

Georgian Dream Pushes to Ban 'UNM-Affiliated' Political Groups Before Elections

By Liza Mchedlidze

The Georgian Dream party is moving forward with plans to seek a Constitutional Court ruling that would ban political groups it claims are affiliated with the United National Movement (UNM). Majority leader Mamuka Mdinardze announced that the lawsuit will be filed before the October elections, with all parliamentary procedures wrapped up by September.

"Everything Parliament needs to do will be completed before the elections," Mdinardze said. "After that, it will be up to the Constitutional Court. If the Court evaluates the case even slightly objectively, I'm confident these parties will be banned this year."

He acknowledged that following his initial announcement, some observers grew optimistic that the process might be delayed. However, he said the extension requested by the relevant commission would only shift the timeline by a couple of months at most.

Parliament has already adopted the legislative amendments in the first reading, with 83 votes in favor. The package, introduced by Georgian Dream, would give the Constitutional Court the authority to ban a political party if its goals, activities,

or personnel resemble those of a previously banned party, even if it is not officially the same organization.

The legislation also proposes shorter decision-making timeframes for the Court: nine months under normal conditions

and just 14 days during election periods. MP Tornike Cheishvili, who presented the bill, indicated that lawmakers may further reduce these deadlines during the second reading.

Under current Georgian law, a political party can be banned

only by the Constitutional Court, and only if it is found to promote violent regime change, undermine national sovereignty, or incite hatred or unrest. Banned parties' remaining assets are transferred to the state.

Mdinardze also claimed that

foreign sponsors may push these opposition groups to participate in the elections, saying, "Since this may be their last election, their foreign patrons will likely encourage them to take part. But I believe both the public and our party will respond appropriately."



Targamadze Slams Court's Bail Decision as Disproportionate: 'I Have No Property, No Income'

By Liza Mchedlidze



Politician and former United National Movement MP Givi Targamadze has criticized a Tbilisi court's decision to impose a 10,000 GEL bail on him for failing to appear before Parliament's temporary investigative commission, calling the measure "disproportionate" given his financial circumstances.

Speaking to journalists after the hearing, Targamadze emphasized that he lives solely on a modest pension and does not own any assets.

"As a former member of parliament, my only income is a 1,000 GEL pension. I have no property whatsoever; nothing is registered in my name," he said. "To secure the bail, they discussed using my son's house,

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where my mother-in-law lives, so I have no connection to that house. It is what it is, what can you do?”

Targamadze added that he would work with his lawyer to resolve the bail issue.

The court sided with the pros-

ecution, which argued that there was a risk of Targamadze evading the investigation. The former MP dismissed this claim outright, stating there was never any danger of him going into hiding.

He also used the opportunity to criticize the commission itself, calling it a tool of political

repression aimed at silencing opposition voices.

“This commission isn’t about justice, it’s about fighting the opposition,” he said.

Targamadze further addressed the long-standing controversy around his infamous quote, “I’ll make you cough up your soul,” which has followed

him since his time in office.

“They’re still stuck on that one line. Since 2012, they’ve been trying to find the mythical 80 million I supposedly stole, it turned out there was nothing. Now all they have left is this one sentence, which I’ve explained countless times.”

He defended the statement’s

original intent, saying it was made in the context of preventing Russian influence in Georgia. “It was about making sure Russian flags don’t wave on Rustaveli Avenue. And now we’re seeing just how determined they are to plant those flags,” Targamadze said.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Parliament Advances Bill Restricting Foreign Grants and Political Seminars



In a unanimous vote of 83 to 0, the Georgian Parliament has approved on first reading a legislative package introduced by the ruling Georgian Dream party that would significantly tighten restrictions on foreign involvement in the country’s political sphere.

If enacted, the amendments will prohibit international organizations from organizing lectures, seminars, or any public events intended for political par-

ties. Additionally, international donor organizations will be banned from issuing grants in Georgia without prior government approval.

The proposed changes span several laws, including the “Law on Political

acceptance of foreign funds deemed prohibited under the law.

While the bill introduces sweeping restrictions, it includes certain exemptions: grants from international sports associations, federations, and committees will not be subject to government approval, nor will scholarships intended for secondary or higher education or scientific research abroad.

Gvaramia Slams Investigative Commission Appearance as ‘Grave Mistake’

Nika Gvaramia, leader of the “Coalition for Change,” called the criminal prosecution against him “neither the first nor the last,” as he appeared before a magistrate judge for failing to attend a session of Parliament’s temporary investigative commission.

Speaking to journalists outside the court, Gvaramia dismissed the commission as pointless. “What is the commission for? Nothing,” he said, emphasizing that he views the opposition’s decision to participate as a mistake.

“Yesterday made it clear that this is just a distraction, a propagandistic nonsense meant to get everyone talking,” he said. “That’s why I believe attending it was a mistake by the opposition. These actions also contain elements of betraying the national interest. The government is trying to shape a narrative that Georgia was guilty in the war, not Russia.”

Gvaramia criticized Giorgi Gakharia, leader of the For Georgia party and former prime minister, for choosing to testify before the commission. He labeled

the move a “grave mistake.”

When asked if Gakharia’s attendance violated the opposition cooperation framework initiated by 5th President Salome Zourabichvili, Gvaramia said, “Let Salome Zourabichvili evaluate that. She was the initiator of the agreement. But in my opinion, Mr. Gakharia’s attendance was a serious misstep.”

“This doesn’t harm the broader struggle for Georgia’s independence or regime change,” he added. “If anyone’s harmed by it, it’s Mr. Gakharia.”



EU Foreign Affairs Council: military support to Ukraine and 17th package of sanctions against Russia

Weather

Wednesday, April 16

Day ☁ Mostly Cloudy
High: 11°C

Night ☁ Cloudy
Low: 6°C

Thursday, April 17

Day ☁ Partly Cloudy
High: 20°C

Night ☁ Mostly Cloudy
Low: 9°C

Work has started on a 17th package of sanctions against Russia focusing on the shadow fleet and other elements, EU High Representative Kaja Kallas announced after the European Foreign Affairs Council, convened on 14 April in Luxembourg.

The European Foreign Affairs Council also discussed the Russian aggression against Ukraine, and the enhanced EU military support to Kyiv. Ukraine’s Foreign Minister

Andrii Sybiha joined the meeting online to update his EU counterparts on the latest developments both politically and on the ground.

“It is clear that all the EU member states want peace,” Kaia Kallas told journalists after the meeting. “And yet we are seeing that Russia wants war because we saw the deadliest attack just yesterday (against Sumy on 13 April), and zoom airstrikes over the weekend. It is clear that they are stalling and do not want

peace at all. So the only way to get Russia to negotiate seriously is increasing pressure.”

According to the High Representative, the EU is the biggest provider of military aid to Ukraine, but also the greatest supporter of the Ukrainian defence industry, as European countries have so far committed over •23 billion for military aid to Ukraine this year.

The Council also touched on the training of Ukrainian soldiers through the EU Military

Assistance Mission to Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine), which has so far trained over 73,000 soldiers. The Council discussed what more could be done when it comes to the mission.

As to the initiative on delivering two million rounds of ammunition to Ukraine, the High Representative announced that two-thirds of the target had already been reached, and that a large majority of member states agreed that the EU needed to do more.

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