian Parliament supported the draft

ing the advisory group "is supported by existing practical ex-



law amending the Election Code, which aims to dissolve the CEC advisory group.

80 deputies backed the amendment.

The CEC advisory group is composed of international and/or local experts chosen by representatives of the Public Defender's Office and monitoring organizations.

The explanatory note states that the advisability of dissolv-

experience, which clearly demonstrates that this group has not functioned effectively, primarily due to the reluctance of monitoring organizations to participate in its activities."

In addition, the registered change eliminates the requirement for the support of two-thirds of the members to make decisions in the CEC, allowing decisions to be made by a simple majority of the full composition.

## Weather

Friday, May 31

Day ☀️ Clear  
High: 30°C

Night 🌧️ Mostly Cloudy  
Low: 17°C

Saturday, June 1

Day 🌧️ Scattered T-storm  
High: 24°C

Night 🌧️ Partly Cloudy  
Low: 16°C

European Commission granted Georgia candidate status on the condition of fulfilling nine recommendations. When the Parliament began considering the law, the European Union explicitly warned Georgia that the Russian-style law did not align with the standards and values of the

published by

**The Messenger**

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