

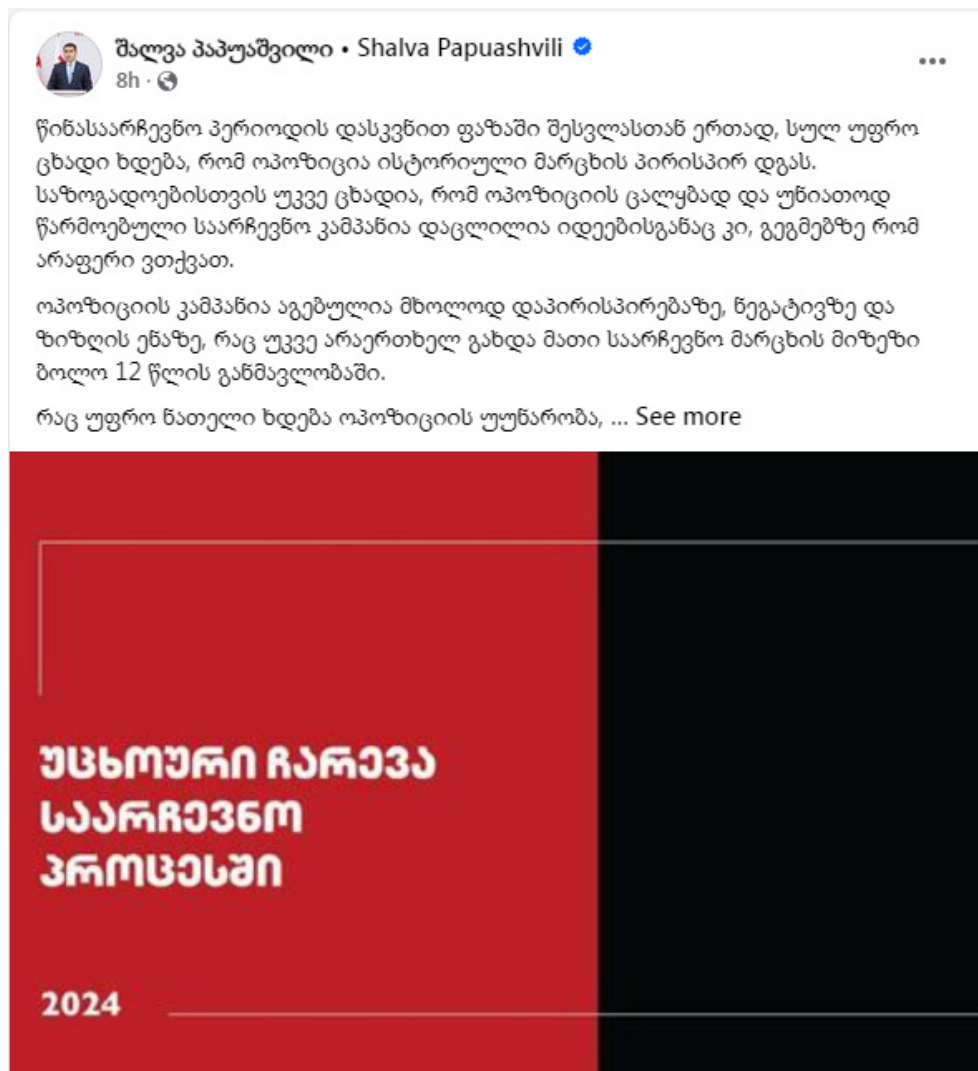
Chairman Papuashvili Criticizes Opposition and Warns Against Foreign Interference in Elections

By Liza Mchedlidze

On September 24, Shalva Papuashvili, Chairman of the Georgian Parliament, claimed that the opposition is running an incoherent campaign and is heading for a "historic defeat," leading them to resort to "confrontation, negativity, and hate speech." He argued that the opposition is increasingly relying on "propaganda from outside the country," which he claimed is setting their agenda. Papuashvili presented a report prepared by the ruling Georgian Dream party on "Foreign Interference in the Electoral Process."

Papuashvili highlighted the frequent involvement of foreign entities in Georgia's electoral discourse. "Not a day passes without some statement, interview, live TV cast, article, or a visit from abroad, which is directly related to parliamentary elections and the opposition agenda," he said. He claimed that these messages are amplified by "opposition-owned" TV stations, which he argued creates an "uneven electoral playing field."

He emphasized that this level of foreign involvement could represent a conscious attempt to manipulate election results, calling it "foreign interference"



that could impact the citizens' choices. He warned that such interference contradicts democratic values and violates the principle of state sovereignty, which is a core tenet of the UN Charter and other international declarations.

"Choosing the government is the privilege of the people, not the right and duty of foreign citizens, even if they are partners," Papuashvili stressed. He underlined that foreign interference hampers the creation of a free and equal electoral environment, where Georgian voters can make choices based on their own beliefs, without outside influence.

The Chairman urged Western partners to respect these principles, especially in light of the global challenges to the rules-based international order. He called on foreign actors to refrain from interfering in Georgia's election campaign, allowing citizens to vote for the political force of their choice without external pressure.

Papuashvili concluded by emphasizing that "foreign propaganda" cannot be seen as conducive to a fair electoral environment. "In a democratic society, every citizen has the right to make a choice in an environment free from undue influence, because the future of the country rests solely with our citizens," he said.

Backlash Against Anti-Corruption Bureau's Decision to Label CSOs as Political Actors

By Liza Mchedlidze



The Anti-Corruption Bureau's decision to classify two civil society organizations (CSOs) involved in get-out-the-vote campaigns as "political actors" has sparked strong opposition from civil society groups and political critics. The ruling imposes regulations typically applied to political parties, which many argue is an overreach and a tactic used by the ruling party to suppress dissent.

Nona Kurdovanidze, head of the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA), expressed her discontent, stating on Facebook: "Instead of the rapid activation of Russian law, the mechanism of the [Anti-Corruption] Bureau has been activated to restrict the activities of organizations and freedom of expression." Kurdovanidze stressed that the Bureau's decision is beyond the scope of the law, which mandates the monitoring of political parties, not CSOs, which are not designed to seek political power through elections.

Transparency International Georgia (TI-Georgia), one of the CSOs affected, called the decision "legally unfounded." They emphasized their commitment to Georgia's European future and clarified that their operations are conducted within the boundaries of the Georgian Constitution.

In a joint statement, GYLA and the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) labeled the Bureau's decision as "illegal," warning that it sets a dangerous precedent that could lead to the use of laws to disproportionately limit freedom of speech and expression.

Nana Makharadze, co-founder of the public movement Vote for Europe, which unites CSOs mobilizing pro-Western voters, commented, "Today we are in a situation where we must really choose on which side Georgia will stand, and I am sure that Georgia will stand on the side of civilized countries." She reiterated that the platform does not endorse any specific political party but aims to promote Georgia's European future. "Georgia chooses Europe, the European future, and that is how it will be," she added.

განცხადება

საია და „სამართლიანი არჩევნები“ მიიჩნევენ, რომ ანტიკორუფციული ბიუროს გადაწყვეტილება უკანონოა

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Sky News: Despite Sanctions, Luxury Cars Enter Russia via South Caucasus, Including Georgia



Despite Western sanctions imposed on Russia, high-end cars from Europe are still making their way into the country, with routes passing through South Caucasus nations, including Georgia, according to a recent investigative report by British channel Sky News.

A Sky News journalist observed the customs checkpoint at Lars, a key border crossing between Georgia and Russia, where luxury cars imported from Europe were spotted. The investigation revealed that one method for bypassing sanctions is by registering and clearing

customs for these vehicles in Armenia. In some cases, car transporters are advised to claim they are not heading to Russia, but to Kyrgyzstan via Russia, as a way to mislead authorities.

“After European countries imposed sanctions, Georgia introduced its own

bans on sending cars to Russia. However, there are many ways to avoid it, which makes it possible to transport cars,” Sky News reported.

The investigative piece highlighted the ease with which this trade continues. While UK car manufacturers and authorities claim they are making efforts to halt these unofficial trade routes, Sky News emphasized the apparent lack of concealment in Georgia. “Perhaps the most striking result of our investigation is that nobody in Georgia is trying to hide what is going on. Everyone knows that

these high-end European cars are not supposed to enter Russia, but they cross the border one by one every day. Everyone knows what is happening, but no one is doing anything to stop it,” the report stated.

Georgian Citizen Illegally Detained by Russian Occupation Forces near Artsevi

the occupied village of Artsevi, close to Tskhinvali.

In response, the SSSG immediately activated the EU Monitoring Mission’s “hot line” and informed the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions (GID) as well as international partners about the incident.

The SSSG stated that all available mechanisms are being utilized to secure the swift release of the detained Georgian citizen. “The responsibility for all destruc-



On September 24, the Georgian State Security Service (SSSG) reported that a Georgian citizen had been illegally detained by Russian occupation forces near

ive acts committed in the occupied territories of Georgia, as well as along the occupation line, lies with the occupying power,” the SSSG emphasized.

EU at the UN General Assembly: energy support to Ukraine on top of the agenda

The G7+ Ministerial Group, meeting on 23 September on the margins of the 79th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, reaffirmed its unwavering support for Ukraine in the face of “Russia’s brutal and unjust attacks” on Ukraine and its energy infrastructure, especially since March 2024.

A statement released by the Governments of the United States of America and the G7+ Group on Ukraine Energy Sector Support said that the upcoming cold winter months could be

“the harshest for Ukraine since the Ministerial Group recommitted to



at least its independence”, and highlighted the regional implications of such attacks, notably on the Republic of Moldova’s energy security. “Russia must end its war of aggression and pay for the damage it has caused,” the statement said.

The members of the G7+ Min-

isterial Group recommitted to supporting Ukraine’s immediate, medium, and long-term recovery and reconstruction in line with its path towards the EU, and to work to involve their private sectors and local governments in the sustainable economic and social recovery of Ukraine. They also welcomed

Ukraine’s commitment to business-friendly reforms that will create a level playing field for investment in the energy sector.

The group reaffirmed its readiness to continue providing assistance to protect energy infrastructure from attacks, including through the strengthening of Ukraine’s air defence capabilities. The ministers also called on the global community urgently to strengthen efforts to provide funding and in-kind support to address the Ukrainian energy sector’s most urgent needs, including repairs of damaged power plants and district heating systems, deployment of new, distributed power generation, emergency backup power for critical services, and passive protection for energy infrastructure.

EU High Representative Josep Borrell reiterated the EU’s support to Ukraine’s energy sector, including the 160 million

package worth of support announced by President von der Leyen last week.

In the afternoon, Borrell chaired the annual informal meeting of EU Foreign Ministers, with Ukraine and the Middle East region on top of the agenda. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha joined a part of the meeting upon the High Representative’s invitation.

In his press remarks before the EU Foreign Ministers meeting, Borrell described the energy situation in Ukraine as critical. “Putin continues bombing the infrastructure producing electricity and energy for Ukrainians. Almost two thirds of the power capacity has been destroyed. I am sure he is trying to curb the will of the Ukrainian people by bringing them into the cold and the dark during the winter,” Borrell said.

(eunighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Wednesday, September 25

Day Clear
High: 27°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 16°C

Thursday, September 26

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 21°C

Night Showers
Low: 16°C

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