

Chairman Papuashvili Rejects Election-Related Allegations as "Disinformation"

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

In a November 4 briefing, Parliament Chairman Shalva Papuashvili refuted claims of election fraud raised by local CSOs, the opposition, and President Salome Zourabichvili. He dismissed allegations concerning vote secrecy, Georgian Dream's voter mobilization tactics, and unusually high turnout in certain regions, labeling these accusations as "disinformation" and politically motivated.

Papuashvili rejected complaints from the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA), an election observer, which argued that thin ballots used in some districts compromised voter secrecy by revealing party choices. The chairman cited other countries—such as Poland, Bulgaria, Lithuania, and Moldova—where ballots are similarly semi-transparent. He accused GYLA of exploiting this issue to question the legitimacy of the election and criticized international donors supporting such organizations, alleging that they were enabling "fraudulent conclusions" aimed at undermining Georgian democracy.

Regarding accusations that Georgian Dream illegally mobilized voters and collected their personal data, Papuashvili defended the party's engagement



with its supporters, stating that close contact with voters is part of democratic campaigning. He argued that Georgian Dream had adhered to international guidelines for voter outreach, denying any coercion or misuse of personal data.

The chairman also responded to concerns about high voter turnout in regions where Georgian Dream won decisively, crediting this to effective regional campaigning. He criticized the opposition's outreach efforts, emphasizing that strong voter

support in these areas was a reflection of Georgian Dream's engagement rather than any irregularity.

Papuashvili concluded by asserting that the election results reflect the will of the Georgian people, accusing the opposition

of ignoring public sentiment. He stated, "The Georgian people showed the traitors and people without a homeland the place they deserve," calling on opponents to accept the election outcome.

Judge Invalidates Results of Electronic Districts in Tsalka and Tetrtskaro

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Judge Vladimer Khuchua of the Tetrtskaro court confirmed a violation of vote secrecy and upheld the claim made by the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA). The lawsuit sought to invalidate all electronic voting districts in Tsalka and Tetrtskaro due to violations of voter privacy.

In Tsalka, there are 39 precincts, while Tetrtskaro has 40. Georgian Dream received 71% of the votes in Tsalka and 67% in Tetrtskaro. Following the judge's ruling, the results of all electronic districts involved in the Tsalka and Tetrtskaro polls were declared invalid.

Before announcing the decision, Judge Khuchua conducted an experiment in the courtroom, requesting a vote counting machine, ballot paper, a marker, and a framed envelope. A technical check revealed that when

ballots were placed in the machine, the choice made on the back was visible.

"Today, we discussed the issue only regarding secrecy, and the court clearly and unequivocally believes that, based on the evidence examined at the court session with this election machine, vote counting machine, and this election ballot, the voter did not have a guarantee of vote protection and vote secrecy. We are talking about a guarantee here. As for the Tsalka District Commission, the court determined that there were violations, including serious mishandling of complaints, certain types of manipulations, the entry of two people into the area, and obstacles to observers. The court unequivocally believes that such reliance on the election process is not free, and therefore all these results should be declared invalid," stated Judge Khuchua.

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.7280; Euro - 2.9738; GBP - 3.5382; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.7548; Swiss Franc - 3.1592

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According to GYLA, this ruling sets a new precedent for protecting voters' right to secrecy.

"By random selection, the court checked the ballots of several districts in Tsalka and Tetrtskaro, where it was confirmed that traces of a marker

are visible on the back of the ballots, which violates the right to vote secrecy. The judge, who himself conducted the verification process, observed the obvi-

ous fact of violation of confidentiality when placing the ballot in the vote counting machine," GYLA remarked.

This case represents the only

successful resolution among 24 lawsuits filed by GYLA, which aims to cancel the results from all electronic polling stations, totaling 2,263 stations.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

My Vote Observer Group Demands Election Fraud Investigation



My Vote, a coalition of Georgian civil society organizations, has called on the Prosecutor's Office to investigate top officials at the Central Election Commission (CEC) for their alleged involvement in election rigging. In a briefing on November 4, My Vote spokesperson Londa Toloraia claimed that CEC leaders Giorgi Kalandarishvili, Giorgi Sharabidze, and Giorgi Javakhishvili played key roles in manipulating election results, violating the Criminal Code.

Toloraia explained that the CEC's bal-

lot-handling process allowed for possible monitoring of voter choices, saying, "The CEC's actions on election day allowed the ruling party to control the will of the voters on a large scale." She highlighted issues like voter ID confiscation, obstacles

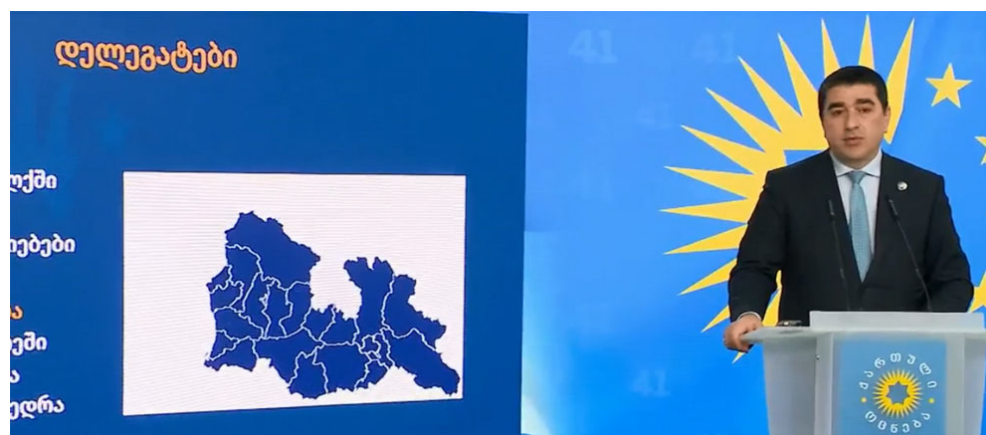
for independent observers, and multiple votes cast by people linked to the ruling party.

The coalition also raised concerns about polling issues abroad, particularly in areas with high numbers of Georgian migrants, where insufficient resources reportedly slowed the voting process. "This decision played into the hands of the ruling party," Toloraia said.

Toloraia added that she had been summoned by the Prosecutor's Office regarding election fraud allegations. However,

she declined to attend, accusing the agency of inaction during the elections. "If the information I provided is really important to this agency (...) I will go to court, where at least one more person will hear how inactive the Prosecutor's Office was during the entire period," she wrote.

Chairman Papuashvili's Briefing Sparks Debate Over Invisibility of Occupied Territories



During a briefing on November 4, Parliament Chairman Shalva Papuashvili vehemently criticized what he described as "disinformation" regarding allegations of election fraud in Georgia. However, the event drew more attention for a controversial display of a map of Georgia that notably omitted the occupied territories of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali, which were nearly invisible to the audience.

The absence of these regions from the official map during a state official's briefing sparked significant public outrage. In response to the backlash, Parliamentary Majority Leader Mamuka Mdinardze defended the presentation, claiming that the occupied territories were indeed included on the map but displayed in very pale colors that were difficult for the cameras to capture.

"The people without a homeland began to post one after another, trying to over-

shadow what Shalva Papuashvili had done to them with this briefing," Mdinardze stated, suggesting that the criticism was an attempt to divert attention from the main message of the briefing. He claimed that journalists in attendance were provided with the presentation, where the occupied territories were visible, albeit in subtle shades.

EU celebrates International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists

"The unprecedented rise in killings of journalists over the last year is devastating and unacceptable," EU High Representative Josep Borrell and European Commission Vice-President for Values and Transparency, Vera Jourová, said in statement



to mark the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, celebrated on 2 November.

They commended the "fearless" frontline reporters and journalists covering conflicts, crises, and emergencies: "Their work is essential to expose human rights violations, abuses, and war crimes that would otherwise remain hidden from public view."

Borrell and Jourova paid special attention to Ukrainian journalists who "continue to be targets of violence, harassment,

and arbitrary detentions by Russia and pro-Russian forces".

The Commission also continues to monitor developments related to media freedom and pluralism in all Member States and some enlargement countries through the annual Rule of Law Reports. The European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF), co-funded by the European Commission, aims to address violations of media freedom and pluralism in the EU and candidate countries.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Tuesday, November 5

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 9°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 2°C

Wednesday, November 6

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 11°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 1°C

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