



GEORGIA ALERT

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JOINT WEEKLY NEWSLETTER BY POLITICAL PARTIES DROA, STRATEGY AGHMASHENEBELI, UNITED NATIONAL MOVEMENT, LELO – FOR GEORGIA, GIRCHI – MORE FREEDOM, AND CIVIL MOVEMENT DEMOCRACY DEFENDERS.

HIGHLIGHT OF THE WEEK:

The Georgian Dream attacks NGOs

The GD Chairman Irakli Kobakhidze [stated](#) that the aim of the “NGO clan” is to “restore the United National Movement control over the judiciary,” and that NGO recommendations about the “double 2/3” principle serve the purpose for the UNM to have veto power in the judiciary. The double 2/3 principle is a 2021 collective NGO [recommendation](#) about the High Council of Justice, which has 15 members – 9 judges and 6 non-judges. Decisions are adopted by the “single” 2/3 principle – 10 votes out of 15, in which case the judicial clan is always victorious. Thus, the NGOs required that the 2/3 principle be adopted separately for both judge and non-judge members of the Council.

The infamously pro-governmental TV Imedi is increasingly attacking independent and pro-Western NGOs in the country. In a recent [video](#), they speak of the “wealth of the NGO clan” such as Transparency International Georgia, ISFED, and the Open Society Foundation. They discuss the salaries and properties of their executives such as Eka Gigauri, Giorgi Oniani, and Nino Dolidze. In addition, TV Imedi’s interviewees such as Goga Khaindrava state that NGOs represent foreign interests, serve as spies for foreign intelligence services, and lobby for international corporations. According to TV Imedi, it is no surprise that Georgia’s “friends” want to infiltrate the judiciary and defame the law enforcement services. These NGOs support the opposition’s agenda, and George Soros helps them financially as he has funded the Rose Revolution and the UNM’s violent regime, TV Imedi states. Experts worry that attacks on the NGOs and focus on their wealth and foreign ties put Georgia on the Russian track, where NGOs are labeled foreign agents and their activities are limited. Defamation of Georgia’s Western partners is also in line with the GD’s latest rhetoric as well as the GD’s satellite “Quartet” which we have discussed in previous issues.

The selection process for the new Public Defender

In our Georgia Alert Issue 32, we spoke of the Georgian Dream legally amending the selection process of the new Public Defender to the detriment of the 12 recommendations given to Georgia by the EU Commission. The new setting serves the purpose of considerably decreasing the possibility of a non-submissive candidate for the GD. For this reason, the GD severely limited the participation of NGOs in the process. Nevertheless, the NGOs carried on with the old process and [named](#) three persons as potential Public Defender candidates for the GD to select from. All three of them are highly reputable in society as independent voices for justice – current Deputy

Public Defender Giorgi Burjanadze, “Partnership for Human Rights” representative Ana Abashidze, and Nazi Janezashvili, founder of “Georgian Court Watch” and former non-judge member of the High Council of Justice.

The GD Chairman Irakli Kobakhidze stated that this action is proof that “wealthy” NGOs “operate as a clan,” and that the “closed process” of selection of the candidates [cannot](#) be acceptable for the ruling party. Kobakhidze boasted that in the new selection methodology (a nine-person [council](#) of academics, lesser-known NGOs and likely some GONGOs under the Speaker of the Parliament), anyone can express their desire to be considered as the new Public Defender.

The outgoing Ombudswoman Nino Lomjaria was once again [dubbed](#) as “the UNM interest lobbyist” by the GD representatives, fueling suspicion that they will not allow an independent Public Defender again. Lomjaria presented her annual report to the Parliament in which she spoke of worsening of [human](#) rights, civil and political rights, as [well](#) as constraints on the freedom of expression in the year 2021, and [stated](#) that she doubts the ruling party understands the functions of the Public Defender.

NATO questions Georgia’s commitment for the first time

Javier Colomina, Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia, NATO, [September](#) 27, 2022 – “The level of implementation of reforms is unsatisfactory, there are concerns about Georgia's readiness to move along the Euro-Atlantic path.” Colomina also underlines that Georgia is missing a unique geopolitical opportunity.

The Georgian opposition collectively believes that Georgia should [apply](#) for NATO membership following Ukraine, but that the current government will not do so and it is [pointless](#) to even demand this from them. The Georgian Dream, on the other hand, [justifies](#) itself with the geopolitical status quo of the first weeks of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine that it is NATO that is not ready for Georgia, not vice versa, and that Ukraine applying for NATO should [not](#) automatically mean that Georgia follows. This is despite the fact that Georgia and Ukraine have always been considered together in the NATO enlargement process. It is noteworthy that the Georgian Dream only applied for EU membership following Ukraine after immense public pressure.

The Georgian Dream and the national security issues

After months of blaming the collective opposition, Ukraine, and the West in an alleged attempt to drag Georgia into war with Russia, Irakli Kobakhidze has [stated](#) after Lukashenka visits Abkhazia that the opposition wants Belarus to recognize Abkhazia. The GD only summoned the Belarusian Ambassador to the MFA, whereas they recalled the Georgian Ambassador from Ukraine in 2020 over Saakashvili’s appointment as the Chairman of Ukraine’s National Reform Council. On a different note, Kobakhidze also [stated](#) that the Georgian Dream promised the people to get rid of the UNM and boasted that the GD has heavily assisted the process of UNM’s current crisis. He also called Saakashvili an oligarch.

The GD not only sees no infiltration or other national and social security risks in the heavy influx of Russian citizens in a Russian-occupied country but insists on calling the immigrants tourists. Minister of Internal Affairs Gomelauri has [expressed](#) amazement at why the Russian influx has suddenly been an issue after all these years, and Irakli Zarkua [said](#) that the beauty of Georgia has always attracted car rows at the Russian border.