

**How Non-governmental Organizations
Influence the Repeal of the Law
on Transparency of Foreign Influence in Georgia**

By

David Gagua

大衛加瓜

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DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

This junior paper was presented

by

David Gagua

大衛加瓜

It was defended on

November 16, 2024

and approved by

Reviewer 1: Mark Lai, Associate Professor, Department of International Affairs

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Reviewer 2: Daniel Lin, Associate Professor, Department of International Affairs

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Adviser: Philipp Fluri, Visiting Professor, Department of International Affairs

Signature: _____ Date: _____

How Non-governmental Organizations Influence the Repeal of the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence in Georgia

David Gagua, B.A.

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Abstract

Non-government organizations are often dependent on foreign funds and some laws may limit the actions they can take. The law on ‘foreign agents’ in Georgia is no exception. It was first proposed in 2023. Moreover, social organizations in Georgia did their duty to inform the local population about the risks of passing the law, which was so similar to the law on foreign agents that was passed in Russia in 2012 and fearing to face the same consequences the Georgian population was determined to withdraw the law, which led to massive non-violent protests by civilians and ended up being vetoed by the President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili. International media reported the news, and the European Commission closely monitored the Georgian government. In the winter of 2023-2024, Georgia, despite the predictions of many experts, officially gained the status of a candidate for European Union accession, most of the time owing to the will and strengthening of the people, not the government.

Several months later, in April 2024, the parliament presented a ‘new’ version of the law and tried again to pass it. This time everything unfolded on a much larger scale, with international media in many countries reporting on the events taking place in Georgia, including thousands of people protesting outside the parliament (where at the same moment the law passed its second reading), the arbitrary behavior of the police towards the local population by using tear gas, water cannons and rubber bullets to disperse the protesters and the repeated being vetoed by the President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili. However, this time, since the Georgian Dream and its co-operating parties have a majority in parliament, the removal of the presidential veto was an expected event.

This study is exploring how non-governmental organizations are trying to stop the adoption of a law on transparency of foreign influence, what stands in their way and whether they can contribute through in-depth interviews with non-governmental organizations and subsequent analysis.

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INTRODUCTION

Background

The first non-governmental organization - Liberty Institute appeared in Georgia at the end of the 20th century, which played a significant role in the Rose Revolution - most of the founders became members of the country's parliament.

Now, there are about 10,000 registered NGOs in Georgia. They actively promote positive, result-oriented change. They are valuable actors in protection, prevention, promotion, and transformation.

In December 2022, deputies of the People's Power movement (ხალხის ძალა), who came from the Georgian Dream party, planned to introduce draft laws to regulate the media and non-governmental organizations, citing European and American experience. The founders claim that the aim of the law is to ensure maximum transparency. At the same time, opponents of the authorities say that in fact, the ruling party is trying to use the law to suppress criticism it does not like coming from the media and NGOs, in the same spirit as it happened in Russia.

The non-violent protests lasted almost a week and in the end the law was not passed. The President of Georgia - Salome Zourabichvili (სალომე ზურაბიშვილი) expressed her opposition to the bill, urging the country not to move towards Russia - and vetoed the law.

In spring 2024, after Georgia gained European Union candidate status, a new 'Foreign Influence Transparency Law' that requires NGOs to register as 'foreign influence agents' if their foreign funding accounts for more than 20 per cent of their total income. The English version of the Foreign Influence and Transparency Law can be found in the **appendix**. Now, non-violent protests are taking place in Georgia and actions are unfolding in the present tense.

Motivation

The right to be informed and to have access to information is an important issue in modern society. Non-governmental organizations exist in many countries, and they help on a non-commercial basis to promote democratic values, to protect the civil rights of local citizens, and are often the key link between public officials and local residents. Every year, there are more and more non-governmental organizations, which may be an indicator of the growth of Public Transparency, which allows citizens to be more informed and encourages disclosure of information by the authorities, acting as a regulatory mechanism. It is based on ethics and governance principles, according to which the interests and needs of the authorities are centered on citizens. Non-state organizations can act as an opposition to the state and expose corruption among politicians. This is also indicative of a state's level of democracy, as the press can act freely, not always to please the authorities, but to bring the truth to the public.

As I grew up, I was a volunteer in such organizations and I was fascinated by how much such organizations can do for local people without cooperating with the state, but with purely philanthropic motives. I am particularly attracted to political activity, where the integration of non-state organizations can have a significant impact on the structure of the state.

My research is driven by a deeply personal exploration of the potential of non-governmental organizations to 'transparency of foreign influence' bill, whether they can influence the law not to be passed, and if so, in what way. I am convinced that non-governmental organizations are one of the best bridges for building trust not only within a state but also internationally. This research is an investigation of this turning point that is taking place in Georgia's political scene right now, with a focus on non-governmental organizations aiming to oppose the law on the agenda.

Research Purpose

The main purpose of this study is to examine the influence of non-governmental organizations in the attempt to stop the implementation of the proposed Foreign Influence Transparency Law with a focus on specific NGOs. The aim is to find out in what ways they are trying to stop and whether they are able to play a role in the revocation of the Foreign Agents Law. In addition, this study also accurately examines how organizations adapt and change their strategies depending on the moves of government officials. Through a comprehensive and comparative analysis of interviews with NGO representatives and politicians, this study seeks to provide an in-depth evaluation of the actions and role that non-governmental organizations have played in this context to protect Georgia's democratic values, thereby contributing to a clear understanding of developments in the country.

Research Questions

The research paper is raising the question of how non-governmental organizations are trying to get the Foreign Influence Law repealed. It provides insights into the ways in which organizations achieve their goals and what strategies are being or might be formed to successfully oppose them.

Based on the first question, the author is exploring the question of the ability of non-governmental organizations to influence the decision-making process. Whether they have any power at all in Georgian politics and, if so, how and in what way it appears.

The second question leads to the third question: what obstacles non-governmental organizations face in achieving the revocation of the law on foreign influence. This question includes obstacles not only from the current Georgian government, but also from the local population and supporters of the government, the media and censorship.

Contribution

The findings of this study may have potential for the future of NGOs in Georgia. It may be possible to understand what role NGOs play in the adoption of laws in Georgia. Whether NGOs can influence state policy. Do NGOs reflect the opinion of the people and how, if they do.

For foreign scholars, this study may give a clear picture of what was happening in Georgia during the period of legislating the law on foreign influence, to see the strength, importance and necessity of NGOs in the country. And what NGOs face in the process of their activities.

Limits

Regarding access, the author is reaching five organizations directly for this study, but if it is not possible to contact them due to busy schedules or other reasons, the author going to contact two more NGOs. In the case of refusal to interview by organizations, the author going to record this in the study and indicate the reason.

The time available to study the research problem and measure change or stability over time are limited to the due date of September 2024. Considering that this research is focused on the ‘Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence’ process, which is ongoing in the present, it is potentially likely that it is going to end earlier than the set date (September 2024) or take longer, depending on the possibilities, the research might be complemented.

Concerning cultural and other possible biases, in proofreading the research, special attention should be paid to how the problem is framed, what data are selected for the research, what might have been missed, how events, people or places are ordered, how a person, organization, place or object is represented, how phenomena are named or possible words with positive or negative connotations are used. The research endeavors to be as neutral and unbiased as possible in all aspects.

Due to the knowledge of Georgian and Mingrelian languages, if necessary, the study can provide information translated into English about events in the local language. If literature is relevant to the study, it can be translated and included in the study with appropriate citations. Considering that this study may be of interest to scholars from different countries, it is going to be written in English. Therefore, the interviews are going to be conducted in English in order to fully convey the meaning of what was said by the representatives of the non-governmental organizations and not to miss the message of the interviewees; if necessary, the author are going to translate the phrases or whole interview into English himself as accurately as possible.

Delimits

This study is not covering the other tasks that NGOs in Georgia are currently carrying out and the goals they are trying to achieve. The study is limited to non-governmental organizations only, and does not include those funded by the state. Non-professionals are going to be excluded, those who are going to be interviewed have held a position in an NGO and have knowledge of the law.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Civil Society Organizations

Civil society is the voluntary association and public expression of the interests, priorities, claims, and values on which these associations are based, which are not linked to the state, but can co-exist freely with it and act together for the benefit of civil groups.

Non-state organizations are an essential tool for preventing the development of authoritarian rule in a country, empowering the population, and ensuring political accountability, and their key role in strengthening and sustaining democracy is now widely recognized by scholars and politicians alike. Its activities include not only volunteerism and volunteerism, but also more aggressive ways of expression such as boycotts, peaceful and violent protests, and strikes. Considering that on average a government is elected for a few years and that people's opinions and demands can change more frequently, non-governmental organizations are an excellent way of representing the will of the people.

'Securitization' is the justification by politicians of controversial issues to avoid unwanted attention. In modern times, the state may justify withholding information from the people on the grounds of 'national security', but this may serve as a cover-up of corruption. This is where non-state organizations can, or rather should, play their role as supervisors and controllers of state security structures and ensure transparency and accountability of processes.¹

Non-governmental Organizations in Georgia

For the first time in modern Georgia, the idea of establishing non-governmental organizations emerged in the late 1980s, when the power of the Soviet Union began to weaken due to Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika policy. The new public discourse created by these groups was mainly focused on anti-communist ideas and the creation of a new independent Georgian

¹ Marina Caparini and Philipp Fluri, "Mapping Civil Society in Defense and Security Affairs: An Agenda for Research," *Connections* 1, no. 4 (2002).

state. The first organizations were not yet well known, and it was difficult to find sponsors or support among the local population, given the crisis in the country. However, they were able to stay afloat thanks to the support of private and semi-private businesses that contributed to the development of local SCOs. After Georgia gained independence in 1992, Western countries began to show interest in the development of non-governmental organizations in the country. At the same time, the first NGOs fully funded by American and European funds started to appear. «At this stage, foundations such as Open Society-Georgia (funded by well-known American philanthropist George Soros), Eurasia and ISAR-Georgia (later known as the Horizonti Foundation) - both funded by the US government - played a particularly important role in the development of the nongovernmental sector.²»

Civil society began to develop, and divisions emerged, some of them of an advocacy nature, others influencing government policy, and still others influencing the development of democratization and assistance to the population. At the same time, however, there is a growing fear among the population about the vision and intentions of social organizations, given their dependence on foreign funds and compliance with their policies. This is a significant disadvantage of non-governmental organizations.

To summarize, it can be said that Western funds helped a lot in the initial development of civil organizations, but the population did not have confidence in them, which is understandable given the realities of the time and the propaganda.

Similarity of the Law with the Russian Version

Once the law was introduced in Parliament, people immediately noticed its similarity to the Russian version, which is why the transparency of foreign influence law is called the Russian law.

In 2012, Russia passed a law on the transparency of foreign influence in non-state organizations, thus ending not only freedom of speech but also democracy itself. By depriving

² Ghia Nodia, "Civil society development in Georgia: achievements and challenges," *Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development, Tbilisi* (2005).

foundations of material support from abroad, Russia was able to greatly reduce the number of social organizations not affiliated with the government. A few years later, the law was extended not only to organizations but also to individuals, which led to the imprisonment of many activists. Georgian citizens are concerned that this future awaits them too, so they do not want to allow the law to be registered.

‘It is a Russian law. It is an exact duplicate of the Putin law that was adopted a few years ago and then complemented in order to crush civil society,’ Salome Zourabichvili, Georgia's president and a longstanding opponent of Georgian Dream, told CNN.³

International Response

USA

The United States calls on all parties to renounce violent action and on the Government of Georgia to refocus its efforts on initiatives that will meet the needs of the Georgian people. As Georgian citizens have spoken out against this law, there are clear signs of a campaign of intimidation and the use of violence to suppress peaceful opposition. In response to these actions, the State Department is introducing a new visa restriction policy for Georgia that will apply to individuals responsible for or complicit in undermining democracy in Georgia, as well as their family members. This includes individuals responsible for oppressing civil society and freedom of peaceful assembly in Georgia through a campaign of violence or intimidation.⁴

³ Christian Edwards Kennedy, Niamh. 2024. “Georgia Presses on with Putin-Style ‘Foreign Agent’ Bill despite Huge Protests.” CNN. April 18, 2024. <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/04/18/europe/georgia-foreign-agent-law-russia-first-reading-intl/index.html>. and .

⁴ <https://www.state.gov/announcement-of-a-visa-restriction-policy-for-undermining-democracy-in-georgia-and-comprehensive-review-of-all-u-s-georgia-cooperation/>.

European Union

The European Union is in no hurry to impose sanctions, but does not share the fact that the Georgian government bypassed the president's veto and warns the Georgian government that not only does this law lead to a retreat in three of the nine steps (on disinformation; on polarization; on basic rights and inclusion of civil society organizations) set out in the Candidate Status Commission recommendation, approved by EU leaders, and will negatively impact Georgia's path to the EU.⁵

The EU argues that there is still time, so it asks the Georgian government to focus its attention on restructuring its path, and member states are considering all options for responding to these events. At the same time, the EU recognizes the choice of most Georgians in favor of a European future and supports it.

Taipei Times

Many media are reporting what is happening in Georgia right now and Taiwan is no exception. However, here's a closer look at what is happening inside parliament.

Georgian Dream party member Dmitry Samkharadze was seen attacking Levan Khabeishvili, head of the main opposition United National Movement party, after he accused Samkharadze of organizing a mob to beat up opposition supporters.

In his speech, Georgian Dream MP Archil Talakvadze accused the “radical and anti-national political opposition, united by political vendetta” of using the protests for their own political purposes and “hoping for a radical turn of events.”

Ana Tsitlidze of the United National Movement said the protests showed how united Georgia was “in the fight for its European future.” Another prominent opposition figure, Giorgi

⁵ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/georgia-statement-high-representative-european-commission-final-adoption-law-transparency-foreign_en.

Vashadze, said that the Georgian Dream party was “completely outside the constitution, outside the law and betraying the European future of our country.”⁶

Russian News

Former Russian President and current Deputy Chairman of the Security Council of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev spoke about the law on foreign agents in Georgia. He welcomed the attempt to adopt the bill and noted that behind the current protests stands the «experienced and familiar Hollywood hand». Medvedev says that people do not like that this is considered a "Russian" idea rather than a Western one, and asks to pay attention to analogical laws in EU countries and America. Despite the existence of the same law on the transparency of foreign influence in Western countries, but in these countries, everything is satisfied with Medvedev. "The Atlantic values, imposed through the Maidan and blood - gifts are extremely dubious." - wrote Medvedev.⁷

Dmitry Peskov, Press Secretary of the President of the Russian Federation, also spoke about the law of foreign agents in Georgia. He said that the law should not be called Russian, and that the first to monitor their internal political "hygiene" the United States of America, which invented the FARA. "The fact that this domestic political process is being used as a tool to provoke anti-Russian sentiment is hardly being conveyed from within Georgia. They surely come from outside, we understand it perfectly. Well, we watch what is happening,"⁸ added Peskov.

⁶ 2024. <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/world/archives/2024/05/16/2003817955>. "People Protest in Georgia over 'Russian Law' - Taipei Times." 2024. www.taipeitimes.com. May 16 and .

⁷ 2024. <https://civil.ge/ru/archives/599555>. "Медведев поддерживает вновь инициированный ГМ законопроект об 'иноагентах.'" 2024. Civil Georgia. April 17 and .

⁸

OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

The conclusions also highlight similarities and differences in other national laws compared to the law under consideration. Financing options include International and foreign funding is an important component of the right to freedom of association. Justification by national authorities the justification for the law is often weak and inadequate, as it does not explain why the existing legal framework and registration/accountability requirements are inadequate and/or ineffective. Furthermore, no adequate justification is provided to justify different treatment of organizations based solely on the source of funding. Furthermore, due to its broad meaning, the term “foreign power” may also include international or intergovernmental organizations, including those to which Georgia participates and contributes, and which may be considered a foreign power.

Thus, organizations that receive funds for relief or development activities (e.g. from the UN) are defined as follows: Representatives of the interests of a foreign power The US Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) and Australia’s recently enacted Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act. The FARA is fundamentally different and is not a relevant comparative example to justify legislative initiatives targeting organizations/associations that only receive foreign funding. The emergency declaration concludes that the FARA is deeply flawed, inconsistent with international human rights standards and OSCE humanitarian commitments, and should be repealed⁹

Georgian Dream

In 2011, billionaire Ivanishvili founded the Georgian Dream movement for political activism, and a few months later the Georgian Dream party, named by Ivanishvili's son Bera, was founded. At the time of inauguration, the billionaire did not have Georgian citizenship, so lawyer

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Manana Kobakhidze was elected as an interim, nominal chairman of the party. These elections marked the beginning of the transition from a presidential system (former head Saakashvili made decisions in unison) to a parliamentary system of government¹⁰. The 2012 elections were a watershed moment as it was the first uncontested transfer of power from one political party to another in the country. It was also the first time that the country's political system showed signs of maturity and stability; instead of disappearing from the political scene, the former ruling party retained its core constituency and party structures and continued to act as an opposition party.² In terms of economic development, the post-2012 period presented a mixed picture. GD presented itself mainly as a centre-left party and tried to revise the neoliberal economic and social policies of its predecessor.

On 25 October 2012, Ivanishvili was elected Prime Minister of Georgia. He demanded that Saakashvili step down as president, but the latter decided to complete his final term, which meant an uneasy political coexistence throughout 2013. The new government introduced the State Universal Health Care Agenda, making emergency surgeries and childbirth free, increased social security spending, and began reforms in self-government, law enforcement, and agriculture. 'Georgian Dream' also began prosecuting former government and opposition officials on charges of corruption, abuse of power, and torture.

Current Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze said the government is 'unequivocally pro-European' and will work towards EU accession¹¹. He cited Europe's association with Christianity and a high level of prosperity as reasons for joining. Kobakhidze denied that the bills on 'foreign agents' and anti-LGBT legislation were influenced by Russia, calling them national decisions. He said Georgia is not under Russian influence and no party or media is under its control. The Prime Minister said that the Georgian Dream party is the strongest guarantee of peace and development in the country, attributed economic growth to it and warned that without economic performance Georgia will not be able to become a full member of the EU.

¹⁰ Kakachia, Kornely, Lebanidze, Larsen, and Grigalashvili. "The First 100 Days of The Georgian Dream Government: A Reality Check." *Georgian Institute of Politics* 22 (2017).

¹¹ Witherspoon, Jane. "Georgia PM Rejects Russian Influence and Embraces Europe Ahead of Vote." euronews. Accessed October 28, 2024. <https://www.euronews.com/2024/10/25/georgian-pm-kobakhidze-rejects-russian-influence-and-embraces-europe-ahead-of-elections>.

The Georgian Patriarchate has published a message regarding the upcoming elections in the country on 22 October. The announcement states that, although it is not politically possible, it demonstrates solidarity with a decision that promotes sustainable peace and reinforces Christian and family customs. The announcement comes just a couple of days after the authorities decided to hand over extensive land plots in a number of Georgian villages to the church.¹²

In accordance with cabinet decrees approved by head of government Irakli Kobakhidze and published on 21 October, significant land plots were handed over to the Georgian Orthodox Church last week. The October 17 decree gave 3,610 square meters and 160 square meters of land in Shuasurebi of Chokhatauri district and 300 square meters of land in Salibauri of Helvachauri district to the churches. The authorities handed over free of charge for a 99-year period a land plot of 1,619 square meters, which is not intended for agricultural needs, together with the buildings and structures located on it.

Bidzina Ivanishvili

“The man who bought a country”¹³

Bidzina (Boris) Grigorievich Ivanishvili was born on 18 February 1956 in the village of Chorvila in the Sachkhere district of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic and studied at the Faculty of Engineering and Economics of Tbilisi State University. From 1982 to 1986 Ivanishvili was a postgraduate student at the Research Institute of Labor and Social Issues in Moscow. After defending his thesis, Ivanishvili returned to Tbilisi and took a job as a senior researcher at the local branch of the Central Institute of Labor (CIT). In 1987 Ivanishvili registered his own cooperative, intending to produce reinforced hoses, which were in short supply at the time. He rented premises from the Foundry-Mechanical Plant and began preparations for production, but soon started selling computers instead of hoses. The main suppliers of electronics for Ivanishvili were his Georgian Jewish acquaintances who had gone abroad, and the first buyer was the

¹² Paniashvili, George. “The Daily Beat: 22 October.” Civil Georgia, October 22, 2024. <https://civil.ge/archives/629723>.

¹³ Parulava, Dato, Eva Hartog, and Gabriel Gavin. “The Man Who Bought a Country.” POLITICO, October 25, 2024. <https://www.politico.eu/article/bidzina-ivanishvili-georgia-election-2024/>.

Georgian Academy of Sciences. However, after the first major transaction, the prosecutor's office arrested Ivanishvili's accounts ('the Georgian prosecutor's office did not like my activity,' the businessman said), after which he left for Moscow. He founded the bank Rossiyskiy Kredit and had significant shares in various oil and gas companies across the country. On 7 October 2011 Ivanishvili announced his intention to create his own political party in opposition to Saakashvili. At the same time, he revealed that he was going to renounce his Russian and French citizenship and sell off his Russian assets. Four days after Ivanishvili announced his retirement from politics, Georgian authorities announced that he had been stripped of his Georgian citizenship - due to the fact that he had previously obtained French citizenship. In September 2012, Ivanishvili sold his last Russian asset, the Stoilenskaya Niva agro-industrial corporation. The buyer was the American investment fund Arco International Group. In June 2012, Ivanishvili faced allegations of illegal campaign financing, receiving fines totaling GEL 127.2 million (\$78 million) for mass distribution of satellite dishes and providing cars to his brother's company. The fines were reduced to GEL 63 million and GEL 11 million, then increased to GEL 20 million. Most of the fine was returned to Ivanishvili after he became prime minister of Georgia in November 2012. On 1 October 2012, Georgia held parliamentary elections in which Georgian Dream won 55% of the vote. Ivanishvili announced his intention to lead the government, and Saakashvili's party went into opposition. On 16 October, Saakashvili restored Ivanishvili's citizenship, and the billionaire then submitted his candidacy for prime minister. Ivanishvili was confirmed as prime minister on 25 October, announcing his intention to retire from politics after a year and a half. On 2 November, he demanded that Saakashvili leave the presidential palace but was refused. Ivanishvili's fortune is estimated at \$6.4 billion, making him the richest man in Georgia¹⁴

¹⁴ Rimple, Paul. "Who Owned Georgia." (2012).

Non-governmental Organizations Interviewed in the Research Study

Europe-Georgian Institute

The Europe-Georgia Institute (EGI)¹⁵ is an independent organization dedicated to strengthening democracy in Georgia and promoting Western aspirations. The organization's mission is to promote democracy, the rule of law and free markets in the Caucasus. EGI plays an important role in policy analysis, recommendation development and project implementation. The organization gives priority to working with young people, ensures equality and non-discrimination, and encourages democratic participation of young people in society.

The Europe-Georgia Institute (EGI) works to improve Georgia's political culture, providing a platform for policy discussions and enabling citizens to voice their opinions. With volunteers, partner organizations, and donor support, the EGI implemented a nationwide get-out-the-vote campaign in 2016. The Institute analyzes politics, creates policy recommendations, and develops projects fostering an open, democratic, and free society. It prioritizes independence, impartiality, and excludes political, economic, or religious factors in its decision-making process.

The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association

The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA)¹⁶ is a significant human rights group in Georgia that was founded in 1994. It has vigorously promoted human rights, strengthened democracy, and established the rule of law. GYLA monitors government operations, conducts research, and produces reports to encourage required improvements. It also offers free legal assistance, strategic litigation, and educational activities to safeguard human rights and build democratic institutions.

The organization has won several precedent-setting lawsuits, which have had a positive impact on people's lives. GYLA runs numerous programs, including human rights, democratic

¹⁵ <https://egi.ge/en/about-us/>

¹⁶ <https://gyla.ge/en/who-we/mission>

institutions, and legal assistance, which address topics like as human rights violations, criminal justice, elections, and European integration. Its aim is to preserve human rights, establish rule of law, and promote social equality in Georgia.

SHAME Movement

The Shame Movement was founded by 15 citizens in June 2019 and has now grown to include 150 activists across Georgia¹⁷. They are united by the desire to achieve Euro-Atlantic unity and systemic democratic reforms through nonviolent action. Their objective is to encourage citizen participation in politics, particularly among young people. They began lobbying for a proportional electoral system in 2019, and were successful in March 2020. This change increased parliamentary representation for minor groupings, providing the groundwork for a pluralist political system.

Create social media 'Get Out the Vote' campaign increased voter turnout by 11% among 18-35-year-olds in the 2020 election. During the continuing COVID-19 epidemic, they organized a volunteer drive to supply nearly 5,000 people with necessary items such as food, medication, and clothes. They informed the public about the presence of a "clan" within the Georgian judiciary via an information campaign. This effort concluded with the sanctioning of the clan's main members in 2023. Shame movement planned pro-Ukraine protests one month before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, as well as after February 24. In addition, with the assistance of 2,000 volunteers, they gathered and sent medications and medical supplies to Ukraine. EU Membership Candidature in March 2022, together with fellow people, asked that the government apply for EU membership. On June 20, in anticipation of the historic decision by the European Council, they planned one of the largest meetings in contemporary history, "Home to Europe," with roughly 150,000 people.

¹⁷ <https://shame.ge/en/about-us>

Organization 4 prefers to remain anonymous

The organization is dedicated to promoting a modern worldview and a liberal spirit. It is supported and sponsored by the United States. The representative speaks at many international forums and actively participates in the civic life of the country

Organization 5 prefers to remain anonymous

A leading civil society organization promoting a free, democratic, and proactive society through youth empowerment, civic activism, and learning opportunities. They unite young professionals, enthusiasts, and youth workers to develop key competences and encourage equal opportunities for personal and professional growth. The organization establishes projects in rural areas, supporting youth with fewer opportunities, minorities, and IDPs to be actively engaged.

METHODOLOGY

This research is a mix of qualitative method and content analysis.

Considering that the research is directly related to the options undertaken by the organization, an in-depth interview was conducted in order to fully understand the reasons. In-depth interview implies a personal conversation. Features of in-depth interview - it helps to better understand the feelings, past experiences, way of thinking, beliefs, motivation of the interviewees. The purpose of an in-depth interview is to obtain answers, insights that would not have been found under other conditions. One of the distinguishing features of qualitative research is the emphasis on context and subjective interpretation of data. Qualitative methods seek to grasp the meaning and significance of the findings by assessing them in the context of the current political and civil situation in Georgia. The research is trying to help to avoid errors in understanding the actions taken by non-governmental organizations and coalitions to resist the Foreign Influence Law.

Content analysis is a research method that provides an opportunity to obtain information about past events, to determine the degree of public significance of a social phenomenon, through the study of secondary data. A variety of techniques can be used to analyze secondary data. Content analysis can be used to analyze different types of texts such as media reports, political statements, party agenda, legal acts, advertising and propaganda materials, and historical sources. The context of the data helps researchers to gain a clear understanding of the data. From the history of non-state organization activities in modern Georgia, to political figures and international media resonance. Without content, the research may not fulfil its objectives

Research Process

Hypothesis Definition and Formation.

A hypothesis is a scientific assumption, based on existing knowledge and observations, which is put forward to explain any phenomena or facts. It is going to serve as a starting point for research aimed at confirming or disproving it. The following hypothesis is going to be considered in this research:

Active participation of non-government organizations positively influences the contribution to abolish proposed legislation on transparency of foreign influence

Designing Research Project

Creating a research plan or developing a step-by-step methodology for research.

First, the formulation of the research questions. Then, the choice of the type of research design chosen is going to be carefully considered. After that, the stage of researching primary and secondary sources is going to begin. Moving on to determining the scope of the research project. Which contributes to choosing the right tools and applications to conduct and analyze the research. Finally moving on to the practical part and developing interview questions. After that, the author can move on to selecting organizations to conduct interviews. Formulate a data analysis plan. And lastly set a timeframe for the research.

Data Collection

Data collection begins with defining the research concept and includes the steps described earlier. Write a letter to non-governmental organizations, indicating who the author is, why the author is doing the research and what topic the author is researching and invite their representatives to the interview. Offer the option to remain anonymous.

Analysis

Data analysis begins after the results have been collected and verified. Requires careful thought to follow the initial data analysis plan and make adjustments as necessary.

Reporting

Presenting the results of the study to non-specialists, i.e. summarizing the data in the form of a conclusion that rejects or confirms the original hypothesis, in the form of a research report or presentation.

Results of the Interviews

Interview 1 **The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA)**

Interviewee - Ioseb Edisherashvili - Experienced specialist in Human rights and international law, with Master's degree in international law and a PhD in Human rights candidate.

This organization has been selected to explore answers from a qualified lawyer who understands the country's constitution and has experience in this niche. To find out the strategy of an organization that understands the nuances of the law and their strategy to revoke the Foreign Influence Law.

The adopted law in Georgia is a concern as it may lead to the suppression of democracy and civil society. The law's ambiguity and uncertain implementation raise concerns about its potential misuse. The organization under pressure has faced de facto pressures, including attacks on their offices, defamatory statements, and threats from the ruling party's members. The coalitions of NGOs in Georgia are common, and picketing is prohibited, but rallies and manifestations are allowed. The government is limiting dissemination of dissenting opinions through propaganda and misinformation online. The law is considered undemocratic and violates EU and COE values, and its implementation has already resulted in some organizations stopping work or skipping registration. The international community has expressed concerns, and sanctions may be imposed if the law is not repealed. The law's primary goal is to target civil society, dissenting voices, and independent organizations to stifle opposition and control finances

Interview 2 **The Europe-Georgia Institute (EGI)**

Interviewee - George Melashvili - Georgian public figure, scholar, and activist. Found and leads the Europe-Georgia Institute, influencing the civic landscape in Georgia since 2016.

This organization has been chosen to assess what strategy are going to be used by those who promote liberal values in the country. It helps to understand the basis of their choices, the relevance of their policies, and the specifics of their methods.

The law is a significant challenge to civil society in Georgia, posing a threat to democracy. Independent CSOs face fines and government pressure if they receive foreign aid. The law's dualistic impact is negative, hindering free press and opposition parties, and halting Georgia's European integration process. Despite efforts to revoke the law, it remains in place, and civil society faces intense pressure from propaganda, vandalism, and government targeting. International pressure mount, with the European Council halting integration and the US State Department sanctioning Members of the Georgian Dream party. The law has had a significant impact on civil society, with organizations declaring they won't comply and mass protests resulting. Many organizations have ceased operations due to the law, and some have received draconian fines. The primary reason for adopting the law is to control society, viewing independent organizations as troublemakers.

Interview 3 **SHAME Movement** is the largest civil movement in Georgia

Interviewee - Dachi Imedadze - copywriter and strategist for the SHAME Movement. He's also a volunteer for Students for Liberty and holds a degree in Governance and Social Sciences from Free University of Tbilisi.

This organization has been chosen to understand how the organization, from an activist perspective, are going to be proactive on the issue of foreign influence law. It is going to allow us to understand whether the style of activism has changed and what the consequences have been.

In Georgia, NGOs and civil societies play a crucial role in democracy due to limited free media outlets. The recently passed "Russian law" (foreign agents bill) aims to silence critical voices, forcing NGOs to choose between compliance or niche work. The Georgian Dream party, the current ruling party, has shown it's undemocratic and doesn't listen to the people. The law was enacted in September, but no organizations have been fined or pressured until now. Civil society campaigned together against the law, attending rallies and providing resources. The government has become increasingly harsh in its response to protests, using tear gas, pepper spray, and rubber bullets against protesters. The government introduced a law that threatens freedom of expression and speech by censoring LGBT-related issues. The law includes

provisions that would ban explicit content showing LGBT relations, prohibit rallies promoting LGBT values or equality. The law also requires NGOs to submit personal employee data to the government, including salary and private phone numbers, which breaches privacy and freedom of expression. The Georgian government's primary goal is to silence critical voices, including organizations exposing corruption and online media that cover sensitive topics efficiently.

Interview 4 they prefer to remain **anonymous**

This organization was chosen to demonstrate pluralism. To hear from a non-governmental organization that was not originally involved or interested in either branch of government and whether their policies have changed in the current situation.

The "Foreign Influence Transparency Law" is seen as a threat to democracy and civil society in the country. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are being targeted with increased registration requirements, fines, and efforts to limit their activism. The law's aim is to curb activism, rather than promote transparency, similar to its impact in neighboring countries like Russia and Azerbaijan. NGOs have united to defend their activities, but the law's implementation has resulted in some organizations closing down and donors refusing funding. The government's primary goal is to limit civil society, free speech, and opposition, rather than promote transparency.

Interview 5 they prefer to remain **anonymous**

This organization has been chosen to hear the views of a smaller foundation. This helps us to hear what organizations outside the capital of Georgia are facing and what the realities of the Foreign Influence Law may be for rural regions and their NGOs.

The law restricting civil society freedom in Georgia is seen as a step backward for democracy. It's a copy-paste of Russian laws, aimed at limiting civil societies and incompatible with personal security and privacy. Organizations are at risk of being monitored, and some have already adjusted their activities to avoid being flagged as foreign agents. The law has led to increased pressure and tension, causing many organizations to stop or withdraw services, and has negatively impacted vulnerable groups. Despite not receiving a list of requirements, organizations followed the law's publication on websites. The primary reason for adopting the law is to limit criticizing the government, media freedom, and CSOs promoting critical thinking. The full and comprehensive in-depth interviews are available in the appendix.

Comparative Analysis of Statements

In this section the author is going to look at each of the interview questions separately and the difference in responses.

Synopsys of the Interviews

In Georgia, a recently passed foreign influence law threatens democracy and civil society. The law is ambiguous and can be misused, targeting independent organizations and dissenting voices. NGOs face pressure, attacks, and threats from the ruling party, leading to some ceasing operations or not registering. The government controls propaganda and misinformation, while limiting free press and opposition parties. International pressure mounts, with sanctions and halting integration into the EU. Many organizations won't comply, and mass protests result in fines and draconian measures. The law aims to control society, viewing independent organizations as troublemakers.

Answers to Research Questions and Hypothesis.

The answer to the first research question about how non-governmental organizations try to achieve the repeal of the law on foreign influence is found in responses under questions 2, 4, 5, 8.

The research question about the potential of non-governmental organizations to influence the decision-making process is answered under questions 2, 8, 9, 14, 15.

The last question in the research paper - what obstacles do NGOs face when seeking the repeal of the Foreign Influence Act is also answered under questions 3, 5, 6, 10, 12.

Altogether, the answers to all the questions prove the hypothesis that the work of non-governmental organizations has a positive effect on the repeal of the Foreign Influence Law.

Comparative Analysis of Each Question

Question 1

All organizations agree that the very existence of non-governmental organizations in the country is a requirement for a democratic country. The Law on Foreign Influence can silence the voices of dissenters, stop the development towards the European Union, violate the protection of personal data - which goes against the will of the people and therefore threatens the democratic regime of Georgia.

Question 2

Here, opinions differed as to the influence of force. There are those who believe that it is possible to achieve results by uniting with the opposition coalition, others believe that it is possible to achieve results in case of strongly expressed disagreement, as practice showed a year ago, by non-violent protests and persistence. And there are those who believe that it is pointless to focus on the «revocation of the law» and it is necessary to focus on the change of regime. The last interviewed organization argues that any open activity on the part of civil society organizations puts them at risk of being recognized by the current authorities as a «foreign agent» and being fined.

Question 3

One organization did not feel pressure, as they were given time to register as a foreign agent in January 2025. The other four organizations felt clear pressure from the current government through non-officials, which manifested itself in pressure on NGO staff and their families, through vandalism and propaganda by the media, through ever-increasing stress and waiting for the elections to start fining organizations afterwards, the staff of the third organization were arrested for actively demonstrating their civic position by attending protests, some were even arrested several times in a row. The last interviewed organization considers the main pressure at the moment to be budgetary limitations and termination of cooperation with other foreign projects at risk. They all have the same reaction – they stand their ground and continue their activities.

Question 4

All organizations united against the Foreign Influence Act and as a result various large coalitions have emerged, such as «My Voice for Europe»

Question 5

All interviewees had participated in non-violent protests against the Foreign Influence Act. It is important to note that one organization believes that the credit for organizing protests goes to civil society organizations, another interviewee noted the fact that over time the police have stepped up their countermeasures including tear gas, water cannons and rubber bullets against protesters. The government's response has been to kidnap and abuse people participating in protests.

Question 6

Opinions varied, with one organization claiming that any information can be found on the internet, except Twitter, where there are many bots supporting the current government, a second interviewee claiming that civil society organizations cannot express opinions on state media, a third organization claiming that censorship started with the law on traditional values, thereby banning the publication of LGBT values and equality, the fourth interviewee believes that a wave of silencing has already started, citing the example of people who have been arrested for holding posters against the government, the last interviewee notes that during an investigation you are obliged to provide your personal data, not only as a natural person but also as a legal entity, otherwise organization face a fine.

Question 7

Four organizations expressed their clear position that they do not want to find a «happy medium» regarding the Foreign Influence Law. In support of their words, one interviewee cited the example of the law on family values, which came into force after the «Russian» law, while another organization assured that it was in vain, citing the example of protests a year ago and the ‘temporary’ revocation of the law. The rest are convinced that the law is moving towards a totalitarian regime. However, one interviewee is open to the possibility of a happy medium, they have nothing to hide but assure that the government is not interested in finding common ground with civil society.

Question 8

All respondents unanimously agree that the law violates the articles of the interview, citing for example articles 70-75 and especially article 78 ‘The constitutional bodies shall take all measures within the scope of their competences to ensure the full integration of Georgia into the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’. Obviously, the law itself first of all stalled the integration of the country into these unions. Also, by asking for such personal data of employees as address, salary, and personal phone number, the Foreign Influence Law violates the basic human rights, Articles 3,8,9.

Question 9

Two interviewees noted the active assistance of the United States through sanctions against members of the Georgian Dream party and their relatives, as well as through negotiations with the Prime Minister. Two other interviewees note that the European Union has already imposed sanctions especially on trade with Georgia. The last interviewee notes that the lack of trust towards the government by foreign countries has already increased and that this contributes to the deterioration of diplomatic relations. All are convinced that the upcoming elections are going to have a major impact on further sanctions towards Georgia.

Question 10

Despite the fact that the government has not yet started to actively fine unregistered organizations, all interviewees stated that the law has affected the work of civil society organizations, many have stopped working to avoid huge fines, others have moved their offices to EU countries, there are those who have lost sponsors because sponsors do not want to be "foreign agents", and there are those who continue their work without registering themselves and are under severe pressure to be closed down at any moment.

Question 11

The list of requirements was posted online, the authorities did not visit the organizations in person. The Ministry of Justice is responsible for the procedure of registration of non-state organizations as foreign agents. Each organization has to fill out a form on its own. The list includes a lot of personal data including ID number, account number, phone number, which violate the Georgian constitution and also includes all expenses of the organization, their reason and for whom.

Question 12

All interviewees speak in unison - limit freedom of speech, control civil organizations and limit the opposition. Additionally, one interviewee added that the government is interested in controlling the entire flow of finances in the country. The second interviewee noticed a tendency in some countries of the former Soviet Union and the Abkhazia region to approve a law similar to the Kremlin's, but in those countries where Russian influence is no longer dominant the law could not be registered. A third interviewee noted that the law on foreign influence is convenient for the authorities for further corruption.

Question 13

One interviewee sees no connection between the law on Foreign Influence and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. However, the other two note the similarities with the frozen conflict between Georgia and Russia, which resulted in 20% of Georgia's territory being occupied. One interviewee believes that there is no direct connection, but rather an indirect one, which can be seen in the fact that the Georgian Dream party expected Russia to dominate the region, but this did not work out, so the wrong direction in foreign policy created a problem for the party. Also, one interviewee believes that the law is primarily aimed at civil organizations, and the connection to the war is not so strong

Question 14

All interviewees are confident that the number of those who support the law on foreign influence is not increasing, but perhaps even decreasing. Basically, those 20-30% of people who are in favor of the law are directly or indirectly from the current Georgian Dream party, GONGOs (government-organized non-governmental organization (GONGO)) employees - sponsored by the authorities or victims of propaganda. One interviewee is concerned that some young people have decided to leave the country, fearing the country's further transformation into an authoritarian regime.

Question 15

All interviewees agree that all civil society organizations changed their vector after the law was passed. One interviewee argues that organizations whose function was far from politics and the government, even those that were focused on humanitarian aid, became activists in the fight against the current law on foreign influence. The second interviewee bitterly reports that small organizations were forced to close down, while those that remained became even stronger and more motivated to fight for liberal values. The third interviewee notes the financial component, namely that due to the lower budget, the organization has reduced its members and has been forced to cancel some projects.

Question 16

None of the interviewees expects any transformations regarding the foreign influence law at the moment, but all of them are also sure that in the future, if the current government remains in power, everything can get worse. From huge fines to further repressive tactics. If the opposition wins, the 'Russian' law is expected to be revoked immediately.

Question 17

While the law was only in force on paper, no execution form was yet in place - no one was fined. Almost all GONGOs were registered voluntarily in the register. Most non-state organizations did not agree to register as foreign agents. Those that have registered have handed over a large amount of personal data to the government.

Question 18

Officially, registration started on September 1 and is online and mandatory for all non-governmental organizations, in case of non-compliance - they face monitoring and forced registration according to the first interviewee. The second interviewee mentioned the campaign of Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze, who promises to pay a large sum to those organizations that register themselves as foreign agents - non-governmental organizations have ignored this attempt by the current government to raise statistics. A third interviewee notes the naive discipline of some organizations that have already registered and consider themselves «foreign agents». The fourth interviewee notes that the registration process is difficult and not logical enough. The fifth mentions that the deadline is not clear and the time spent on this could be spent for other purposes and for the good of both government officials and non-governmental organizations. None of the interviewed organizations have been registered and are at risk to be fined or to be shut down.

Additional question

Considering the amount of influence of the Kremlin in the answers of the interviewed people in Georgia's state policy I have a question - **Do you think that Russia is helping the Georgian Dream party with some resources?**

The first one thinks that there is no evidence, but the influence of Russia can be felt. The second said that through propaganda and corruption. The third said that there is evidence of unofficial communication between the Georgian government and the Russian government. The fourth does not think that Russia is involved. The fifth interviewee believes that the Georgian government is sponsored by the Kremlin.

CONCLUSION

Through content analysis we were able to learn about the history of non-governmental organizations in modern Georgia. Compared the law presented by the Georgian Dream party on foreign influence with its Russian "copy" and found similarities, as well as compared it with the US Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), which does not violate human rights. We analyzed the international resonance, including media and urgent opinion The OSCE stands for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Studied the Georgian Dream party itself and how the policy vector has changed rapidly in recent years under the shadowy leadership of a Georgian billionaire who benefits from co-operation with Russia.

We conducted in-depth interviews that provided a comprehensive study of each of the organizations, as well as their views on the Foreign Influence Law, the methods by which they oppose the law, and in general the work they have done and their strategies for revoking the Foreign Influence Law. We explored how the law may interfere with the work of civil society organizations and what effects the law is already having. Studied how "foreign agents" are registered and what are the consequences of not being registered. We identified which laws of the Georgian constitution the law on foreign influence and transparency violates and what data is required from organizations and their employees. Through the answers we were able to discover an additional question that would not have been possible without in-depth interviews

The research study explored the influence of non-governmental organizations on the politics of Georgia, specifically the activity on the Foreign Influence Law. It was revealed in which ways each of the organizations is trying to make its contribution. We studied specifically each of the strategies of non-governmental organizations and through a comprehensive and comparative analysis we were able to find differences in the ways in which the organizations work. We looked at how the strategy of civil society organizations changes depending on the time and steps taken by the Georgian government and the opposition. We were able to make an in-depth assessment of the actions of non-governmental organizations and evaluate their role in the context of Georgia's democratic development. At the same time, we were able to analyze the current situation of the events taking place in the country. We also learned about the work of civil society organizations from the inside and their interaction with other organizations to oppose the

Georgian government in the context of the law on foreign influence. We identified how strongly non-governmental organizations reflect the opinion and will of the people and what risks are taken by the representatives and employees of these organizations.

This research paper has proven that one of the main roles of NGOs is to act as an advocate for social change. NGOs often work to influence policies and legislation that affect the communities they serve. The hypothesis was confirmed that the active participation of NGO organizations resulted in the law being promulgated more publicly and receiving a huge international response, which means that the opposition has a great foundation for resisting state authorities.

In addition, for foreign scholars, this research can give a clear picture of what was happening in Georgia during the reading and adoption of the Foreign Influence Law. The necessary existence of civil organizations in the country and what function they play, how they highlight the events taking place in the country and how they unite with each other. What non-governmental organizations and employees actually face in their attempts to resist the current government. What role civil society organizations can play in the political life of the country and their support to the opposition authorities. This study is may be useful for non-governmental organizations in Georgia to analyze the strategies of the government and non-governmental organizations during this period.

Based on the findings of the author of the study, it can be assumed that the active work of non-governmental organizations is going to continue not only until the law on foreign influence is finally repealed, but also until the current government does not reflect the will of the people. As long as the law remains in place, non-governmental organizations may face difficulties in the future, such as finding sponsors from abroad, staff shortages due to relocation of staff to avoid threats of prosecution or imprisonment, as well as gradual censorship in every media outlet to silence criticism of the government. The main role at the moment may play by the upcoming parliamentary elections on October 26, 2024, which are going to completely decide the further course of work of NGOs in Georgia. With the help of civil society organizations and volunteers who are going to monitor the transparency and fairness of the elections, the opposition coalition can win the parliamentary elections and not only repeal the law on foreign influence, which is

the primary reason for the opposition's unification, but also restore people's faith in the government and build democracy in Georgia.

Appendix One: Conducted Interviews

The number of the interview question

1. R
2. Respondent's answer from Europe-Georgia institute
3. Respondent's answer from Shame movement
4. Respondent's answer from Organization 4
5. Respondent's answer from Organization 5

n

Question 1: Any NGO is a reflection of the existence of a democratic component in the country. What impact do you think this law has on the democratic component in the country?

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1. The right to assemble and defend individual rights is a democratic fundamental. Georgia's new law has raised concerns about its impact on civil society and democracy. Its uncertainty and ambiguity could be used to suppress dissent and freedom of speech, mirroring Russia's experience with similar laws.
2. Civil society is crucial for democratic development and Georgia's civil society has always been actively supporting humanitarian aid and democracy. In contrast, countries that restrict civil society activities are not democratic. This law's dualistic impact is negative on democracy, as it hinders free press and opposition parties, but also halts Georgia's European integration process
3. In Georgia, NGOs and civil societies play a crucial role in democracy, particularly due to limited free media outlets. They effectively expose government corruption, observe elections, and mobilize citizens. The recently passed "Russian law" (foreign agents bill) aims to silence critical voices, forcing NGOs to choose between compliance or niche work. The law's implementation will depend on the upcoming election results, which will define its impact.

4. The "Foreign Influence Transparency Law" is very dangerous for democracy in our country and especially for nonprofits and not only nonprofits and organizations but a lot of groups of people who daily benefit from the activity of nonprofits and from the funds that come from the western country. This law for us is not about transparency; most organizations are proud to declare that we are funded by certain organizations. If you check our pages, you will always find that this program is funded by this and that. But we remember what implications this law had in neighboring countries like Russia and Azerbaijan. The main aim is to limit the activism of organizations, and it's very bad for democracy and development.
5. The law in question restricts civil society freedom, as they're hard to control compared to judicial, parliamentary, and other democratic institutions. It's a copy-paste of similar Russian laws, and its adoption signals limitations on civil societies, incompatible with personal security and privacy. These laws harm democracy in Georgia, as seen in ongoing protests.

Question 2: Do you think you can influence the revocation of the law, if yes, was there any activity from your organization and how did it appear itself.

1. The group against the Russian law is struggling to have it withdrawn. The government uses propaganda and propaganda to influence voters. They might still vote for unwanted candidates due to fear. The group tried to appeal the law to the constitutional and European courts, but progress is slow. They've exhausted foreign and local pressure, including a 2-month protest with many arrests and reprisals. The next step is dependent on an impartial and free election
2. Everybody should focus on revoking all Russian laws, not just the one against civil society. It's crucial to vote against Georgian and support pro-European opposition parties in the October 26th election.

3. The Georgian Dream party, the current ruling party, has shown it's undemocratic and doesn't listen to the people. Despite massive protests for 2 months, they don't care about public opinion. The protests were historic, with similar numbers seen only for Georgia's independence back in Soviet times. Due to the government's stance, it's unlikely the law will be revoked and the only solution is a government change, with opposition parties revoking the law.
4. I don't think you can just remove the law now; rather, we should try to unite and defend our voice and defend our choice that we made on October 26 on our parliamentary elections. The majority of us chose to support the government of coalition parties, while the governmental party rigged elections and stayed in power.
5. The organization is at risk of being monitored and flagged as a foreign agent. To avoid this, they won't engage in activism and will instead finalize existing projects, relocate work opportunities, and find new ways to support civil society in Georgia.

Question 3: Have you faced pressure on your organization, if yes, in what form and whether it was regulatory bodies, which ones, in what form the pressure was exerted. What was your reaction to the pressure? If not, do you expect to face pressure in the future?

1. The organization has been facing de facto pressures and Itoshkas (people who work with Russian tactics of Strathiga dissent) have attacked their offices and written defamatory statements, including calling them traitors and agents of foreign aid powers. The ruling party's members have also threatened CSOs and individuals who are protesting or members of CSOs, and even called family members, including children. The organization refuses to register as the law requires, and faces fines that are too big to pay, putting them at risk of being shut down and losing their staff or personal information
2. Civil society faces intense pressure from the ruling party's propaganda campaign and vandalism, with side organizations and civil society actors targeted. Offices and cars were

vandalized, and some were beaten in dark quarters. The corruption bureau was forced to step down after public outcry over targeting organizations

3. The law was enacted in September, but no organizations have been fined or pressured until now. The speaker believes this is a strategy until elections, to create a picture of everything being fine. If the ruling party wins, they will likely start putting pressure on NGOs, with huge fines and a possibility of bankruptcy. The speaker's organization, Shame Movement, has faced pressure from the government, with members arrested 35 times and fined over 50,000 laris. The group believes most CSOs and NGOs are under attack, and they are now using the government's rhetoric to connect them to an oppositional party.
4. No, we didn't get pressure because we didn't have to register in September, while some organizations had to register then. We had to register in January, and I'm not sure what will happen after that.
5. The pressure on organizations like them in Georgia is intense due to limited budgets and large projects, making them vulnerable to threats like closure. Despite no official letters, there's already a sense of repression. The organization's educational projects, funded by the EU, aim to promote quality education, but this will be a challenge, and they expect daily threats

Question 4: Is there some united (formal/informal) form of coalition, within the NGOs, by which you are trying to influence the revocation of the law?

1. Georgia has several coalitions working together on specific issues, including law appeals, strategic communications, and discrimination, criminal justice, and hate crimes. This collective approach is common in Georgia.
2. Several coalitions are working on various topics. The like «Your Voice to the European Union» coalition is organizing a march. The "Information Integrity"

coalition is combating government propaganda. The CSO Defense Group aims to strategize ahead of the election and resist government attacks. These three are key coalitions acting against the law.

3. Civil society campaigned together against the law, attending rallies and providing resources like information, human aid, and shelter to others during the protests. Everyone was united against the law.
4. There are some forms of politicians made by nonprofits, and we always make statements. My organization, in most cases, signed the statements that asked our partners to help us and that told the government to stop the law and all the related stuff. But yeah, nothing really changed.
5. The organization is transparent about their efforts, but their resources are utilized through coalitions like «Your Voice to the European Union» in Georgia's observation mission. While they lack observation status, they contribute intellectually and advocate for democratization and solving democratization issues on local and European levels through various platforms.

Question 5: Have you been participants in pickets or other forms of demonstrations of opposition to the law, if yes, what were the cases? What was the government's response to these initiatives?

1. Picketing is prohibited in Georgia, but rallies, manifestations, and marches are allowed. In April 2023, there was an unprecedented daily protest in front of parliament.
2. Well, of course, both me and my friends and my colleagues, we participated in protests against the Russian law, suffering from government response including pepper spraying, water cannons, and being ran down by special forces.
3. In recent years, the government has become increasingly harsh in its response to protests, using tear gas, pepper spray, and rubber bullets against protesters. Despite denials,

victims have been injured, including one person who lost an eyeball due to a rubber bullet. Additionally, protesters have been kidnapped, beaten, and even nearly killed by police. In response, more people have continued to show up to protests, defying the government's attempts to intimidate them.

4. We participated in the demonstrations of opposition to the law, not personally but part of my organization. Most of our audience participated in demonstrations against the law. Last year, we did that, and then the government revoked the law again. This year they started the process again, and unfortunately, we were unable to let them stop it.
5. The demonstration was run by civil societies and interested groups, not the opposition. It didn't become violent and was peaceful from their side. The organization didn't face government response.

Question 6: Are there any limiting factors on the part of the government to publicize dissenting opinions today?

1. They don't have influence on big search engines, so you can freely find news on their website, but you need to know which websites to visit. Many information exchanges happen on Facebook, where they have a presence, but don't use Twitter. They spam bots and fake accounts to spread misinformation and propaganda online, which is a problem, but the bot activity can be normal if it's not done maliciously.
2. Opposition and civil society voices are silenced on Georgian government propaganda channels, which also don't provide space for diverse opinions. While no internet censor is reported, critical channels were fined for not airing promotional materials from Georgia's ruling party, which features destroyed Ukrainian cities.
3. The government introduced a law, disguised as a protection of tradition and family values, which aims to use LGBT-related issues for electoral advantage. The law includes

censorship provisions that would ban explicit content showing LGBT relations, such as scenes in movies like "Alexander". Additionally, it would prohibit rallies promoting LGBT values or equality. This law threatens freedom of expression and speech, making it necessary to change the government through elections to solve these problems.

4. We are still exercising freedom of speech to some extent, but if the trend goes towards this inward trend, we know we're going to be limited. We already saw cases where people were arrested just because of holding papers apart in front of parliament, so I'm sure the government is trying to ban more and more free speech.
5. The situation in Georgia limits media and civil society freedom through censorship. Individuals can be found and fined 5,000 lari if they don't provide personal information to the Ministry of Justice or Special Department for Investigations. This affects both legal and physical persons.

Question 7: Do you consider the form of the adopted law to find a happy medium?

1. No. The law in question is undemocratic and goes against EU and COE values. References to European Commission, Ecommerce v Russia, and Venice Commission recommendations all criticize the law's fundamental nature. The law could shift Georgia towards authoritarianism, damaging civil society and individual freedoms. Another recent law promotes "family values" by censoring media and prohibiting gay content, a slippery slope towards restricting individual rights, exemplified by China's movie censorship.
2. I consider the law's form to find a compromise. We're for transparency, against demonization and attempts to strangle us. It's hard to find a compromise with this government, as they've taken steps too far and aren't willing to find common ground with civil society.

3. The Georgian Dream party had no intention to compromise on a law intended to punish the civil sector. It was re-introduced after being revoked last year, and this time, they were determined to pass it at any cost. Despite having few allies, they managed to achieve their goal. The UK has since cancelled a strategic program with Georgia over concerns about democracy
4. No, we are not considering finding happy medium because there is no happy medium in terms of equal laws, and Russian law is one of a kind. We are not really trying; we want this law to end and be canceled and never enacted again.
5. I mean, with the authoritarian regime, there is no chances to find a happy medium. You just need to change it.

Question 8: Does this law violate any articles or specific paragraphs of the constitution in the opinion of your organization?

1. The appeal challenges the constitution for freedom of assembly, expression, and privacy, citing articles 70, 75 - support for European integration process is universally declared by all state bodies, article 3, Article 8, article 9, you can article 10, article 11. You can appeal on everything. This law completely violates all your human rights
2. The institute drafted a constitutional case against Georgia's new law, citing violations of human rights and European integration. The constitutional court, controlled by the ruling party, refused to immediately stop the law but agreed to review the case, but also article 76, which directly states that Georgia's choice is European Union.
3. Georgia's law 78 clashes with the country's goal of joining the European Union and NATO, effectively freezing talks and actions. The law also violates human rights by requiring NGOs to submit personal employee data to the government, including salary and private phone numbers. This breaches privacy and freedom of expression, making it

difficult for NGOs and CSOs to work freely, ultimately violating the country's constitution.

4. Yes, this law is against our constitution because it endangers our European integration. Our constitution says that the government should do anything to accelerate our integration into Western organizations like the European Union. So, if this law is anti-EU and anti-integration, it is definitely anti-constitutional.
5. The law opposing article 78, Euro Atlantic integration is against the constitution and democratic institutions. It's backsliding and freezing integration efforts, contrary to European Parliament and stakeholder resolutions. The Venice Commission argued that the law is incompatible with authentic integration and democratic institutions in a 102-page report.

Question 9: Have there been any initiatives by international communities to influence the dissolution of the law? Do you expect international sanctions if the law is not revoked

1. Our European integration is stalled, and political relationships with Western allies have broken down, with some individuals sanctioned. More sanctions may come, depending on elections and future actions. If the election outcome remains unchanged, Georgia may face a complete breakdown in relations with the West, amplifying pro-Russian sentiments and leading to tough sanctions, potentially including country-wide restrictions.
2. International pressure is mounting over Georgia's law, with bilateral and organizational pressure. The European Council has halted integration, European parliaments have issued statements, the US State Department has sanctioned MPs, and visa/travel bans have been issued.
3. The US has been helpful in persuading Georgia's government to reconsider its decision, with Assistant Secretary General Anthony Blinken trying to influence the process.

Despite this, the government still passed a bill, prompting US sanctions on Georgian officials and police officers involved in beatings. The US may ramp up sanctions before October 26th elections, while the EU will likely wait to see election outcomes before taking action.

4. I don't have real sympathy towards them, but yes, this law is clearly anti-European. That's what we hear also from European Union leaders and from Western leaders. Therefore, it's unconstitutional.
5. I believe following a law would hinder trade and debate between authoritarian and democratic forces. They cite past experience where agreements were broken, leading to a lack of trust in government.

Question 10: What has been the impact of this law on civil society?

1. Some organizations stopped working, while others skipped registration, as their activities were already under law. Most resources were taken away, affecting work. The government is delaying enforcement to avoid admitting the law's effects.
2. Civil society organizations declared they won't comply with the law, leading to mass protests. Activities have been impacted, scaled down, and some organizations canceled operations due to forced election situation. Many organizations ceased to exist, and others face draconian fines of \$15,000, making it difficult for those with property to register and pay fines.
3. The law has had no direct impact as it's currently frozen, but indirectly, some organizations stopped operating to avoid registration, while others relocated to other states in the EU. The government plans to introduce an amendment to punish organizations registered elsewhere, which could outweigh some benefits. This has essentially undone decades of hard work.

4. I know the first letter for organizations to close down has been issued, but those who are still continuing, some of their donors stopped giving them money because of the law. Organizations abroad don't want to be seen as foreign agents or something similar, so I'm sure this law will limit the funds coming to this country and also many services and benefits that local people receive.
5. A law increased pressure and tension, causing many organizations to stop or withdraw services, particularly for vulnerable groups in Georgia. As a result, many people lacked support, and our organization focused on assisting the most vulnerable with little opportunities

Question 11: Have you received a list of requirements for the implementation of this law from the governmental authorities?

1. There's a Ministry of Justice order specifying procedures for a particular issue, publicized on August 2nd. It's more detailed than the law, defining guidelines, but not changing main principles.
2. They published an excessive list of requested information online, including personal data violating Georgia's constitution. The financial details are highly complex, making it difficult for small organizations to comply, requiring additional expertise to fill the forms accurately.
3. The organization is required to submit a detailed financial declaration to the Georgian government, including receipts and personal data of employees such as salary, account numbers, phone numbers, and ID numbers. This is a huge workload and raises concerns about privacy and personal data protection laws.
4. The list that we got from the government is very long. It asks you to declare layers of private information about your salaries, where you spend all the money that you received from foreign influence agents, and to whom and how much you paid for what.

5. We didn't receive on the emails, but it was generally published on the websites

Question 12: What is the primary reason for adopting the law? What does the government want to achieve with it?

1. Georgian government is targeting civil society, dissenting voices, and independent organizations to stifle opposition and control the country's finances. They accuse the government of wanting to control money flows, spread anti-Western propaganda, and portray dissenting voices as foreign agents.
2. The law in question was adopted in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Abkhazia, but not in Bosnia and Slovakia. Experts suspect Kremlin influence, as the laws are identical and target civil society. Georgian Dream aimed to control society, viewing independent organizations as troublemakers, but the law backfired as civil society resisted. The campaign against the law halted Georgia's European integration and may cost them the election.
3. The government's primary goal is to silence critical voices, including organizations exposing corruption, and online media that cover sensitive topics efficiently. The government doesn't like these outlets as they reveal their wrongdoings, making their fault invisible to the public.
4. The primary reason for adopting this law is not transparency; everything is so transparent. If there is an individual case, the government can always intervene and investigate the case and the organization. This law is to limit civil society, limit free speech, and limit opposition in general.
5. The law limits criticizing government, media freedom, and CSOs that promote critical thinking in Georgia, making it vulnerable to the current government's control.

Question 13: What echoes of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict are reflected in the law and what is the connection with Georgia?

1. The Russian-Ukrainian conflict has implications for Georgia, which has its own conflict with Russia. Georgia has a frozen conflict with Russia occupying 20% of its territory. In 2008, Georgia had a direct war with Russia, leaving a bad memory among Georgians. The country is small and cannot defend itself against Russian aggression, which creates fear among the population. Georgia recognizes the connection between the conflict in Ukraine and its own situation, as Ukraine's survival in the initial stages of the war was due to its large territory and stretched supply lines. Georgia understands that whatever happens in Ukraine will have a significant impact on itself, as it may be next in line for political annexation or military intervention.
2. The Georgian regime hasn't formally linked the conflict to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but experts believe it's the catalyst for subsequent foreign policy mistakes. Georgian Dream initially thought Russia would dominate the region and prepared a pro-Russian government in Georgia, but that didn't happen. They then attempted to align with right-wing groups in European Parliament elections and Marine Le Pen's party in France, but those efforts failed too. This string of wrong foreign policy calculations has led to internal problems for Georgian Dream.
3. The law in question is not specific to war and is a general extension of Russia's 2012 law, initially targeting CSOs and NGOs, then adding media. It registers foreign agents, restricting their rights, including voting and candidacy.
4. I'm not sure how the Russian-Ukrainian conflict can be related to this law; maybe it's a question of research, but I cannot see any connection right now.

5. Because we have the common enemy. Who is occupying the territories of Ukraine and Georgia.

Question 14: What are the dynamics of support for the law? Is the volume of dissenters increasing or decreasing?

1. In Georgia, dissenters are still opposed to the government, but protests have been quiet. However, there have been targeted attacks on dissidents. Despite this, they're not afraid of protest or blackmail and will continue to sustain their cause. Georgians are emotional and violent when facing oppression, as history has shown. The current authoritarian government is causing many to leave the country, especially young people.
2. George and Dream have radicalized 20% of the population, but their propaganda is unsuccessful beyond their base, resulting in electoral losses. They're expected to lose more support. Their main aim is the October 26th election, seen as a chance for Georgians to get rid of "Georgia nightmares"
3. A public opinion poll found over 70% of Georgians opposed a Russian law, with 30% in support, mainly from supporters of the GD party. The law's impact has been forgotten due to its unrealistic and arbitrary nature, with the government being the root cause of problems, requiring a government change to improve the environment.
4. Support for the law is not increasing; it has stayed the same. More people now see why this law can be really disastrous for our country.
5. No. I don't think that people who agree with Russian law is increasing, most of the law's supporter are like GONGOs usually. Or the just few organizations which didn't have do it to very highly sensitive, vulnerability groups. They have to kind of register to others. I don't think there's anyone registered on the database. And neither says they will not

increase any support. (GONGO – government organized non-governmental organizations)

Question 15: How has civil society activism changed since the law came into force?

1. The organization is still advocating for its beliefs, but the change in law affects its work, leaving them without resources, unable to plan long-term, and forced to focus on short-term reactive efforts.
2. Civil society organizations, including think tanks and humanitarian aid groups, became activists after a law's implementation. They aim to ensure the law's repeal and the ruling party's removal from power.
3. The civil sector was heavily involved in law protests, citing missed opportunities due to limited free time. After the law was passed, NGOs, CSOs, and media adjusted to the new reality, focusing on alternative efforts rather than continuously debating the law.
4. Since the law came into force, a lot of organizations, especially smaller ones, have closed down, which is bad. But in general, civil society as such, people—not only organizations—has really become stronger and more motivated to fight for our rights and to fight for our liberal democracy.
5. There was growing protest, and we adapted to a news environment. Some projects had to be canceled to focus on Russian law, and others were paused due to low budget. This reduced the organization's staff and size.

Question 16: What transformations do you expect in the implementation of the law?

1. The law has already been adopted and enforced. Whoever wins the election won't solve all Georgian problems, and tough times are ahead, including the ongoing struggle. We don't expect a change and anticipates the situation to stay tough and possibly get worse.
2. Well, we do not expect any transformation if «Georgian Dream» stays in power, which is, a possibility. However, if the opposition wins, then this law will be canceled all at all and at once.
3. If Georgia's Dream wins, stricter law enforcement is likely, including fines and shutdowns. If they don't, the law could be cancelled.
4. Now, no one got any fines or something like that, but transformation will be that they will ask for more and more information. They will add several changes and amendments to the law, and if the trend goes, they may try to limit large nonprofits and their activism in the future.
5. Experts believe law enforcement may use repressive tactics, but it's unclear if governments authorities will tighten or withdraw them after elections.

Question 17: Now, the law is in force, how is it in force?

1. Some NGOs, funded by the government, register as foreign influencers to provide information. However, a specific website exists for registration, making it a registry. This law doesn't affect small regional organizations focused on specific issues, but larger NGOs don't register, waiting for potential repression that would prove the law's effectiveness.
2. The law is being implemented, but only for voluntary registrants. Some organizations, including Gongos, have registered and are being actively communicated with by government agencies. Others, part of the public protest, haven't received demands or

documents. Operations continue normally as everyone prepares for the election. It's unclear what will happen if the opposition wins and the law is dissolved.

3. here are around 300 NGOs registered, including some Gongos, but not all. Some NGOs have shut down, while others are still operational, but all are being watched, waiting to be targeted by the law.
4. Registration started; some organizations have registered, and they have to declare their funds, where they pay those funds, to whom, for what, and every detail should be clear.
5. Some organizations have closed, are closing, or will enforce mask mandates later due to different approaches and potential future measures.

Question 18: Is the registration of foreign agents and organizations started? If yes, in which way and what does it involve?

1. It happens online through The Ministry of Justice communicates with foreign agents and influencers online, requiring them to fill out forms, register on a website, and provide financial and detailed information. Registration is mandatory, and failure to comply can lead to monitoring, fines, and forced registration. NGOs struggle with the bureaucracy, citing excessive paperwork and poor government handling.
2. The government's fear-mongering campaign failed, so the prime minister promised funding to organizations if they register, but they ignored the offer and found it amusing.
3. Registration started; some organizations have registered, and they have to declare their funds, where they pay those funds, to whom, for what, and every detail should be clear.

4. Yes, the registration of foreign agents and organizations has started, and it involves declaring extensive financial details and operational activities, which adds a significant burden to organizations.

5. Registration for assets started 2 months ago, but the government's deadline is unclear. Some registered-on time, while others did not. The process is mostly online, but some individuals may need to provide additional data, causing bureaucratic delays. This is wasting time that could be used for more important activities.

Appendix Two: Law of Georgia on Transparency of Foreign Influence

Article 1 – Purpose and scope of the Law

In order to ensure the transparency of foreign influence, this Law regulates the registration of an entity as an organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power and other issues related to the transparency of activities of organisations pursuing the interests of a foreign power.

This Law shall not restrict the activities of an entity registered under this Law as an organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power.

Article 2 – Organisations pursuing the interests of a foreign power

For the purposes of this Law, an organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power shall be:

a non-entrepreneurial (non-commercial) legal person that is not established by an administrative body, that is not the National Sports Federation of Georgia as provided for by the Law of Georgia on Sports, or a blood establishment as provided for by the Law of Georgia on the Quality and Safety of Human Blood and Its Components, and the source of more than 20 % of the total income of which during a calendar year is a foreign power;

a broadcaster provided for by the Law of Georgia on Broadcasting, the source of more than 20 % of the total non- commercial income of which during a calendar year is a foreign power;

a legal person, which alone or jointly owns print media operating in Georgia, and the source of more than 20 % of the total non-commercial income of which during a calendar year is a foreign power;

a legal person, which alone or jointly owns and/or uses a domain and/or web hosting designated for digital media disseminating mass information in the official language of Georgia, and the source of more than 20 % of the total non- commercial income of which during a calendar year is a foreign power.

For the purposes of this Article, income is a sum of money or other tangible goods of tangible value (any movable or immovable thing). The value of income that is not a sum of money shall, for the purposes of this Article, be calculated at its market price.

It shall be considered, for the purposes of paragraph 1 of this article, that a respective entity determined by the same paragraph received income if the entity was provided with a sum of money or became the owner or user of other tangible goods of tangible value (any movable or immovable thing).

It shall be considered, for the purposes of paragraph 1 of this article, that the source of income received by the respective entity determined by the same paragraph is a foreign power, if:

the entity received income directly or indirectly from a foreign power;

the entity received income directly or indirectly from a legal person, which had received income directly or indirectly from a foreign power;

the source of such income has not been identified.

Article 3 – Foreign power

For the purposes of this Law, a foreign power is:

an entity within the government system of a foreign state;

a natural person who is not a citizen of Georgia;

a legal person that has not been established under the legislation of Georgia;

an organisational entity (including a foundation, an association, a corporation, a union, or other type of organisation) or other form of association of persons, which has been established under the law of a foreign state and/or international law.

Article 4 – Registration of an entity as an organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power

An entity that meets the criteria determined for an organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power under Article 2 of this Law shall, in January of the calendar year following the year during which it met these criteria, submit to the Legal Entity under Public Law (LEPL) called the National Agency of Public Registry operating under the governance of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia ('the Agency'), through the LEPL Public Service Hall, a written application, in tangible form, regarding registration as an organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power. In this case, the Agency shall, within 2 working days, grant the said entity access to the appropriate website, so that the entity is able to fill in electronically a statement for registration as an organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power ('the statement') in observance of the form established by the Minister of Justice of Georgia, and submit it to the Agency.

The entity shall, within 10 working days after being granted access to the website provided for by paragraph 1 of this article, fill in the statement electronically, in observance of the form established by the Minister of Justice of Georgia, and submit it to the Agency.

The registrant shall provide the following information (if any) in the statement, which is at the same time the

registrant's financial declaration:

the registrant's identification data;

the address of the registrant's location;

the registrant's website address;

information about the source, amount and purpose of any sum of money and other tangible goods of tangible value received by the registrant during the preceding calendar year;

information about the amount and purpose of any sum of money spent by the registrant during the preceding calendar year;

the date of filling in the statement.

A person authorised by the Ministry of Justice of Georgia shall, within 30 working days after the submission of the statement to the Agency, examine and inquire into the statement. For this purpose, the said person shall have the right to obtain the necessary information in

compliance with law, including the data provided for by Article 3(b) of the Law of Georgia on Personal Data Protection, other personal data, and information containing a secret (except for a state secret as provided for by the legislation of Georgia). All persons, bodies, organisations, and institutions, which are requested by a person authorised by the Ministry of Justice of Georgia to submit such information, shall immediately provide him/her with such information that is available to them. If the registrant meets the criteria established in Article 2 of this Law for organisations pursuing the interests of a foreign power, and the statement is correctly and completely filled in, the Agency shall, within 30 working days after the statement has been submitted to it, register the registrant as an organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power and enter its registration in the registry of organisations pursuing the interests of a foreign power. If the statement is filled in incorrectly and/or incompletely, the Agency shall determine a timeframe of 10 working days for the registrant to remedy the shortcoming. The registrant is obliged to remedy the shortcoming within the said timeframe. If the registrant meets the criteria established in Article 2 of this Law for organisations pursuing the interests of a foreign power, the Agency shall, within 5 working days after the expiry of the said timeframe, register the registrant as an organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power, and enter its registration in the registry of organisations pursuing the interests of a foreign power.

The registration of an entity as an organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power and the entry of its registration in the registry of organisations pursuing the interests of a foreign power shall be free of charge.

The rules for the registration of an entity as an organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power, and for keeping the registry of organisations pursuing the interests of a foreign power, as well as the form of the statement, shall be determined by the Minister of Justice of Georgia.

Article 5 – Ensuring public access to the statements, other relevant documents, and the registry of organisations pursuing the interests of a foreign power

The statement and the application provided for in Article 4(1) of this Law shall be public. Upon the registration of an entity as an organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power, the

Agency shall publish on the respective website and make publicly available the statement submitted by the entity to the Agency, the application provided for in Article 4(1) of this Law, the valid statute of the entity, if any, other instruments of incorporation of the entity and its latest extract from the Public Registry.

The information entered in the registry of organisations pursuing the interests of a foreign power shall be public. The Agency shall publish such information on the respective website and make it publicly available.

Article 6 – Annual financial declaration

An entity registered as an organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power shall, in January of each year following the year of its registration as an organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power, electronically fill in a financial declaration in observance of the form approved by the Minister of Justice of Georgia, and submit it to the Agency. The entity shall include in the financial declaration correct and complete information (if any) as determined by Article 4(3) of this Law as of the year preceding the year of its submission to the Agency. A person authorised by the Ministry of Justice of Georgia shall, within 30 working days after the submission of the financial declaration to the Agency, examine and inquire into the said financial declaration. For this purpose, the said person shall have the right to obtain the necessary information in compliance with law, including the data provided for by Article 3(b) of the Law of Georgia on Personal Data Protection, other personal data, and information containing a secret (except for a state secret as provided for by the legislation of Georgia). All persons, bodies, organisations, and institutions, which are requested by a person authorised by the Ministry of Justice of Georgia to submit such information, shall immediately provide him/her with such information that is available to them. If a financial declaration is filled in incorrectly and/or incompletely, the Agency shall determine a timeframe of 10 working days for the entity submitting the financial declaration to remedy the shortcoming. The entity is obliged to remedy the shortcoming within the said timeframe.

A financial declaration as referred to in paragraph 1 of this article, and the information contained in it, shall be public. The Agency shall immediately publish the financial declaration on the respective website and make it publicly available.

The procedure for submitting a financial declaration provided for by this article, and the form of the financial declaration, shall be determined by the Minister of Justice of Georgia

Article 7 – Revocation of registration of an entity registered as an organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power

An entity registered as an organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power which, according to the data (circumstances) of the preceding calendar year no longer meets the criteria established in Article 2 of this Law for organisations pursuing the interests of a foreign power, shall have the right, when submitting to the Agency a financial declaration provided for by Article 6 of this Law, to submit a substantiated written application, in tangible form, to the Ministry of Justice of Georgia and request the revocation of its registration as an organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power. In this case, a person authorised by the Ministry of Justice of Georgia shall, based on a proper examination and enquiry into the matter, make an appropriate decision within 30 working days. For this purpose, the said person authorised by the Ministry of Justice of Georgia shall have the right to obtain the necessary information in compliance with law, including the data provided for by Article 3(b) of the Law of Georgia on Personal Data Protection, other personal data, and information containing a secret (except for a state secret as provided for by the legislation of Georgia). All persons, bodies, organisations, and institutions, which are requested by a person authorised by the Ministry of Justice of Georgia to submit such information, shall immediately provide him/her with such information that is available to them.

If a decision is made on revoking the registration of an entity as an organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power, the Agency shall immediately remove such entity from the registry of organisations pursuing the interests of a foreign power and delete from the respective website the information and documents related to the said entity that were previously made public in accordance with this Law.

The decision provided for by paragraph 2 of this article is public and shall be published on the respective website.

The procedure for revoking the registration of an entity registered as an organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power shall be determined by the Minister of Justice of Georgia.

Article 8 – Monitoring

In order to identify organisations pursuing the interests of a foreign power, or to check compliance with any of the requirements of this Law, a person authorised by the Ministry of Justice of Georgia shall have the right to carry out, at any time, monitoring, namely the appropriate examination of and enquiry into the matter.

The grounds for initiating monitoring shall be as follows:

a decision of a person authorised by the Ministry of Justice of Georgia;

a written application submitted to the Ministry of Justice of Georgia, which contains appropriate information related to a specific organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power.

In order to carry out monitoring, a person authorised by the Ministry of Justice of Georgia shall have the right to obtain the necessary information in compliance with law, including the data provided for by Article 3(b) of the Law of Georgia on Personal Data Protection, other personal data, and information containing a secret (except for a state secret as provided for by the legislation of Georgia). All persons, bodies, organisations, and institutions, which are requested by a person authorised by the Ministry of Justice of Georgia to submit such information, shall immediately provide him/her with such information that is available to them.

The monitoring of the same entity may be carried out only once in 6 months.

If, as a result of monitoring, it has been established that an entity meets the criteria established in Article 2 of this Law for organisations pursuing the interests of a foreign power, but the entity had evaded registration as an organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power, the Agency shall register such entity as an organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power based on the application of a person authorised by the Ministry of Justice of Georgia. The

registration of such entity as an organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power shall not exempt it from the liability provided for by Article 9(1) of this Law. In this case, the entity shall fill in the statement and submit it to the Agency within 10 working days, in compliance with the requirements of this Law.

The monitoring procedure shall be determined by the Minister of Justice of Georgia.

Article 9 – Liability and matters of legal proceedings

The evasion of registration as an organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power, or the failure to submit a financial declaration as provided for by Article 6 of this Law within the timeframe established by the same article, –

shall be subject to a fine of GEL 25 000.

Failure to comply with the requirement of Article 4(2) of this Law, failure to fulfil the obligation to remedy a shortcoming as provided for by Article 4(4) or Article 6(1) of this Law, or failure to fulfil the obligation to fill in and submit the statement provided for by Article 8(5) of this Law, –

shall be subject to a fine of GEL 10 000.

Continuation of an action as referred to in paragraph 2 of this article within 1 month after the imposition of the latest administrative penalty for committing the same action –

shall be subject to a fine of GEL 20 000.

Failure to provide a person authorised by the Ministry of Justice of Georgia with the information requested by him/her in accordance with this Law – shall be subject to a fine of GEL 5 000.

A case of administrative offence as provided for by this article shall be examined, an administrative offence report shall be drawn up, and an appropriate administrative penalty shall be imposed on an offender, by a person authorised by the Ministry of Justice of Georgia. In the case of committing the said administrative offence, legal proceedings shall be carried out in accordance with the Administrative Offences Code and other relevant legislative acts of Georgia.

The imposition of liability as provided for by this article on a respective entity shall not exempt it from the obligation to fulfil the requirements of this Law.

Liability as provided for by this article may be imposed on an entity committing the respective administrative offence only within 6 years after the commission of the said administrative offence.

Appealing against a legal act issued on the basis of this Law and/or on the basis of a subordinate normative act provided for by this Law shall not suspend its effect.

Article 10 – Transitional provisions

Within 60 days after the entry into force of this paragraph:

the relevant bodies/officials shall adopt/issue the subordinate acts necessary for the implementation of this Law and ensure the compliance of the relevant subordinate acts with this Law;

the Ministry of Justice of Georgia and the Agency shall take preliminary material and technical and other measures necessary for the implementation of this Law.

An entity provided for by Article 2(1) of this Law which, according to the data (circumstances) of 2023, meets the criteria established in the same article for organisations pursuing the interests of a foreign power, shall, within 1 month after the entry into force of this paragraph, submit to the Agency a written application, in tangible form, through the LEPL Public Service Hall, regarding registration as an organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power. After that, the procedures specified in Article 4 of this Law shall be carried out.

Article 11 – Entry into force of the Law

This Law, except for Articles 1-9 and Article 10(2) of this Law, shall enter into force upon its promulgation.

Articles 1-9 and Article 10(2) of this Law shall enter into force on the 60th day after the promulgation of this Law.

Chairperson of the Parliament of Georgia Shalva Papuashvili Tbilisi,

28 May 2024

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