

U.S. Helsinki Commission Warns of Georgia's Authoritarian Shift Ahead of Elections

By Liza Mchedlidze

On October 16, 2024, leaders from the U.S. Helsinki Commission issued a statement expressing concerns over Georgia's upcoming parliamentary elections on October 26, warning of the country's authoritarian shift.

"Over the past several decades, the people of Georgia have demonstrated their commitment to democracy and the rule of law," the statement read. The commissioners emphasized that the Georgian government must ensure free and fair elections, monitored by independent observers, and provide space for political opposition, as it has done in the past. "The Georgian people deserve a government that respects their right to elect their own leaders democratically."

The commissioners voiced deep concerns about the country's "authoritarian trajectory," warning that it threatens Georgia's democratic future and its long-held aspirations for closer ties with Western institutions like NATO and the European Union. "The government's authoritarian trajectory imperils Georgia's democratic future and its people's deep-seated Euro-Atlantic aspirations," the statement continued.



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WASHINGTON—Today, U.S. Helsinki Commission Chairman Rep. Joe Wilson (SC-02), Ranking Member Rep. Steve Cohen (TN-09), Commissioner Rep. Richard Hudson (NC-09), Commissioner Rep. Marc Veasey

In recent months, the U.S. government has signaled its unease with developments in Georgia. In September, the State Department announced a series of sanctions targeting Georgian officials accused of undermining democracy and violating human rights. These measures reflect growing concern in Washington over the Georgian Dream party's tightening grip on power, its

treatment of political opponents, and the weakening of democratic institutions.

The U.S. Helsinki Commission also highlighted the introduction of the MEGOBARI Act, a bipartisan piece of legislation designed to support democratic reforms in Georgia. The act, which is making its way through the U.S. House of Representatives, underscores the U.S. com-

mitment to Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration. "The bill reaffirms the United States' commitment to supporting Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration and countering the influence of authoritarian regimes, particularly Russia," the commission noted.

The upcoming parliamentary elections are seen as a critical moment for Georgia's political

future. The U.S. has called on the Georgian government to uphold its democratic commitments, warning that continued backsliding could strain its relations with Western partners. "The Georgian government must honor their obligations to their country and citizens by holding free and fair elections," the commissioners stated.

State Security Service of Georgia Warns of Fake Leaked Footage Ahead of Elections

By Liza Mchedlidze

On October 16, Georgia's State Security Service

(SSSG) revealed a potential scheme involving fabricated video and audio recordings targeting government officials. According to the SSSG, political

groups plan to release this fake content just days before the parliamentary elections on October

26, with the goal of sparking conflict within the government, straining ties with the Orthodox Church, and damaging Georgia's relations with Western allies.

The SSSG claims the footage will be framed as a leak from within their own agency, intending to both discredit the Service and ignite political protests. These groups allegedly aim to provoke instability and public unrest in the lead-up to the elections.

The SSSG's statement stressed that it felt compelled to notify the public in advance to safeguard state security. They warned of potential manipulation designed to create disorder for political purposes. The agency also emphasized that it is actively monitoring these groups and will respond to any legal violations related to the scheme.

In response to a statement from the Security Service, Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze accused the opposition of seeking to undermine the country's stability.

Kobakhidze characterized the

political landscape as being shaped by "forces that do not want good for our country." He specifically pointed to "the radical opposition and their foreign patrons," suggesting that both internal and external actors are conspiring against the government.

While acknowledging the existence of these political forces, the Prime Minister expressed confidence that their actions would not affect the election results. "I think that such acts cannot have any influence on the results of the elections," he stated. However, he praised the vigilance of state agencies, particularly the SSSG, for their proactive approach in informing the public about these potential threats.

"Of course, special attention is needed to ensure that no one can have any type of negative influence on these elections," Kobakhidze added. He emphasized the importance of maintaining a secure electoral environment and thanked the SSSG for its efforts in safeguarding the democratic process.

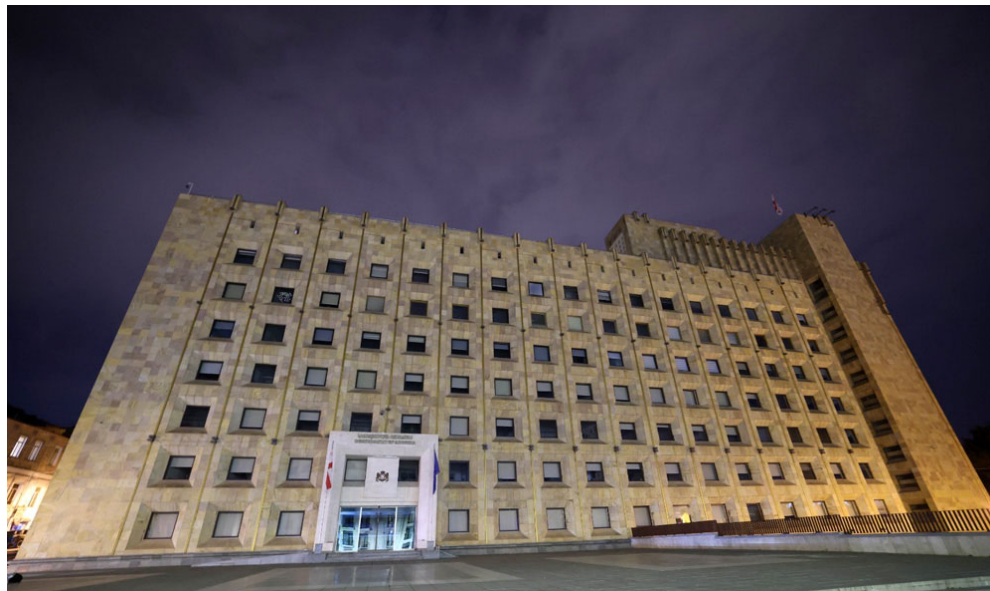


სახელმწიფო უსაფრთხოების სამსახური / State Security Service Of Georgia

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Georgia Suspended from Open Government Partnership



The Georgian government confirmed to the media outlet Netgazeti that the country's participation in the Open Government Partnership (OGP) has been suspended.

The suspension is a result of Georgia's failure to meet its OGP commitments, a concern raised by local watchdogs.

about a possible suspension due to the government's handling of the reintroduced Law on Foreign Agents.

The OGP, founded in 2011 within the UN General Assembly, consists of 75 member states and thousands of civil society organizations.

Gov't Accuses President of Misusing Administrative Resources for Elections



administration attended the session. Minister of Justice Rati Bregadze stated that while the president's administration

The Georgian government accused President Salome Zourabichvili of using administrative resources for election purposes, specifically citing her October 7 announcement about organizing a coordination platform at the Orbeliani Palace on election day, October 26.

On October 16, a representative from the President's administration was summoned to the Interdepartmental Commission at the Ministry of Justice to discuss this matter.

provided a written explanation, the commission found it unsatisfactory. "We agreed to send another letter to the administration of the President of Georgia, requesting that a representative attend the next meeting to address the president's comments about 'celebrating the victory together'," Bregadze said.

The commission aims to prevent any violations of election legislation by civil servants and to address any infractions that may occur. The commission is chaired by Minister Bregadze.

Georgia: Ruling party takes the country away from the European path, says Borrell



representative Josep Borrell told journalists that "the ruling party's recent actions, statements and electoral promises take

The EU Foreign Affairs Council discussed the political situation in Georgia at a meeting on 14 September.

Speaking at a press conference after the Council, EU High Rep-

the country away from the European path and signal a shift towards authoritarianism."

"That is why the European Union accession process is de facto halted," he added.

Borrell called for waiting for the results of the parliamentary elections in Georgia, scheduled for 26 October, "which will be a crucial test for democracy in Georgia and its European Union path."

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Ukraine: Ivano-Frankivsk hosts European Research and Innovation Days



On 11 October, Ivano-Frankivsk hosted the European Research and Innovation Days for the second time.

The event was organised with

EU support as part of the New Economy of Ivano-Frankivsk (NEF) project, and brought together more than 100 participants to discuss research and in-

novation.

A special feature of this year's event were guest days for representatives of business, local authorities, architects, engineers and product designers. Participants visited Ivano-Frankivsk prior to the event to explore the city's cultural and business ecosystem, take part in thematic events and network.

The Research and Innovation Days took place at the newly opened co-working space Pole. growing products, also created as part of the EU-supported NEF project. (euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Thursday, October 17

Day Rain High: 16°C

Night Rain Low: 11°C

Friday, October 18

Day Mostly Cloudy High: 16°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 7°C

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The Messenger preserves the style of a source written in English where possible.

The highest German school diploma can now be acquired permanently at the German International School Tbilisi!

Since 2022, students have had the opportunity to graduate from the German International School Tbilisi with an Abitur - the highest and globally recognized German school diploma. This enables them to study anywhere in German-speaking countries or worldwide.

On Tuesday, October 8th, 2024, the recently founded school in Tbilisi received the certificate of recognition to be an official "deutsche Auslandsschule" – a German school abroad - from the German school authorities. The certificate was ceremonially handed over by the 1st Vice President of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs and Minister for Education and Child Day Care of the German Federal State of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Simone Oldenburg.

Next to pupils, teachers and parents, the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Ger-

many, Peter Fischer, the Ambassador of the Republic of Austria, Robert Gerschner, as well as partners and guests from the Georgian "National Center for Quality Assurance in Education" were present.

The school, which was founded in 2010 by Georgian and German parents, has thus achieved its most important goal: it offers children and teenagers in the Georgian capital Tbilisi a school education in German and is finally authorized to award the highest German diploma permanently without any need of individual certification.

This is a great honor for the school since the requirements for awarding the German Abitur abroad are high. In order to get a permanent certificate to award this diploma the school has to prove its ability to fulfill the required standards over several years.

"We are proud to have achieved this.

Thanks to the very dedicated founders of the school, the excellent staff and the great support from Georgia and Germany our young school successfully finalized its establishment process." the school director Stafani Droll says.

Currently there are 265 children and teenagers from the age of three to eighteen years old visiting the school and the associated kindergarten. There is eighteen nations represented among the pupils, which live in an international community in the modern school building in Bagebi.

The school has also been certified by Georgian authorities. Georgian language is taught there as a native language as well as a foreign language.

Therefore, the school represents a place of encounter of Georgian and German pupils and contributes to the traditionally close relations between the two countries in the future.



Mit Beschluss der Ständigen Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland vom 19. September 2024 wurde die

Deutsche Internationale Schule Tbilisi

als Deutsche Auslandsschule, die zur deutschen allgemeinen Hochschulreife führt, anerkannt.

Berlin, den 19. September 2024

Simone Oldenburg

1. Vizepräsidentin der Kultusministerkonferenz
Ministerin für Bildung und Kinderlageförderung des Landes Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

Die Deutsche Internationale Schule Tbilisi wird damit in die „Übersicht über die von der Kultusministerkonferenz anerkannten deutschen Auslandsschulen“ der Kultusministerkonferenz aufgenommen.

Sekretariat der Ständigen Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland

