

Georgian Civil Society Organizations Condemn Foreign Agents Law as 'Repackaged Russian Law'

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

More than 100 civil society organizations (CSOs) have condemned the Foreign Agents Registration Act, set to be adopted by the ruling Georgian Dream (GD) party, calling it a "repackaged Russian law" that targets independent media and the civil sector. In a joint statement, they declared their refusal to "live and work under Russian laws."

The statement also refuted GD's claim that its proposed law is similar to the U.S. Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), arguing that the American law "does not oppose the activities of independent NGOs and free media", whereas the Georgian version directly targets both sectors.

In their statement, the organizations asserted that "any act of Ivanishvili's illegitimate parliament that restricts people's freedom is anti-Georgian and unconstitutional." They reaffirmed their commitment to the Constitution of Georgia and their mission "to serve the Georgian people."

Nino Lomjaria, founder of the civic platform Georgia's European Orbit, accused the government of attempting to "suppress any manifestation of freedom."

"After the political arrests of more than 50 people, raids, and repression, they want to leave



children and women who are victims of violence unprotected, cut off funding for scholars, young people, and socially vulnerable families, and silence the voices of the people," Lomjaria said.

Baia Pataraiia, Executive Director of Sapari, pointed out that the U.S. FARA does not apply to media organizations and CSOs, whereas the Georgian version specifically includes them in its explanatory note.

"Ivanishvili's FARA, which

lies to be an American law, explicitly mentions CSOs in its explanatory note," she stated. "Very soon, everyone will know if this law is Ivanishvili's FARA or American FARA because if it starts to be used against CSOs, then we simply have a repackaged Russian law."

Ucha Nanuashvili, founder of the Democracy Research Institute, argued that the law serves Russian geopolitical interests.

"Its main purpose is to imple-

ment Russian interests on the territory of Georgia, and this is precisely the goal of the whole Georgian Dream, and this is exactly what the illegitimate authorities have been doing in recent months," he said.

Nanuashvili further emphasized the CSOs' commitment to resisting the law, calling it "unconstitutional, anti-people, anti-Georgian."

"CSOs will take all necessary steps to prevent GD from implementing the law for the third

time," he added.

The proposed Foreign Agents Registration Act has sparked widespread opposition from civil society groups, media organizations, and international actors, with critics warning that it could undermine Georgia's democratic institutions and European integration efforts. As CSOs continue to mobilize against the law, the debate over its implications for Georgia's political landscape remains highly contentious.

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Berlin Court Overturns Rejection of Georgian Asylum Seekers, Questions 'Safe Country' Status

BERLIN

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Georgien: Erhebliche Zweifel an Einstufung als sicherer Herkunftsstaat (Nr. 19/2025)

Pressemitteilung vom 21.03.2025

Es bestehen erhebliche Zweifel daran, ob die Bestimmung Georgiens zum sicheren Herkunftsstaat mit Unionsrecht vereinbar ist. Das hat das Verwaltungsgericht Berlin in zwei Eilbeschlüssen entschieden.

Ende 2023 stufte der Bundesgesetzgeber Georgien als sicheren Herkunftsstaat ein. Das hat zur Folge, dass Asylverfahren von georgischen Staatsangehörigen in Deutschland nach besonderen Regeln durchgeführt werden. So wird unter anderem individuell widerlegbar vermutet, dass im Herkunftsstaat Freiheit von Verfolgung und unmenschlicher oder erniedrigender Bestrafung oder Behandlung besteht. Gegen eine entsprechende qualifizierte Ablehnung ihrer Asylanträge hat ein georgisches Ehepaar Klagen sowie Eilanträge beim Verwaltungsgericht Berlin erhoben. Sie machen u.a. geltend, dass der als Veterinär in einer Behörde tätige Ehemann aufgrund seiner Teilnahme an Demonstrationen gegen die „russischen Gesetze“ Georgiens aus politischen Gründen entlassen und Repressalien ausgesetzt worden sei. Seine Ehefrau gab ebenfalls an, von ihrem öffentlichen Arbeitgeber nach der Teilnahme an Protestkundgebungen gemäßregelt worden zu sein.

A Berlin court has ruled against the German government's rejection of two Georgian asylum applications, challenging the classification of Georgia as a "safe country of origin." The decision, published on March 21, could have wider implications for Germany's asylum policy and Georgia's visa-free travel agreement with the European Union.

The case involved a Georgian couple, both former civil servants, who claimed they were persecuted for participating in pro-EU protests. According to their testimony, the husband was dismissed from his job, and the wife was officially reprimanded for their political involvement. They sought asylum in Germany, arguing that their safety and rights were at risk in Georgia.

However, their applications were initially rejected under Germany's policy of treating Georgia as a "safe country of origin", a classification applied to states where citizens are not at risk of political persecution and where governments uphold fundamental rights.

The Berlin court's ruling cast doubt on whether Georgia meets the EU legal criteria for a safe country. The verdict referenced a previous ruling by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) in Luxem-

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.7815; Euro - 3.0182; GBP - 3.6062; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.3069; Swiss Franc - 3.1583

Berlin Court Overturns Rejection of Georgian Asylum Seekers, Questions 'Safe Country' Status

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bourg, which found that a country cannot be classified as entirely safe if part of its territory is not under government control.

"There are significant doubts as to whether the definition of Georgia as a safe

country of origin complies with EU law," the ruling stated.

The court noted that Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, which are outside the control of the Georgian government, create a legal precedent similar to Moldova, which was denied full "safe country" status due to its breakaway

region of Transnistria.

Furthermore, the court expressed concerns about LGBTQ+ rights in Georgia, suggesting that discrimination and state protection failures could challenge the country's safe designation.

A representative of the Berlin court, quoted by Germany's dpa news agency,

stated that the ruling allows the Georgian couple to remain in Germany while their asylum claims are reassessed.

This decision could set a legal precedent, potentially making it easier for Georgian asylum seekers to challenge rejections in German and other EU courts.

More significantly, the ruling could affect Georgia's visa-free travel arrangement with the EU, a key benefit for Georgian citizens. If asylum applications from Georgia increase, European policymakers may re-evaluate migration policies to prevent abuse of the system, as has happened with Western Balkan countries in the past.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Georgian Dream's Investigative Commission Summons Lelo Leaders for Inquiry



The parliamentary investigative commission established by Georgian Dream (GD) to examine the activities of the Unity - National Movement (UNM) government has summoned Lelo for Georgia party leaders Mamuka Khazaradze and Badri Japaridze for questioning.

The commission's session is scheduled for March 25 at 10:00, where the case of "Magnati" LLC will be discussed. The company's owner, Jemal Leonidze, and his lawyer, as well as Khazaradze and

Japaridze, have been invited to attend. However, it remains unclear whether the Lelo leaders will be present at the session.

The investigative commission, chaired by Thea Tsulukiani, was formed by Geor-

gian Dream to examine the activities of the UNM government from 2003-2012.

According to GD's official statement, the commission aims to conduct an "accurate and transparent investigation" into the previous government's activities and assess any political, economic, or other threats that may have stemmed from that period. The findings will be used to prepare recommendations, conclusions, and draft decisions.

Mikheil Kavelashvili Rejects Salome Zourabichvili's Lawsuit Against 'Russian Law'



Mikheil Kavelashvili has rejected the lawsuit filed by Salome Zourabichvili against the Russian law, leading to the termination of the case in the Constitutional Court.

On October 9, 2024, the Constitutional Court had partially accepted the president's lawsuit for consideration. The court was set to examine the law's compliance with several articles of the Constitution.

A statement released by Kavelashvili's administration justified the rejection of the lawsuit, emphasizing the law's role

in ensuring transparency and accountability:

"The Georgian Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence is based on trans-

parency and accountability, which contributes to the protection of the most important principle of Georgian statehood—the national sovereignty of the state and the stable development of the country."

The statement further outlined the purpose of the law:

"The law serves to inform the public as much as possible about the origin of funding for organizations that promote the interests of foreign powers. Accordingly, the President of Georgia, Mikheil Kavelashvili, has decided to reject the constitutional lawsuit."

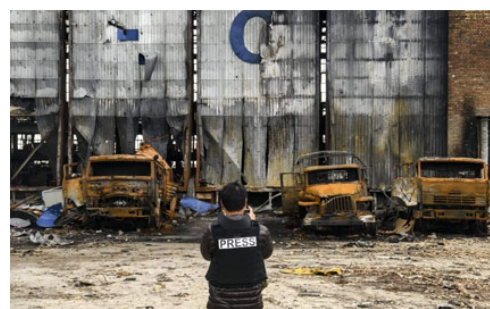
EU boosts support for independent media in Ukraine with extra Euro10 million

The European Union has announced an increase in its support for independent media in Ukraine, with a new Euro10 million funding package.

This new funding builds on

more than Euro100 million that the European Union has already invested in independent media in Ukraine since 2017. Since the full scale invasion, the EU has supported independent media with around Euro37 million in

grants, and supported the establishment of a centre in Przemysl, Poland, to serve as a workspace for media evacuated from Ukraine that were able to get news about the Russian aggression to the world.



As part of the new package, the EU will provide Euro10 million for independent media to ensure their sustainability. The initiative will provide grants to a range of media organisations that will in turn support individual independent journalists and media outlets

through sub-grants:

Euro3 million for Internews Europe to support media in war-affected regions and promote investigative journalism.

Euro2 million to Reporters Without Borders, funding protection measures for at-risk journalists and supporting small media outlets.

Euro1 million to the Institute for Mass Information for small and medium-sized media outlets.

A further Euro1 million will be allocated to smaller-scale projects, such as the Black Sea Foundation and the Docudays festival.

An additional Euro3 million will be allocated through a new call for applications in May 2025. It will focus on strengthening local and regional media outlets and supporting investigative journalism in Ukraine.

"Russia's aggression extends beyond the battlefield. Russia uses massive disinformation to undermine unity and reduce international support," said Katarína Matheronová, EU Ambassador to Ukraine. "A strong independent media in Ukraine is more crucial than ever, and EU funding will help sustain it." (eunighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Tuesday, March 25

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 16°C

Night Partly Cloudy

Low: 5°C

Wednesday, March 26

Day Mostly Cloudy

High: 17°C

Night Mostly Cloudy

Low: 7°C

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