

## NGOs Demand Georgian Dream Leaders Publicly Clarify Allegations of Foreign Influence

By Liza Mchedlidze

Non-governmental organizations in Georgia are calling out leaders of the Georgian Dream party, who were previously involved with NGOs and international organizations but are now backing the 'Russian Law' against the civil sector.

These leaders, including Irakli Kobakhidze, Shalva Papuashvili, Givi Mikanadze, Rati Ionatamishvili, Nikoloz Samkharadze, Archil Talakvadze, and Maia Bitadze, have years of experience working with funds and organizations supported by the USA, EU, UN, Council of Europe, OSCE, Soros Foundation, and World Bank. Their past work involved collaboration on justice, equality, self-governance, and more with Georgian NGOs.

However, they now claim these organizations represent foreign interests and threaten Georgia's sovereignty. The NGOs demand these leaders publicly clarify whether they were instructed to favor foreign interests and to specify instances if any. Georgian NGOs assert their commitment to protecting Georgian citizens' interests and strengthening the country's democratic institutions.

"It is known to the public that representatives of the party, the authors of the 'Russian Law', have been working in organizations funded by the USA and the European Union for decades, among them:

Irakli Kobakhidze worked for 9 years in US and UN organizations;

Shalva Papuashvili worked for 17 years in the German Foundation;

Givi Mikanadze received funding from the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the

United Nations, and the European Union for 10 years;

Rati Ionatamishvili received funding from the European Union, USAID, and other international funds for 9 years;

Nikoloz Samkharadze worked for 11 years in EU and UN programs;

Archil Talakvadze worked for 3 years in US organizations and the Soros Foundation;

Maia Bitadze worked for 15 years in UN, OSCE, and World Bank organiza-

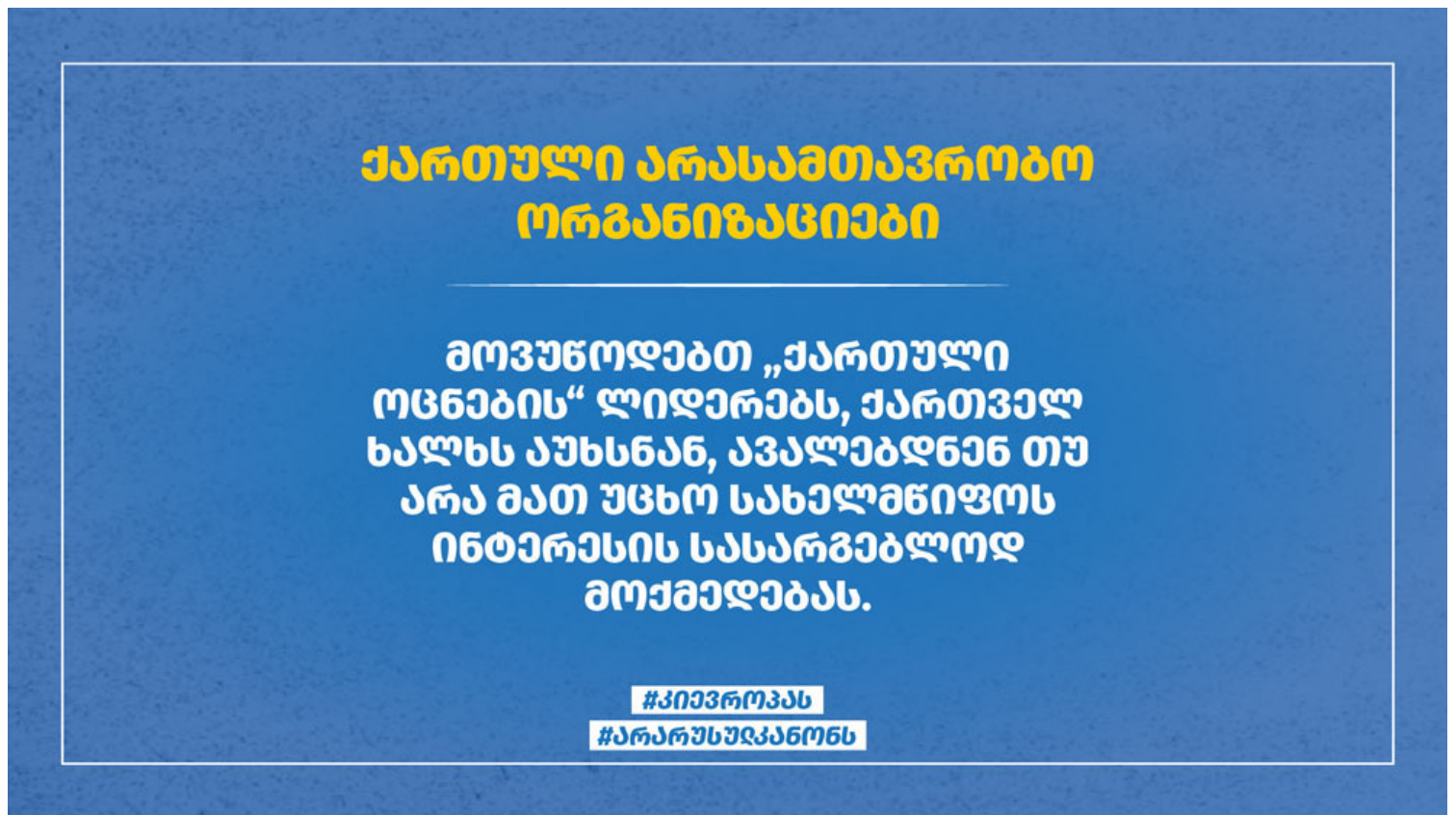
tions.

Some of them, as representatives of donor organizations, worked with Georgian non-governmental organizations on issues such as justice, equality, self-governance, and more.

Today, they declare that the organizations they have represented for years act in the interests of foreign states and pose a threat to Georgia. Accordingly, we call on them to publicly explain to the Georgian people whether someone instructed

them to act in favor of the interests of a foreign state and, if so, to name specific cases.

Georgian non-governmental organizations have acted, are acting, and will continue to act to achieve the goals stipulated in their statutes, to protect the interests of Georgian citizens, and to strengthen democratic public institutions in Georgia," reads the statement signed by 22 NGOs.



## Papuashvili Accuses NGOs of Spreading Misinformation and Manipulating Groups in Georgia

By Liza Mchedlidze

Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia, Shalva Papuashvili, stated that certain claims made about the draft law 'On Transparency of Foreign Influence' last year have been proven false.

He emphasized that allegations suggesting the law targeted individuals such as students, immigrants, farmers, and persons with disability were untrue. As Papuashvili clarified, the draft law does not pertain to any natural person or individual.

"It was written last year, and the same is written this year. The changes do not affect any natural person or individual, period. The problem was with the term 'agent'. Even then, we clarified that it was a borrowed term. Why don't they say the same now? Because this term is directly taken from the European directive, and they have stopped discussing it. They claim that



the funding will cease. Why will it stop? Does it mean that the funding comes to Georgia on the condition that it is covered up?" Papuashvili stated.

Papuashvili accused non-governmental organizations of spreading misinformation targeting specific groups in Georgia. He suggested that these groups are being falsely threatened with the loss of funding. The Chairman alleged that these deceptive practices are being financially supported by foreign entities.

"Specific groups are being threatened with false claims that they will lose funding. Do American, European, or other funds come to Georgia and spend money under the condition that they remain hidden and non-transparent? Is this a requirement? It appears to be an attempt to deceive the Georgian people once again, and this is

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.6784; Euro - 2.9018; GBP - 3.3834; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.8983; Swiss Franc - 2.9658

# Papuashvili Accuses NGOs of Spreading Misinformation and Manipulating Groups in Georgia

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being carried out by NGOs. Foreign money is being used to deceive the Georgian people," Papuashvili stated.

Parliament Chairman claimed there's an effort to undermine Georgian democracy by pushing laws that don't serve the broader population but favor special interests backed by foreign money.

"I would like to remind everyone that the first of the nine recommendations is to reject disinformation, and today, European money is being spent on disseminating disinformation. There is an attempt to silence the Georgian people and the Parliament. They want us to not adopt laws that truly benefit the Georgian people, but rather regulations that cater to a narrow group financed from abroad. As for people with disabilities, I appeal to them: it is a lie that the law has any influence on your possible financing," said Papuashvili.

something and we don't like to delve into the content. While 'vetting' may be a popular term today, what results will it actually lead to? If there's a possibility of worsening outcomes, then we should think twice. Looking at the example of Albania, it resulted in worse outcomes there. I've also seen reports regarding Ukraine, and I can't say that vetting has brought better results there, particularly in ensuring the independence of the judiciary," Ioseliani stated.

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

### Economy Minister Announces Decision on Tbilisi's New Airport Development



Levan Davitashvili, the Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development, stated that at the Economic Council, discussions centered on energy incentive mechanisms and the development of the new Tbilisi airport. Davitashvili noted that decisions were reached concerning government approval for new support mechanisms and the airport's development.

At the Economic Council, we discussed the mechanisms of energy incentives, which we had discussed with the private sector. New mechanisms for supporting energy projects from renewable sources, as well as the last auction. We introduced this information to the members of the Economic Council, and a decision was made that the government should already approve the

new support mechanisms, which were discussed by the Economic Council.

Also, we talked about the new airport in Tbilisi, and we actually heard the results of the study, which was conducted by the Asian Development Bank together with the Association of Airports. Several options for the development of the new airport were discussed, and the economic council made a decision on how to develop the new international airport in Tbilisi," Davitashvili said.

Public Defender: Vetting Not Instant Solution for Judicial System

### Public Defender: Vetting Not Instant Solution for Judicial System

Levan Ioseliani, Georgia's Public Defender, emphasized that vetting alone cannot instantly fix all issues within the country's judicial system.

Ioseliani raised concerns about the effectiveness of vetting processes in Albania and Ukraine, suggesting they may not guarantee better outcomes, particularly regarding judiciary independence.

"We tend to get caught up in

somewhat in worse outcomes there. I've also seen reports regarding Ukraine, and I can't say that vetting has brought better results there, particularly in ensuring the independence of the judiciary," Ioseliani stated.



## Join Europe Day celebration on 11 May in Tbilisi

The EU Delegation to Georgia invites everyone to take part in the Europe Day celebration planned for 11 May, at Expo Georgia in Tbilisi.

Europe Day, celebrated annually on 9 May, commemorates the 1950 Declaration of Robert Schuman, then French Foreign Minister, which marked the inception of what is now recognised as the European Union (EU). Europe Day has been celebrated in Georgia for many years.

This year, visitors will be able to engage in various activities, quizzes, prizes, traditional cuisines and captivating cultural performances.



They will have an opportunity to explore the rich cultures and traditions of EU Member States, learn about the European Investment Bank, the EU Monitoring Mission, and the EU's work in Georgia through the projects that benefit Georgian citizens and communities.

The festivities will also include a puppet show 'Luna and the Planet of Fireflies', arts and crafts fair, and 'Unique Georgian Taste' market, presenting products from local farmers.

Europe Day will also provide an opportunity to engage in discussions on EU values, culture, environment, and many more.

The Official Opening Ceremony is scheduled for 11.30 am.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

### Weather

Monday, April 8

Day Mostly Cloudy High: 12°C

Night Showers Low: 10°C

Tuesday, April 9

Day Mostly Cloudy High: 18°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 11°C

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On 5 April, the French Ambassador to Georgia H.E. Shéraz Gasri inaugurated the photographic exhibition “Championesses!” with the President of the Georgian Olympic Committee Mr. Leri Khabelov and the President of the Georgian Paralympic Committee Rati Ionatamishvili, on the gates of the territory of the French Embassy located at 4 Khazina Street, near Orbeliani Square. Georgian shooting champion Nino Salukvadze and Georgian para-fencing champion Irma Khetsuriani were also on

# Opening of the “Championesses!” photographic exhibition

hand to talk about their careers and the importance of women’s sport.

The “Championesses!” exhibition was organized by the French Embassy and the French Institute of Georgia, in collaboration with the French and Georgian Olympic and Paralympic Committees. It

honours 14 French and Georgian sports-women whose achievements have left their mark on the history of their sports. It is being inaugurated as part of Olympic and Paralympic Week 2024, which is being held almost 100 days before the opening ceremony of the Paris 2024 Games. These

Games will be the first strictly parity games in history, with 50% women among the participating athletes. They will see female champions, whose portraits are featured in our exhibition, compete, make proud and continue to inspire young sports-women around the world.





