

By Liza Mchedlidze

Georgian PM Irakli Kobakhidze confirmed that the government is actively gathering evidence through a parliamentary commission to support a constitutional lawsuit aimed at banning several opposition parties. Speaking to journalists, Kobakhidze said the commission is compiling “concrete facts” to build a case against the United National Movement (UNM), Lelo for Georgia, New Political Center–Girchi, and Gakharia for Georgia.

The commission, chaired by former Justice Minister Thea Tsulukiani, was established to investigate alleged unconstitutional activities by these opposition groups. Kobakhidze accused the UNM of being responsible for starting the 2008 Russia-Georgia war, a charge frequently cited by Georgian Dream as part of their justification to ban the party. According to Kobakhidze, the commission’s evidence collection has focused on such historical events and current actions deemed harmful to the Georgian state.

He emphasized that the commission has the full mandate to request information from various institutions and that refusal by any party to cooperate has led to criminal proceedings against some opposition figures. Kobakhidze said the evidence gathered will be submitted to the Constitutional Court as part of the upcoming lawsuit.

Kobakhidze also indicated that the government intends to ban four parties through this legal process, which he believes is essential for protecting Georgia’s national security and democratic system. He acknowledged that the case might take time to resolve but insisted that it

Kobakhidze Confirms Evidence Gathering to Ban Opposition Parties



must be done before or after the local elections scheduled for October 4, 2025. He argued that the Georgian Dream party is acting within legal bounds and following constitutional procedures. He stated, “We are using all the legal mechanisms available to protect Georgia from forces that want to destabilize the country.”

Opposition leaders have condemned the

commission and the planned ban, calling it a political crackdown designed to eliminate dissent. They argue that the move violates democratic principles and further isolates Georgia internationally.

International observers have also expressed concern over the legislative changes enabling the banning of political parties and the overall shrinking

space for political opposition in Georgia.

Despite criticism, Kobakhidze dismissed concerns, accusing the opposition of attempting to undermine the country’s sovereignty and security. He urged all Georgians to support the government’s efforts to “defend Georgia’s future.”

Council of Europe Urges Georgia to Address Police Abuse and Legislative Reforms

By Liza Mchedlidze

Michael O’Flaherty, the Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights, has called on Georgian authorities to effectively investigate police abuse, reduce the Special Investigation Service’s (SIS) depen-

dency on the Prosecutor’s Office, and revise recent legislative changes. In two communications to the Committee of Ministers, he addressed the cases of Tsintsabadze v. Georgia and Makarashvili and Others v. Georgia, concluding that Georgia faces persistent issues with

arbitrary administrative detention and insufficient judicial review in such cases.

The Tsintsabadze group of cases involves deaths, torture, and other ill-treatment, often attributed to law enforcement and prison officials, with ineffective investigations. In 2024, the

Committee of Ministers expressed concerns over Georgia’s delays in executing European Court of Human Rights judgments related to these cases.

O’Flaherty emphasized the need for law enforcement actions, especially during public assemblies, to adhere to principles of legality, necessity, and proportionality. Drawing from his January 2025 visit to Georgia, he cited violent crackdowns on pro-EU rallies as evidence of the need for reforms.

He recommended mandatory visible identification for all police officers to enhance accountability, independent investigations into police abuse, and strengthening the SIS by reducing its dependency on the Prosecutor’s Office, empowering it to suspend abusive officers, and enhancing victim participation in investigations. He also called for reviewing criminal law provisions to better protect against ill-treatment and provide comprehensive reparation for survivors.

These recommendations come as the Georgian Dream-led Parliament has passed, in its first reading, a bill to dissolve the SIS and transfer its responsibilities to the Prosecutor’s Office.

In the Makarashvili and Others v. Georgia case, O’Flaherty highlighted ongoing problems with arbitrary administrative detention and inadequate judicial review. The case centers on alleged violations of freedom of assembly and fair trial rights during a 2019 demonstration.

He urged the Georgian government to reform the Code of Administrative Offences through meaningful consultations with civil society, the Public Defender’s Office, and international bodies; revise legislative amendments since November 2024 that restrict peaceful assembly rights; and ensure timely, independent judicial review, access to legal counsel, and the right to present evidence and witnesses, in line with Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights.



Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.7357; Euro - 3.1042; GBP - 3.7036; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.4214; Swiss Franc - 3.3096

Georgian Opposition Parties Face Dilemmas

By MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

The pro-Western opposition, under threat of elimination from the ruling party Georgian Dream, is currently facing two major dilemmas: how to respond to the Tsulukiani-led parliamentary commission, and whether to participate in the upcoming local self-government elections scheduled for the fall. On both issues, the opposition remains divided.

The local elections are set to take place in the fall, although no exact date has been set yet. Whether pro-Western opposition parties will participate remains a topic of debate. Georgian Dream had planned to ban these pro-Western parties — labeled collectively as the “United National Movement coalition” — and even passed a law to that effect. However, they postponed its enforcement until after the elections. The plan is to let the opposition participate one final time, expecting voters to reject them, allowing Georgian Dream to win a decisive victory. Afterward, they intend to petition the

Constitutional Court to ban these parties. This is their calculation.

Some political groups under threat of being banned, and who have already refused to take seats in the current parliament, have also declared a firm boycott of the local elections. These include the “Coalition for Changes” (Melia-Gvaramia bloc) and the United National Movement. In contrast, Giorgi Gakharia’s party appears to be preparing to participate. The party Lelo has yet to make its stance clear, but may also lean toward participation.

The position of those who do intend to run is relatively straightforward: all elections are opportunities to be used. Some analysts argue that if the opposition unites, it has a real chance to win the mayoral race in Tbilisi and replace Kakha Kaladze with an opposition figure.

Those politicians who support a boycott don’t buy this argument. Their reasoning is also clear: they refused to enter parliament due to alleged election fraud — why should they now

legitimize local elections run by the same ruling party, which already claims it will win “decisively”? Why play by Georgian Dream’s rules?

But the boycott won’t just mean staying home on election day. Those in favor of it are working on an active strategy, aiming to expose Georgian Dream’s manipulation and potentially launch a parallel digital plebiscite. Still, the elections are months away, and the fast pace of events could demand a change in plans.

Some opposition figures might not even make it to election day — they could end up in prison. The main reason: a parliamentary commission led by Tea Tsulukiani. The commission’s original mandate was to investigate crimes committed during Saakashvili’s rule, but its scope has since expanded to the present day.

Opposition figures summoned by Tsulukiani’s commission face a serious dilemma. Since they have declared the 2024-elected parliament illegitimate, they don’t recognize the commission

either. Another argument: parliamentary inquiry commissions must include opposition MPs — yet Tsulukiani’s commission does not.

Those who defy a summons from the commission risk criminal charges and imprisonment. Giorgi Gakharia did appear and answered questions for several hours. Both he and the commission claimed victory afterward.

In contrast, Lelo leaders Mamuka Khazaradze and Badri Japaridze refused to appear but posted bail to avoid jail — though trials are ongoing and could lead to imprisonment. Former Defense Minister Irakli Okruashvili and Zurab Japaridze, leader of Girchi – More Freedom, both refused to appear or post bail and have been arrested.

Some, like Giorgi Vashadze, are considering posting bail as a pragmatic way to continue political work, though others see this as an unconvincing compromise and are ready to go to jail rather than cooperate with what they view as an illegitimate process.

There is a belief that Georgian Dream would not dare mass arrests of opposition figures, fearing domestic and international backlash. But if the party proceeds with arrests via the Tsulukiani commission, it would signal a shift toward “Belarusification” of Georgia — where opposition leaders are either jailed or exiled.

Through its current policies, Georgian Dream is trying to project confidence and indifference toward both protests and existing or potential Western sanctions. Yet, many experts argue this is a facade. The party has failed to establish a working relationship with the Biden administration — something Bidzina Ivanishvili had promised and hoped for. An open letter by Irakli Kobakhidze to former President Trump was one such failed attempt to build ties. Meanwhile, the U.S. Congress is expected to pass the MEGOBARI Act, which could bring consequences that Georgian Dream would rather avoid.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER
STAFF

U.S. Intelligence Warns of Increased Russian Influence in Georgia, PM Kobakhidze Calls Report ‘Nonsense’



The United States Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) has

Weather

Wednesday, May 28
Day ☁ Overcast
High: 24°C
Night ☁ Mostly Cloudy
Low: 16°C

Thursday, May 29
Day ☁ Overcast
High: 27°C
Night ☁ Partly Cloudy
Low: 16°C

raised concerns about growing Russian influence in Georgia in its recently released 2025 Worldwide Threat Assessment. The unclassified report states that “Russia almost certainly aims to return Georgia to its sphere of influence,” adding that the po-

litical environment created by the Georgian Dream-led government since the October 2024 parliamentary elections has “enabled Russia to increase its influence in the country.”

According to the DIA, Georgia remains a strategic target for Moscow, and developments in

recent months have strengthened conditions favorable to Kremlin interests.

Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze dismissed the assessment entirely. “This is total nonsense!” he told journalists. “What increased influence are we talking about? We have taken more steps to strengthen Georgia’s sovereignty than ever before.”

Kobakhidze went on to criticize the credibility of the report, claiming it was driven by internal U.S. political agendas. “The fact that such nonsense ends up in such important documents is precisely indicative of the ‘deep state’ influence. These kinds of assessments do not reflect reality but rather geopolitical manipulation,” he said.

Kobakhidze insisted that Georgia’s foreign policy remains balanced and independent, rejecting allegations of a shift toward Moscow. “Our government has never and will never align itself with any foreign interest that undermines Georgia’s independence or its Euro-Atlantic aspirations,” Kobakhidze added.

Georgian Citizen Freed from Detention by Russian Occupation Forces



Giorgi Bolotashvili, a Georgian citizen who had been held by Russian occupation forces, has been released and is now back in territory controlled by Tbilisi, the State Security Service of Georgia confirmed on May 27.

He was detained near the village of Khurvaleti in Gori Municipality, near the administrative boundary line with the Russian-occupied Tskhinvali region. On May 20, Georgian officials

reported that three citizens had been illegally detained in the area, including Bolotashvili. One was released shortly afterward,

and one person is reportedly still being held.

According to the State Security Service, Bolotashvili’s release was achieved with the help of the European Union Monitoring Mission’s hotline and other tools available to the Georgian government.

Officials reiterated that efforts are ongoing to secure the release of all Georgian citizens detained in the occupied territories.

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