

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Levan Davitashvili: Georgian Dream Provided Comprehensive Clarifications on 'Foreign Influence Transparency Act'

Levan Davitashvili, the First Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development, emphasized that Georgian Dream has provided comprehensive clarifications concerning the 'Foreign Influence Transparency Act' and expressed confidence that the information disseminated to the public on this matter has been exhaustive.

"There are several issues. It is very difficult to discern any particular difficulty or element of conspiracy in this. This legislation has been adopted by many successful Western democracies, and you are also aware that similar legislation is actively being discussed in the EU.

When the European Union discusses the adoption of such legislation, it is often stated that it aims to strengthen democracy in EU member states by ensuring transparency in funding sources for all organizations. In this context, the main focus is on making clear statements regarding funding. There are no other aspects to consider. This law does not entail any other forms of liability," Davitashvili stated.

Davitashvili stressed the importance of the 'foreign influence' law in enhancing economic security, cautioning against the potential threat posed by organizations driven by specific interests that could undermine various economic projects.

"You know that every citizen and business is accountable to any financial organization. It is defined by different principles



and is a sector that has not had accountability up to this point. Therefore, there is a very important need to have clear information and reporting on funding sources in this direction as well.

That's all there is to talk about. It is also very important from the viewpoint of economic security because a lot of organizations act according to specific interests, potentially to the detriment of

many economic projects.

Therefore, in this case, we are discussing transparency alone. It is challenging to obtain information about the origin of funding, and this could address nu-

merous inquiries. Naturally, our population has a legitimate right to know the funding's origin, which may be linked to the expression of specific interests," said Levan Davitashvili.

Women's Rights Organizations Condemn Discriminatory Language, Call for Parliamentary Action

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Organizations in Georgia focused on women's issues strongly condemn the use of discriminatory language against women, deeming it incompatible with parliamentary ethics.

They stress that the failure to implement appropriate measures for each incident cultivates a culture of impunity, which they argue serves as the foundation for the recurrence of similar cases.

The organizations urge the parliament to uphold the constitution, enforce existing codes of ethics and associated sanctions, address violence and clear hostility towards women, and concurrently prioritize the revision of ethical codes and the reinforcement of sanctions.

"Organizations dedicated to women's issues in Georgia strongly condemn the use of language that is discriminatory towards women and incompatible with parliamentary ethics. This condemnation comes in response to the events of April 3, 2024, during the discussion of the abolition of mandatory gender quotas in parliament.

At the first plenary session, we deem the sexist and insulting remarks directed at female MPs by Vakhtang Megrelishvili and Beka Odisharia as unacceptable. Such statements fuel violence and hatred against women.

Despite the evident violation of the Code of Ethics by the MPs, the Parliament of Georgia has not yet responded, and the matter of initiating disciplinary proceedings and imposing appropriate responsibility on parliamentarians who breach the Code of Ethics is not being addressed.

"It should be noted that this is not the first instance of discrimination or abuse against women in Parliament. The failure to take appropriate measures for each incident leads to a culture of impunity, which, based on past experience, fosters the recurrence of similar cases. It is unacceptable for the Parliament of Georgia to tolerate hatred and discrimination against women as a norm of communication. Such an approach, particularly in the context of abolishing gender quotas, will severely impede women's political participation and further marginalize them from decision-making processes.

On behalf of the organizations working on women's issues, we call on the Parliament of Georgia to protect the Constitution, implement the existing code of ethics and associated sanctions, and respond to acts of violence and overt hatred against women. Additionally, we urge the Parliament to prioritize the review of the code of ethics and the strengthening of sanctions," the statement reads.



The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Parliament Abolishes Gender Quotas: Amendments to Election Code Pass in Vote



The parliament has abolished gender quotas. The proposed legislation, fast-tracked for consideration, recently underwent its

third reading. In the vote, 85 deputies supported the amendments to the election code, while 22 opposed them.

Additionally, the draft law stipulates that the minimum number of candidates for membership in the Parliament of

Unions of Citizens', which abolishes the mechanism offering additional financial incentives to parties based on the inclusion of female candidates in the lists in appropriate proportions.

The initiators of the bill argue that by abolishing quotas, equal opportunities will be fostered, ensuring gender equality. "We are eliminating privileges. How could this be seen as fighting against women?" stated Aleksandre Rakviashvili, one of the bill's initiators.

Central Election Commission Registers Anti-Western Propagandist Party Alt-Info

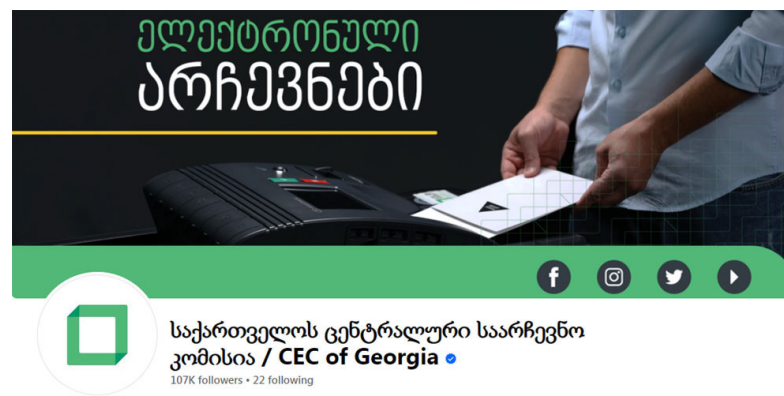
The Central Election Commission has registered the Conservative Movement, a party affiliated with the anti-Western and violent Alt-Info movement, as a participant in the elections. This

registration permits the party to compete in the parliamentary elections scheduled for October 26, 2024.

"Electoral registration of parties is regulated by law, and all those who meet the requirements set forth by the law will be registered. The Conservative

issued," stated the CEC.

Alt-Info has orchestrated several violent incidents, and its leaders are known for openly expressing pro-Russian views and collaborating with Russian state entities and Kremlin propagandists. Their social media pages have been repeatedly re-



Movement/Alt-Info submitted 50,608 signatures to the CEC. At this stage, signature verification has been completed, and the corresponding document has been

moved by Facebook for disseminating disinformation and propagating coordinated propaganda, often through fake accounts.

Reintroduction of draft law on 'Transparency of Foreign Influence' in Georgia raises serious concerns, says EU

The European Union said that the announcement by the ruling party in Georgia to reintroduce a draft law on "Transparency of Foreign Influence" raised serious concerns.

In a statement published on 3 April, EU Lead Spokesperson Peter Stano said that the European Union recalled the public pledge of the Georgian government and the ruling party from last year to "unconditionally withdraw" such legislation. He also said the EU regretted that it was once again being considered despite strong public and international reactions in March 2023.

"Creating and maintaining an enabling environment for civil society organisations and ensuring media freedom is at the core of democracy. It is also crucial for the EU accession process," Stano said.

He noted that the European



Council granted Georgia candidate status on the understanding that the relevant steps set out in the Commission's recommendation of 8 November 2023 were taken. Step 9 includes a rec-

ommendation for Georgia to make sure that civil society can operate freely, and Step 1 calls on Georgia to fight disinformation against the EU and its values.

"Transparency should not be used as an instrument to limit civil society's capacity to operate

freely. We encourage the political leaders in Georgia to adopt and implement reforms that are in line with the stated objective of joining the European Union, as supported by a large majority of Georgia's citizens," the statement says.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Friday, April 5

Day Mostly Cloudy High: 18°C

Night Mostly Cloudy Low: 9°C

Saturday, April 6

Day Mostly Cloudy High: 14°C

Night Showers Low: 8°C

Dear Friends and Partners,

American Friends of Georgia is celebrating the 30th Anniversary of its Charitable work in Georgia! On Saturday, May 18, 2023, we are holding a Special Anniversary Gala Event to celebrate a longstanding tradition of philanthropy to benefit the neediest children and elderly in Georgia.

We are thrilled to inform you that world-renown jazz trumpeter Chris Botti will be performing at our Gala. It will be a spectacular event and we will be delighted to share this memorable evening with our dearest partners and friends.

GRAMMY-winning trumpeter Chris Botti is celebrating an anniversary as well - the 20th anniversary of his first performance in Georgia- and he will be visiting Georgia to exclusively present this Charity Concert for American Friends of Georgia!

Chris Botti has been one of the most popular instrumentalists in the world for nearly three decades. He's collaborated with some of the biggest superstars on the planet, including Sting, Paul Simon, Barbra Streisand, Lady Gaga, Tony Bennett, Frank Sinatra, Aretha Franklin, Bette Midler, Joni Mitchell, Steven Tyler, Andrea Bocelli, Herbie Hancock, Yo-Yo Ma, and others. He's topped the jazz charts with numerous albums, earned multiple Gold and Platinum records, performed with symphony orchestras and on prestigious stages from Carnegie Hall to the Hollywood Bowl to the Sydney Opera House.

For the past few years, our annual Gala celebration has been a wonderful, elegant gathering for our community, and a pivotal event in our efforts to support Georgia's neediest children and elderly. It has been made possible by generous sponsorship donations from corporations as well AmCham, Diplomatic missions, prominent Georgian artists and musicians.

This year will be extremely important, exciting and particularly memorable as it marks the 30th Anniversary of our Charitable Work in Georgia.

Saturday, May 18 at 6:00 Location: Biltmore Hotel Tbilisi Dress code: Black Tie

Corporate tables as well as individual tickets available!

For more info and reservations, please contact AFG Gala Committee kate@afgeorgia.org. lena@afgeorgia.org ONLY TOGETHER CAN WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE! www.afgeorgia.org



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43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi, 0108, Georgia Founded by Prof. Zaza Gachechiladze Tamar Gachechiladze Publisher

Mob.: +995 599 565621; +995 577 760000 E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge http://www.messenger.com.ge/

Nino Metreveli Commercial Director

Mariam Mchedlidze Editor-in-Chief

Khatuna Gogichaishvili Layout Designer, Photographer

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