

Georgian Journalistic Ethics Charter Condemns Heavy Fines on Reporters

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics has urged the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) to cease imposing steep fines on journalists accused of "artificially blocking the road," calling the practice a troubling trend that threatens press freedom. The organization cited 13 such cases, most occurring in Tbilisi, raising concerns about the systematic targeting of reporters.

In a statement released on February 21, the Charter suggested that the growing number of fines either indicates a deliberate attempt to stifle journalistic activity or points to a serious systemic issue within law enforcement. "The Ministry of Internal Affairs and the judicial system must urgently respond," the statement emphasized.

The affected journalists, according to the Charter, were all performing their professional duties at the time of the alleged violations and had informed authorities accordingly. Many were wearing press passes and using professional recording equipment, making their identification as journalists unmis-



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takable. Despite this, they faced penalties under Article 174 prima of the Administrative Code of Georgia.

The Charter further highlighted the uncertainty faced by

journalists due to the inconsistent nature of how these fines are issued. "In most cases, the outcome is not yet certain, leaving journalists in a state of ongoing uncertainty," the statement read.

Beyond the financial burden, the organization warned of the broader consequences of such fines, describing them as "repressive norms" that not only obstruct journalistic work but also exert

psychological pressure on journalists and their families. The Charter has called for an immediate review of these measures to ensure that press freedom in Georgia remains protected.

WSJ: Georgia Aligns with U.S. in UN Diplomatic Standoff Over Ukraine War

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

A diplomatic rift has emerged at the United Nations as

Georgia joined the U.S. in backing an alternative resolution on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, challenging a proposal led by

Ukraine and supported by Europe, The Wall Street Journal reports. The U.S. resolution, notably co-sponsored by Geor-

gia, does not directly blame Russia but instead calls for a swift end to the conflict, a move that has drawn criticism from European allies and Ukrainian officials.

According to The Wall Street Journal, this shift in Georgia's position has raised concerns in Kyiv and European capitals. Ukraine's draft resolution — backed by over 100 countries — explicitly condemns Russia's

aggression and demands a full military withdrawal, while the U.S. version avoids assigning blame and takes a more neutral stance.

As The Wall Street Journal details, European diplomats view the U.S. move as an effort to soften criticism of Russia, fueling tensions between Washington and its European allies. Britain and France have pushed back against the American resolution, arguing that it undermines Ukraine's position at the U.N.

Georgia's decision, as highlighted by The Wall Street Journal, signals a potential shift in its foreign policy. A country traditionally aligned with Western institutions like NATO and the EU, Georgia's support for the U.S. resolution suggests a possible recalibration of its stance toward Russia. This has sparked unease among European allies about Georgia's long-term strategic direction.

With both resolutions set for a U.N. vote on Monday, marking the third anniversary of the war, European leaders are gathering in Kyiv with President Volodymyr Zelensky to reinforce their support for Ukraine. As The Wall Street Journal notes, the diplomatic standoff could further reveal deepening geopolitical divisions, with Georgia's role under increasing scrutiny.

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The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Papuashvili Defends Proposed 'Foreign Agent' Law as Direct Copy of U.S. Legislation



The Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia, Shalva Papuashvili, has defended the controversial *Foreign Agents* bill, claiming it is an exact translation of the U.S. Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA). Papuashvili stated that anyone objecting to the law should first address their concerns to the United States.

Speaking to journalists, Papuashvili announced that discussions on the bill would begin in Parliament next week. "Everyone will see that this is an accurate translation. If anyone has complaints about any word, comma, or period in the text, they should first contact the United States of America and then tell us what they don't like about the American system. We will be happy to hear what they dislike about the Ameri-

can system in this regard," he stated.

The proposed legislation, which has drawn criticism from opposition groups and international organizations, has been labeled by critics as an attempt to restrict

media and civil society organizations. Papuashvili dismissed these concerns, accusing foreign politicians, diplomats, and ambassadors of spreading "absurd conspiracies, disinformation, and false narratives" about the bill. "Yes, here is the American law — word for word, identical. If they have any complaints about the U.S. system, let them tell us about it," he asserted.

Additionally, Papuashvili addressed the ruling party's plans to introduce a new "Law on Media," which he claimed would be modeled after British standards. He argued that the law would not introduce anything new but rather reinforce existing journalistic norms.

"What journalistic standards are, everyone knows. It's just that some people

want to turn journalists into political activists outside of journalistic standards. Therefore, there is nothing new here either," he said.

Georgia Seeks to Renew Strategic Partnership with the US



Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze has stated that Georgia aims to not only reset but also renew its strategic partnership with the United States, offering a specific roadmap for future cooperation. In a recent address to the media, Kobakhidze highlighted that this is an open invitation from the Georgian gov-

ernment to US authorities.

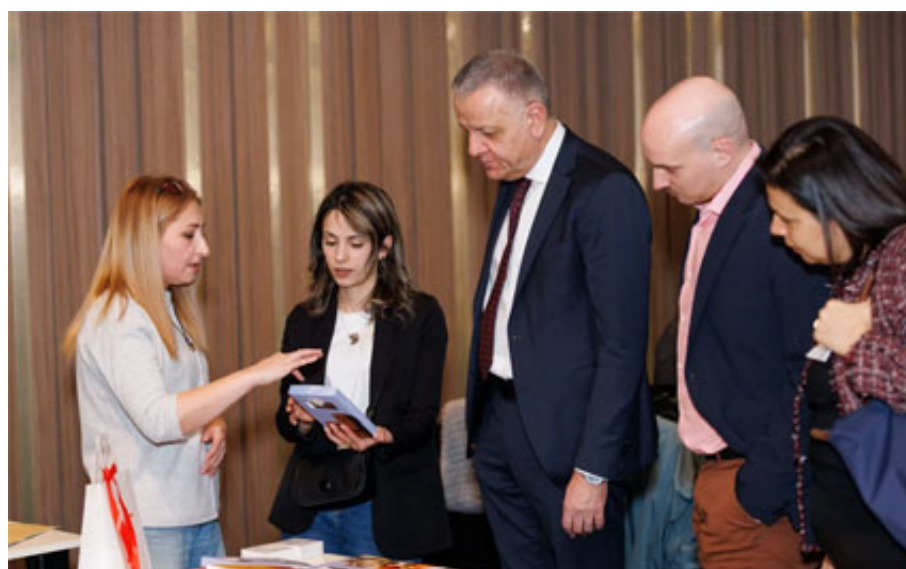
"We want not only to reset relations, but more than that, we want to renew the strategic partnership with a specific roadmap," he emphasized. Kobakhidze acknowledged the Trump administration's current focus on domestic issues and the ongoing war, which may limit attention to Georgia at

this stage. However, he is confident that, in due course, the administration will recognize the importance of Georgian-American relations.

"At a certain stage, the time will definitely come when the Trump administration will take a serious interest in Georgian-American relations," Kobakhidze remarked.

EU project on capacity building of migrants in Armenia presents achievements

On 19 January, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD Armenia) hosted the closing event for the EU4IMPACT (EU for Increasing Migrants' Potential to Act for the Development of Armenia) project. EU Ambassador to Armenia Vassilis Maragos also took part in the event, held in Yerevan.



Launched in September 2020, the project was implemented alongside the Local Empowerment for Actors for Development (LEAD) project, both funded by the European Union, and as part of the EU4Business initiative. Its main goal was to empower Armenian labour migrants, returnees, and their families by mobilising remittances to invest in local development and job creation in Armenia. In addition to providing

support for migrant start-ups and existing businesses, the project worked on developing innovative diaspora investment instruments.

As part of the project, approximately 300 individuals were trained, and 117 migrant start-ups and businesses received funding. These businesses spanned various sectors across Armenia, including agriculture (40%), production (34%), services (31%), and tourism and hospitality (19%). The project also created a new crowdfunding platform.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Monday, February 24

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 1°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: -4°C

Tuesday, February 25

Day Cloudy
High: 2°C

Night Overcast
Low: -5°C

published by
The Messenger

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