

Georgian Constitutional Court Reviews Lawsuits Against 'Foreign Agents' Law

By Liza Mchedlidze

On August 29, the Georgian Constitutional Court began its review of consolidated lawsuits challenging the 'Foreign Agents' Law. These lawsuits, filed by President Salome Zourabichvili, 121 civil society and media organizations, opposition MPs, and journalists, claim the law violates key constitutional principles and jeopardizes Georgia's path toward European integration.

The preliminary hearing, which will last until August 31, began with the presence of all judges except Judge Irine Imerlinshvili, who was absent due to health reasons. Merab Turava, Chairman of the Constitutional Court, announced that a new lawsuit against the law had been submitted by the Association of Law Firms of Georgia, although it could not be combined with the existing case due to procedural limitations.

President Zourabichvili's representatives argued that the law directly contradicts Article 78 of the Constitution, which obliges all constitutional bodies to work toward Georgia's integration into the EU and NATO. They also highlighted violations of fundamental rights, including freedom of association, freedom of expression, and the right to per-



sonal development, urging the Court to suspend the law before its enforcement begins on September 1.

The absence of Georgian Dream members, who were designated to represent Parliament, was noted, with the defendant side instead represented by parliamentary staff. The Georgian

Public Ombudsman, Levan Ioseliani, submitted a supportive brief, asserting that the law unfairly targets certain organizations based on their foreign funding, which could stigmatize them and impede their operations.

As the hearing proceeded, opposition MPs and civil society

leaders echoed concerns about the law's potential to damage Georgia's democratic institutions and derail its Western alignment. Media representatives also raised alarms about the risks to press freedom, citing the law's impact on journalists' ability to protect sources and the confidentiality of their

information.

The hearing will continue through August 31, after which the Constitutional Court will decide on the admissibility of the claims and whether to temporarily suspend the law's implementation pending a final decision.

TI Georgia Condemns CEC Decree for Undermining Election Transparency

By Liza Mchedlidze

On August 29, Transparency International Georgia (TI Georgia)

issued a statement condemning a recent decree by the Central Election Commission (CEC), which the watchdog claims un-

dermines the transparency of the electoral process and violates the Election Code. The decree changes the timeline for

drawing lots to assign duties among election commission members, shifting the process to one week before the election, rather

than on election day as previously required.

TI Georgia highlighted the importance of the roles assigned through this lottery, particularly the voter registrar and the flow regulator, in preventing multiple voting and ensuring fair elections. The organization noted that the previous procedure allowed civil society organizations (CSOs), international observers, and political party representatives to monitor the lottery on election day. However, the new rule makes it nearly impossible to organize large-scale observation across more than 3,000 precincts in Georgia and abroad, as the process will now occur well before election day.

The CEC justified the changes by citing Article 14, Part 1, Subsection "C" of the Election Code of Georgia, which permits the CEC to alter certain

deadlines in "exceptional cases" to ensure smooth election day operations. However, TI Georgia argues that the CEC is ignoring another part of the same article, which prohibits changes to election day procedures. The watchdog also criticized the CEC for failing to specify what "exceptional case" necessitated the change, noting that no issues arose during the 2023 midterm elections, which used the same technologies and procedures planned for the upcoming parliamentary elections.

TI Georgia has called on the CEC to revoke the decree and adhere to the deadlines set by the Election Code for conducting the lottery procedure on election day.

The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) echoed this sentiment in its Amicus Curiae brief, issued on August 20, also urging the CEC to respect the established procedures.



The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Representative Warns of Risks to Individuals in Occupied Territories Due to 'Foreign Agents' Law



Giorgi Burjanadze, a representative of President Salome Zourabichvili in the Constitutional Court, highlighted the dangers of the "Foreign Agents" law, particularly for individuals in Georgia's occupied territories who collaborate with Georgian organizations.

law, particularly for individuals in Georgia's occupied territories who collaborate with Georgian organizations.

Burjanadze expressed concern that the law's requirement to disclose the identities of these individuals could jeopardize their safety, as it exposes them to po-

tential risks and endangers their health. He emphasized that human rights work often necessitates confidentiality to protect individuals in sensitive

situations, and the new law could lead to severe consequences by making this information public.

"In Georgia, a number of organizations work to document the human rights situation in the occupied territories. There are people who are paid by non-governmental organizations operating in Georgia. These individuals are members of these organizations, and the law stipulates that their names and surnames should be made public.

Sometimes human rights activities require professional confidentiality. For the reason that the names and surnames of persons in dangerous places are kept unknown, the type of information being documented does not become known in order to further use this information by the state of Georgia itself. Naturally, with this register and arrangement, this information can be made public, and the lives and health of those people and members of organizations may be endangered, which can cause irreparable damage," Burjanadze said.

Public Defender Submits Friend of the Court Opinion on 'Foreign Agents' Law



On August 29, the Public Defender presented a friend of the court opinion to the Constitutional Court of Georgia concerning the controversial "Foreign Agents" law. The opinion argued that the law's stipulations, which require certain organizations to disclose their foreign funding sources, lead to the stigmatization of these groups and obstruct their operations.

The submission critiques the

law's potential for broad interpretation and its monitoring mechanisms, especially regarding access to personal data. It

warns that the new requirements could impose an excessive burden on organizations and their employees, potentially undermining their ability to effectively perform their core functions.

The opinion urges the court to consider these factors in its review of the law and to assess its impact on the operational capacity and safety of affected organizations.

Together we bring light: bulb exchange programme concludes as EU steps up support for Ukraine's energy sector

A nationwide programme supported by the EU offering to exchange old incandescent bulbs for energy-saving ones has successfully concluded in Ukraine. Under the "Together We Bring Light!" programme, more than 8 million Ukrainians exchanged 40 million old incandescent bulbs for modern LED bulbs.

The programme, initiated at the end of 2022 by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and supported by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, was implemented by the Ministry of Economy of Ukraine, the Ministry of Digital Transformation, and Ukrposhta with the support of the European Union.

Using the extensive network of Ukrposhta offices, the programme began in oblast centres and large cities, before moving to the most remote villages. Later, legal entities such as schools, kindergartens, medical institutions, and homeowners' associations also joined the programme.

Geographically, Kyiv Oblast led with 4.2 million exchanges, followed by Lviv (3.2 million), Dnipro (3.1 million), and Kharkiv (2.3 million).

"Thanks to our citizens exchanging 40 million bulbs, we've saved approximately 2 GW of energy capacity, equivalent to the capacity of two nuclear power units," said Ihor Smilyansky, General Director of JSC Ukrposhta.

EU Ambassador Katarína Matherňová said the programme "demonstrated the European Union's rapid and effective response to Ukraine's urgent needs during the wartime, highlighting energy as a vital strategic necessity. The EU is taking every possible measure to support Ukraine's energy infrastructure in the most difficult conditions ahead of winter".

Ukrainians had the opportunity to exchange up to 5 incandescent bulbs for the same number of LED bulbs either at Ukrposhta offices or by placing a pre-order in the Diia application.

At the same time, the EU continues its systemic support for Ukraine and its energy sector.

Given the challenging situation in the energy sector, the European Union plans to expedite the delivery of over 1,000 generators from the rescEU strategic reserves to Ukraine, along with 15,000 solar panels through the

EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

The Support Group for Ukraine (SGUA), established in March 2022, is actively facilitating the delivery of specialized energy equipment, fuel, and materials needed to restore

Ukraine's infrastructure damaged by Russia's war of aggression. To date, the group has facilitated 144 in-kind donations and delivered over 5,600 tons of energy equipment from more than 100 donors across 24 countries to Ukraine.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Friday, August 30

Day ☀️ Clear High: 31°C

Night 🌧️ Partly Cloudy Low: 20°C

Saturday, August 31

Day ☁️ Partly Cloudy High: 32°C

Night 🌧️ Partly Cloudy Low: 19°C

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23, 25 AUGUST
BATUMI | Batumi Drama Theater

15, 17, 18, 20
SEPTEMBER
TBILISI | Tbilisi State Conservatoire

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Artistic Director
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NIGHT SERENADES

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