

Legal Affairs Committee Backs Georgia's 'Agents Law' Amidst Mass Protests and International Criticism

By Liza Mchedlidze

Amidst mass protests outside Parliament and heavy criticism from Georgia's partner countries, the Legal Affairs Committee supported the 'On Transparency of Foreign Influence' bill, often referred to as the 'Agents Law' or 'Russian Law'. The bill, which will be discussed during the plenary session, is scheduled for its first reading in Parliament this week.

"Since alternative draft laws have been presented, we must vote on this matter in its current form. The committee deems it appropriate to consider the 'Transparency' draft law, presented by Mr. Mamuka, as the main draft to be accepted as a basis. As for the alternative legislative packages, we suggest they be rejected," said Anri Okhanashvili, the chairman of the committee.

The committee session discussing the draft law was filled with controversy and physical altercations, leading to the expulsion of many opposition members.

The controversial draft law "On Transparency of foreign influence," proposes the registration of non-entrepreneurial (non-commercial) legal entities and media outlets that serve the interests of foreign powers. Specifically, organizations receiving over 20% of their income from



abroad must be registered in the public register under the same name, as mandated by the draft law.

During registration, organizations will be required to report their income. Additionally, they must annually complete a financial declaration.

The draft law authorizes the

Ministry of Justice to conduct ongoing research and monitoring to identify such organizations.

According to the project, monitoring will commence based on the decision of the designated official within the Ministry of Justice and a written statement submitted to the Ministry. This

statement must include "a relevant reference related to a specific organization serving the interests of a foreign power".

If monitoring reveals that an entity meets the criteria of an organization serving foreign interests but has evaded registration, the agency will register it as such based on the request of

the designated official from the Ministry of Justice. This action does not exempt the entity from legal responsibilities outlined in the law.

Failure to register as an organization serving foreign interests or failure to submit the declaration will result in a fine of 25,000 GEL for the organization.

Deutsche Botschaft Tiflis გერმანიის საელჩო თბილისის P...

Deutsche Botschaft Tiflis გერმანიის საელჩო თბილისი 11h · 🌐

გერმანიის ფედერალური კანცლერის ოლაფ შოლცისა და საქართველოს პრემიერ-მინისტრის ირაკლი კობახიძის პრესკონფერენციაზე, რომელიც 2024 წლის 12 აპრილს ბერლინში გაიმართა, ფედერალურმა კანცლერმა შოლცმა განაცხადა:

„მინდა კიდევ ერთხელ ვთქვა: ჩვენ, ისევე როგორც მთელი ევროკავშირი, კრიტიკულად ვიყავით უცხოური გავლენის ორგანიზაციებთან დაკავშირებულ კანონთან მიმართებაში და როდესაც იგი შეაჩერეს, დიდი იმედი გვქონდა, რომ აღარ განიხილებოდა. ამჯერად ახალი საკანონმდებლო ინიციატივა, რომელიც იმავე მიმართულებითაა, რომელიც იმავე მიმართულებითაა... See more



German Embassy Releases Translation of Scholz's Statement Amid PM's Claims

By Liza Mchedlidze

On April 12, Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze alleged that during the press conference with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, the translator distorted Scholz's remarks on the draft law. Kobakhidze also highlighted that the translator "openly affiliates with one of the radical opposition parties."

Following this, the German Embassy in Georgia released the Georgian translation of a statement by the German Chancellor during a press conference with Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze in Berlin on April 12.

In the statement, the Chancellor emphasized the European

Union's collective criticism of the law on foreign influence organizations. They reiterated their opposition to adopting the 'Foreign Agents' law in its current form and urged consideration of critical feedback.

"I want to reiterate: we, along with the entire European Union, were critical of the law on foreign influence organizations, and when it was suspended, we had high hopes that it would not be discussed again. This time, there is a new legislative initiative that goes in the same direction. Our criticism, like in the previous period, remains the same, and we hope that this law

CONTINUED ON Page 2

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.6699; Euro - 2.8450; GBP - 3.3347; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.8530; Swiss Franc - 2.9224

German Embassy Releases Translation of Scholz's Statement Amid PM's Claims

CONTINUED FROM Page 1
will not be adopted in such a form and that critical statements will be taken into account [...] The EU does not have such

regulation. There is discussion about adopting measures to provide transparency in certain areas, but that's a different regulation and concept from what we're discussing here. In the Eu-

ropean Union, they have not adopted it, and probably will not adopt it. There was a certain regulation in Hungary, which was annulled by the European Court," the statement reads.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Prime Minister Kobakhidze Discusses 'Russian Law' with US, EU, and UK Ambassadors

Kobakhidze told the ambassadors that the law "fully complies with all basic legal principles and serves the sole purpose of annual disclosure of the finances of non-governmental organizations and relevant

Three Georgian Citizens Unlawfully Detained by Russian Occupiers

Another instance of illegal detention was promptly reported to the co-chairs of the international discussions in Geneva and



Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze met with US Ambassador Robin Dunnigan, EU Ambassador Pawel Herczynski, and UK Ambassador Mark Clayton to discuss 'Russian Law'.

According to the government administration, Prime Minister Irakli

media." "When the government itself shows an example of transparency and all government decisions and legal acts are published, it is not clear why it is unacceptable for non-governmental organizations to meet the minimum standard of transparency," Kobakhidze said.



The State Security Service reported that three Georgian citizens were unlawfully detained by Russian occupation forces within the occupied territory, near the villages of Zemo Artsevi and Otrevi. "Upon receiving information about the mentioned incident, the State Security Service activated the 'hotline' operated by the European Union Monitoring Mission.

to our international partners. All existing mechanisms for the release of illegally detained Georgian citizens have been activated. Responsibility for all destructive actions committed on the occupied territories of Georgia, as well as along the occupation line, rests with the occupying power," the statement reads.

Regional conference for Eastern Partner countries sparks dialogue on sustainable solutions for heating and energy efficiency

On 15 and 16 April, the Council of European Energy Regulators (CEER) is hosting a two-day High-Level Conference on Sustainable Heating and Energy Efficiency in the Eastern Partnership in Tbilisi.

The event is organised by CEER on behalf of the European Commission's EU4Energy programme - 'Promoting the Clean Energy Transition in the Eastern Partnership Countries', and the Elizbar Eristavi Energy Training Centre (ENTC) of the Georgian National Energy and Water Supply Regulatory Com-



mission (GNERC). The conference will facilitate capacity building, knowledge sharing, and dialogue on sustainable heating practices, including policy development, modernisation efforts, renewable energy integration, and efforts to

address climate change. Participants - energy sector experts from Eastern Partnership countries - are given the opportunity to learn from European experts on strategies to enhance environmental sustainability in the heating sector and the pace of

energy efficiency initiatives in their countries.

"Decarbonising the heating and cooling sector is central to achieving the EU's energy and climate targets. Although there is a diverse landscape of heating practices, approaches, and systems across countries, making heating and cooling sustainable, increasing the use of renewable energy sources and boosting the energy efficiency of buildings is a common interest and shared goal that unites us all," Nicholas Cendrowicz, Head of Cooperation Section at the Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, said.

"In addressing the decarbonisation challenge, energy regulators are dedicated to empowering consumers to actively participate in the energy transition. These green transi-

tion policies are designed to not only reduce consumers' carbon footprint but also enhance energy efficiency and accelerate the transformation of energy markets. EU4Energy is therefore an important instrument in the Eastern Partnership region, aiming to assist the countries to achieve these objectives by delivering EU experience," said Mara Berzina, Secretary General of the Council of European Energy Regulators.

The EU4Energy initiative is funded by the European Union with a total budget of • 8.5 million, and is jointly implemented by the Council of European Energy Regulators (CEER), the International Energy Agency (IEA) and the Energy Community Secretariat (EnCS).

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Tuesday, April 16

Day Partly Cloudy High: 24°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 11°C

Wednesday, April 17

Day Partly Cloudy High: 26°C

Night Clear Low: 13°C

published by

The Messenger

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

The Messenger welcomes your contributions. If you are interested in submitting an article or news item please contact. All contributions should be submitted by e-mail.

The Messenger Georgia's English language daily is an independent newspaper, and,

therefore, the opinions expressed in some articles do not necessarily coincide with those of the newspaper. We take no responsibility for any claims made in advertisements.

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