



COUNTDOWN

An afterword to Bidzina's Law

HOW TO HOLD BIDZINA IVANISHVILI ACCOUNTABLE FOR HIS ASSAULT ON DEMOCRACY, HIS KLEPTOCRATIC THEFT OF GEORGIA'S EURO-ATLANTIC FUTURE, AND THE SHOW TRIAL AGAINST GEORGE BACHIASHVILI

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The following briefing paper was prepared by Amsterdam & Partners LLP to serve as an afterword to our white paper, “Bidzina’s Law: The State Capture of Georgia” published on May 9, 2024. It serves as an update concerning the dramatic events that have occurred since that publication and highlights the geopolitical significance of the show trial of our client George Bachiashvili, which is set to commence on January 23, 2025.

Georgia today finds itself in uncharted waters. A stolen election, a crazed oligarch-sultan obsessed with personal retribution, and a brazen assault on rule of law all dragging the promising young democracy away from its popular consensus of a European and democratic future backwards into Russia’s authoritarian shadow.

The show trial being mounted against Bachiashvili, which we believe has been personally ordered by Bidzina Ivanishvili to end by mid-February, encapsulates this story of Georgia’s rapid institutional decay.

The trial represents the very first time that Ivanishvili has come out publicly – bogus criminal charges – emerging from behind his curtain of secrecy to use the courts as a tool of extortion and revenge. The ways in which he is shamelessly manipulating and orchestrating judges and prosecutors has never been more barefaced, illustrating a larger belief in his own impunity to martial all institutions of the state to serve his personal interests.

Bachiashvili, of course, is far from the only victim. The show trial takes place within the

context of widespread abuses of power by Ivanishvili which demonstrate his near-total control over all levers of power in Georgian society. Following the highly controversial and unrecognized Georgian presidential elections held on December 14, 2024, Ivanishvili has crossed a Rubicon.

The ruling party stands accused of stealing an election victory from the citizens of Georgia and using militarized police and paramilitary elements to brutally violate the human rights of Georgians protesting for their representation. They have engaged in grotesque human rights violations, which continue on the streets of Georgia every night against protesters yearning to restore the country’s path toward European integration.

This afterword to the white paper will argue that Ivanishvili is waging an expanding hybrid war against his own country, one that not only coincides with his personal interests, but also compliments Vladimir Putin’s agenda in the South Caucasus. These events demonstrate that the West can no longer afford to sit back and leave Russia to interfere through puppets such as Ivanishvili without some forum to fight back, and to do so effectively.

But Ivanishvili is vulnerable. He is a French citizen and subject to the laws of France and the European Union. He holds massive amounts of assets and property in specific locations, both onshore and offshore, which can be attached to a tighter sanctions regime. Members of his family regularly travel and reside in foreign countries.

Our firm is working in partnership with a leading French law firm to aggressively review all options and actions which may be brought internationally concerning the conduct of Ivanishvili. These actions will not only seek to respond to the show trial, but also with respect to his violation of international laws concerning violence and torture which has been going on repeatedly in the use of Georgian police and paramilitary networks against demonstrators legitimately protesting the theft of their rights of citizenship in Georgia.

There is little disagreement internationally about the threat that Ivanishvili poses to democracy and rule of law. The process to hold him accountable has already started. We applaud the recent US decision to sanction Ivanishvili and others, as well as highlighting the sanctions imposed against certain members of Georgia's judiciary, known as "the clan of judges." We applaud the sanctions taken by a variety of European states to persuade Georgian Dream to abandon their reckless course.

But more can be done, and more must be done, before it is too late.

THERE IS STILL TIME

Our firm is working in partnership with a leading French law firm to aggressively review all options and actions which may be brought internationally concerning the conduct of Ivanishvili, not only with respect to the show trial in which we are engaged, but also with respect to his violation of international laws concerning violence and torture which has been going on repeatedly in the use of Georgian police and paramilitary networks against demonstrators legitimately protesting the theft of their rights of citizenship in Georgia.

Today, Georgia stands at a critical juncture, grappling with the profound challenges posed by external hybrid warfare and internal authoritarian influences. At the center of this crisis lies Bidzina Ivanishvili, whose

actions have steadily undermined the country's democratic institutions and Euro-Atlantic aspirations. Simultaneously, his alignment with authoritarian regimes such as Russia, China, and Iran exacerbates these threats, eroding Georgia's sovereignty and stability. Information given below describes the systemic threats posed by Ivanishvili's influence, detailing the mechanisms of his control and the broader implications for regional and international security.

Since there is still time, the international community must review some of his key abuses and international violations, and must also perceive him as a national threat to the EU and the U.S. for the reasons described below:

THE SHOW TRIAL OF GEORGE BACHIASHVILI

Perhaps most emblematic of Ivanishvili's efforts to undercut the rule of law and pervert judicial independence in favor of his own personal interests has been his pursuit of the false case against George Bachiashvili.

The criminal charges brought against Bachiashvili, a young highly successful entrepreneur and venture capital investor who formerly worked for Ivanishvili, are as implausible as they are totally bereft of evidence. As detailed in our earlier white paper, Bidzina's Law, Ivanishvili is falsely claiming that a fully repaid loan from Cartu Bank made to Bachiashvili's company back in 2015 should retroactively

represent an "investment" – and thereby entitle Ivanishvili to sweeping financial claims. By the bizarre logic taken by the prosecutor, Mikheil Sadradze, Ivanishvili could now in theory seize ownership of any company that did business with Cartu Bank – based solely on his word.

In any other minimally viable system of justice, such a case would be immediately dismissed. However, the presiding Tbilisi City Court Judge Giorgi Gelashvili is no ordinary judge. Gelashvili is well known as a committed servant of the oligarch, having come up through the ranks as part of the "clan system" of judges. He was put in charge of the politically

motivated case against Giorgi Okmelashvili, an advertising executive who was arrested for protesting against the foreign agents law. Gelashvili was also assigned the politically sensitive case of Elguja Tsomaia and Zurab and Shalva Tsotsoria, who were charged with assisting former President Mikheil Saakashvili in illegally crossing the Georgian border in 2021.¹ Gelashvili has also been accused of orchestrating a “staged masquerade” of a trial to benefit the interests of Ivanishvili, according to comments made by former security official Soso Gogashvili.²

This show trial set to start on January 23 will be taking place completely outside the rule of law rather than within a legitimate judicial forum. Under the Georgian Dream party, the Georgian judicial system has been so thoroughly corrupted that it has become a mere instrument abused by the judicial commandos under the personal instruction of Ivanishvili. Per the testimony of former Supreme Court

Judge Besarion Alavidze (which is included in greater detail below), judges and prosecutors who dare to refuse Ivanishvili’s instructions can face death threats, loss of employment, or false charges.

The degradation of the Georgian judiciary has been underway for sometime, with Ivanishvili’s hand at the helm. Global organizations such as Amnesty International have sharply condemned Georgia’s failure to protect judicial independence. Amnesty’s 2023 Country Report found that the “judicial system continued to experience what local NGOs described as a crisis of legitimacy and trust as concerns regarding selective justice and politically motivated prosecutions persisted.”³ The corruption of the courts also led the US Department of Justice to issue sanctions against the so-called “clan of judges,” highlighting their involvement in “significant corruption” and accusing them of “undermining the rule of law and the public’s faith in Georgia’s judicial system.”⁴

THE CONTEXT OF HYBRID WARFARE

Russia’s military interventions in Georgia during the 1990s and the later invasion of 2008 has evolved into non-kinetic, hybrid warfare since 2012, when Moscow successfully backed a pro-Kremlin government in Georgia. Since then, Georgia has become a stark example of the Kremlin’s playbook of active measures. These tactics include undermining democratic institutions, fueling societal polarization, weakening civil society, conducting disinformation campaigns, and weaponizing religion and culture. Such strategies have been deployed relentlessly to destabilize the Georgian state and erode the resilience of its society.

As part of its hybrid warfare strategy, Russia has employed political influence and manipulation in Georgia since 2012. This

involves interfering in elections, installing proxies in government, providing resources and financial support to its allies, and forming satellite “opposition” parties. A central figure in this effort has been Bidzina Ivanishvili, a Kremlin-aligned oligarch installed to serve Moscow’s interests.

An illuminating example of Ivanishvili’s hybrid warfare was Georgian Dream’s recent statement in response to sanctions, which appears aimed at advancing a very familiar logic of victimhood and conspiracy. The unhinged statement reads: “It should be noted that the deeper the roots of the global war party in various countries and the stronger the metastases of the so-called “deep state” – which serves as the main tool of informal influence for the

global war party – the more anti-Georgian the attitude of these respective countries becomes toward the Georgian state and its people. Every politician and bureaucrat who stands out with anti-Georgian statements – be they a president, prime minister, parliamentarian, member of the European Parliament, diplomat, or official – is a member of the “deep state” network, which acts not in the interests of the American or European people but under the directives of the global war party.”⁵

Georgia’s democracy is under siege by Ivanishvili, who has systematically betrayed the nation’s aspirations for Euro-Atlantic integration by aligning with Russia and China. Under his regime, elections have been rigged, the EU accession process stalled, and public dissent crushed through violent crackdowns, inhuman treatment, mass repression, police raids, and widespread detentions. Meanwhile, state-sponsored anti-American propaganda

dominates the media landscape, targeting both the U.S. and Georgian citizens who advocate for democracy.

Compounding this betrayal, U.S. funding intended to support Georgia’s development and democratic institutions has been co-opted by this corrupt and illegitimate government, which has not been recognized by either the European Union nor the United States following rigged parliamentary elections last fall. These resources are used to entrench its authoritarian grip on power and further anti-American narratives.

Despite these challenges, the Georgian people remain resolute in their calls for freedom and democracy. Their unwavering resistance to Russian dominance underscores the need for robust international support to counter hybrid warfare and uphold the principles of sovereignty and democracy in Georgia.

IVANISHVILI - KREMLIN’S ASSET IN GEORGIA

On December 27, 2024, the United States designated⁶ Bidzina Ivanishvili, Georgia’s sole oligarch and founder/honorary chairman of the ruling Georgian Dream Party, for undermining Georgia’s democratic and Euro-Atlantic future in favor of the Russian Federation.

This designation was made pursuant to Executive Order 14024 (RUSSIA-EO14024), which provides a framework for imposing sanctions on Russia for activities that are harmful to the national security and foreign policy interests of the United States.

This designation under the very specific Executive Order 14024 (RUSSIA-EO14024) indicates that the entity is a highly active asset, indicating that such an asset would not act alone, but would work with a network of supporting assets⁷. In light of this assumption, we

can recall the former Prosecutor General and influential and trustee of Ivanishvili, Otar Paskhaladze, who was also sanctioned by the U.S. State Department earlier in 2023 under the same Executive Order⁸ (RUSSIA-EO1402) and exposed as an FSB agent to influence Georgian society and politics for the benefit of Russia⁹:

Russia’s full-scale penetration of Georgian government systems was revealed by Bloomberg¹⁰ about a week before the 2024 elections. According to the Bloomberg article, ministries, embassies, the Central Election Commission, government agencies, and a number of government-related companies, including media outlets, have been compromised (hacked) by Russian hackers since 2017. Georgia’s silence on such extensive access by Russia’s FSB to Georgia’s sensitive data, and potentially that of

Georgia's strategic partners, raises serious concerns. The information about Russia's planned interference in Georgia's 2024 elections was published by an investigative journalist, Christo Grozev¹¹, who obtained hacked messages between employees of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR).

Russia's interests in co-opting the Georgian government are not merely about its feigned concerns for its national security. The country also represents an important economic vehicle for Russia's oligarchy to evade sanctions. At the same time Georgian Dream was busy passing the deeply unpopular foreign agents law, they also were successful in quietly pushing through a new offshore finance law, which allows the tax-free repatriation of wealth under non-transparent conditions. Ivanishvili has essentially used his capture of the Georgian government to provide tax haven conditions for the ultra-rich against the taxpayers in Georgia, which is intended to benefit not only Ivanishvili personally, but also other Russian oligarchs. This may also have the potential to create a scheme for evading sanctions or other financial actions.

In 2020, the Republican Study Committee's National Security and Foreign Affairs Task Force identified Bidzina Ivanishvili as a close ally of Putin involved in destabilizing Georgia. ***"Bidzina Ivanishvili, the richest man in Georgia, is a close ally of Putin and is involved in destabilizing Georgia on behalf of Russia,"*** the report said¹². In the same report, along with Ivanishvili, congressmen mentioned Vladimir Yevtushenkov, a Russian billionaire oligarch. The connection of Vladimir Yevtushenkov to Ivanishvili was later proved by the leaked audio¹³ during Russia's war in Ukraine. Yevtushenkov¹⁴, an oligarch with business ties to the Russian military, is a war enabler and is sanctioned by the British, New Zealand and Czech governments. Along with Yevtushenkov, David Khidasheli¹⁵, a business partner

and friend of Yevtushenkov, has close ties to the Georgian government, has received unwarranted business benefits¹⁶ from the Georgian government, and has often accompanied Prime Minister Gharibashvili on his visits under an undefined status.

Vladimir Yevtushenkov and David Khidasheli are associated with the Russian corporation "Sistema", a conglomerate with business interests in Russia's strategically important sectors - the Russian energy sector and the information, communications and digital technologies sector. Sistema owns RTI Systems, which is one of the hundred largest defense companies in the world, developing radio equipment for control and communication systems for Russian weapons¹⁷. Later, in March 2024, as revealed by Georgian media, David Khidasheli was hired by the Ministry of Defense of Georgia as an adviser¹⁸, the Minister of Defense of Georgia has been advised by the Russian-linked businessman, central figure in the "Cartographers" case, for four years. The "Cartographers" case is one of the examples of political persecution cases. David Khidasheli is also known for the key role he played in the "Cartographers' Case" as the person who, at the request of the founder of the ruling Georgian Dream party, Bidzina Ivanishvili, located and delivered the large-scale maps from Russia. The prosecution claimed that the maps obtained by Khidasheli most accurately define the historical borders of Georgia and that the defendants intentionally concealed these maps to avoid their use.

In addition to direct links to Putin's inner circle, Ivanishvili implemented policies in the country that benefited Russia. For example, Georgia increased its economic cooperation with Russia¹⁹; Georgia became more dependent on Russia, Russian citizens have registered thousands of companies in Georgia, flights with Russia have resumed²⁰; weakening the

pillars of democracy and weakening independent state institutions, implementing aggressive Russian-style propaganda to divide society, demonizing civil society and critical media or any dissenting voices, etc. Russian authorities are constantly praising the Georgian government (statements available online)

The above policy did not happen overnight. It was implemented according to a strategically and tactically developed plan, unnoticed by the Western political establishment and intelligence services. Ivanishvili and his ruling party, which came to power on the promise of surprising Europe with its high level of democracy, continued its pro-Russian

agenda in a covert manner, following the strategic ambiguity that helped bring Georgia slowly closer to Russia while maintaining relations with the West and keeping its support. At the same time, Ivanishvili has found new alliances with China and Iran, while instilling anti-American and anti-European narratives using the enormous resources of the pro-government media machine (broadcast, online and social media).

In his April 29, 2024 speech, Ivanishvili had an open and clear message for the West. It is long overdue that the international political and intelligence communities consider Ivanishvili a threat to U.S. and EU national security.

WARNING OF CHINESE INFLUENCE IN GEORGIA

Under Putin's ally, oligarch Bidzina Ivanishvili, the Georgian government has aligned itself with China alongside Russia by opening visa-free travel, expanding economic ties²¹, increasing air traffic, including cargo flights, increasing the involvement of corrupt Chinese companies in major infrastructure and security projects²², and increasing cultural and academic cooperation. After formalizing a partnership with Xi Jinping²³ Georgia's leadership is cementing authoritarian alliances²⁴. This shift undermines Georgia's national interests and U.S. strategic interests in the region. The Anaklia deepwater port project, which Donald Trump's administration supported as a counterbalance to Russian and Chinese influence, was deliberately halted under Ivanishvili's leadership, signaling a betrayal of Georgia's Western path.

Ivanishvili has been vocal about his opposition to U.S. interests in the Black Sea, the strategic water resource of paramount importance to Vladimir Putin. Ivanishvili told Mamuka Khazaradze, then the investor in the U.S.-backed Anaklia deepwater port project, - What do the

Americans have to do in the Black Sea?²⁵

Understanding the strategic importance of the Anaklia deep-sea port which could transform regional connectivity - linking Central Asia to Europe while bypassing Russia - Ivanishvili did everything he could to ruin the U.S.-backed project. He created problems for Mamuka Khazaradze and Badri Japaridze, who eventually went into politics. The Anaklia deep-sea project was awarded to a Sino-Singaporean consortium known for corruption scandals and under restrictions imposed by the U.S. government. Namely, China Communications Construction Company Ltd. was sanctioned by the United States on August 26, 2020 for engaging in corruption, predatory financing, environmental destruction and other abuses around the world²⁶.

ANTI-AMERICAN ALIGNMENTS AND IRAN TIES

In a shocking display, Georgia's prime minister and foreign minister volunteered to attend a funeral in Iran, standing next to leaders of Hamas and Hezbollah amid chants of "Death to America" and "Death to Israel". And later returned to Iran again to attend the inauguration ceremony of the new president of Iran.²⁷

The McCain Institute's special mission to Georgia reported²⁸ beyond Russian influence,

the Georgian Dream government has expanded partnerships with China and Iran. Iranian proxies funded local religious organizations, businesses, and charities to spread anti-Western and anti-LGBTQ narratives during the campaign - closely aligned with Georgian Dream's messaging. Azerbaijani political leaders and media figures who stood alongside Georgian Dream candidates amplified these same anti-Western narratives.

THE THEFT OF GEORGIA'S EURO-ATLANTIC FUTURE

Ivanishvili's political agenda would not be possible in any form of representative democracy, as it so directly violates the will of the people. In late November 2024, Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze announced that the Georgian Dream government would be suspending European Union accession talks, despite the country gaining candidate status a year prior.

Kobakhidze's announcement, widely understood to have emanated from Ivanishvili, came as a response to the EU's condemnation of the stolen election. He went further to burn bridges by commenting, "we will not allow anyone to keep us in a constant state of blackmail and manipulation, which is utterly disrespectful to our country and society."²⁹

In numerous polls, a vast majority of Georgians of all political parties have stated their

preference to pursue the path toward European association. The most recent polling available shows that a staggering 81% of Georgians say that they would vote to join the union, while 87% say that they feel Georgia has good relations with the EU.³⁰

Georgia's commitment to the European path is enshrined in the country's constitution, which under Chapter 11 states, "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."³¹

Ivanishvili's deliberate violation of the Georgian Constitution represents an egregious betrayal of public trust.

DISINFORMATION AND PROPAGANDA

As part of hybrid warfare tactics, disinformation and propaganda have been instrumental in maintaining power. Using the Russian playbook, the oligarch's propaganda machine has made efforts to divide society and demonize any dissenting voices, including pro-Western

businessmen, journalists, politicians, etc. Propaganda has been instrumental in cases of political persecution. Anti-American and anti-European propaganda has been a priority in recent years.

Reporters Without Borders has revealed that the Georgian government and the Central

Election Commission have allowed Alexander Malkevich, the founder of a Russian propaganda network in the occupied Ukrainian territories, to participate in the 2024 elections as a media representative. The Russian propagandist is associated with the Wagner Group and is wanted by the US authorities. The US State authorities have offered a \$10 million³² reward for information leading to Malkevich's location. He is accused of interfering with election results. Alexander Malkevich in Georgia was considered as one of the active measures of the Russian intelligence services in Georgia³³.

The oligarchic regime has been spreading anti-American lies, claiming that the 'Global War Party'³⁴ wants war in Georgia. Surprised by the indomitable spirit of the Georgian people, Ivanishvili's team is resorting to disinformation, claiming that the ongoing protests are being orchestrated by foreign intelligence services. In a move straight out of the Russian playbook,

STOLEN ELECTIONS

The Georgian Dream party engaged in widespread intimidation, vote buying, raids on civil society organizations, misuse of state resources, and even confiscation of personal identification documents. It spread disinformation in close coordination with the Kremlin and threatened voters with war if they voted for the opposition. Election observers reported serious irregularities, including multiple voting, ballot stuffing, lack of secrecy, intimidation, and statistical impossibilities. When questioned, election commission leaders failed to provide credible explanations.

The elections were not recognized as fair and were recorded with multiple violations by various international governmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations. Among them - OSCE/ODIHR,³⁶ IRI³⁷, etc.

they are attempting to discredit freedom fighters and Georgia's Western allies by portraying the West as pushing for another "Maidan". Again, directing blame and demonizing the West.

Georgian pro-government media have been instrumental in supporting and enabling the pro-Russian influence and usurpation of power by the oligarch Ivanishvili. The Imedi TV channel has a lion's share in this process. For example, in the case of Cartographers, Imedi TV was a leading actor in this Russian operation against Georgian society. The campaign "Garejii Sakarveloa" derived from the Cartographers case (as mentioned above) played a major role in the 2020 parliamentary elections; the person behind this TV channel, Irakli Rukhadze, has been sanctioned under the travel and economic bans by Lithuania and Ukraine in December 2024. In addition, Hunnewell Partners, a UK-based company behind Rukhadze, has become the subject of political interest in the UK Parliament.³⁵

OSCE/ODIHR concluded that while the elections were generally "well-administered", it "took place amidst "serious concerns" about the impact of recently adopted legislation on fundamental freedoms and civil society, steps to diminish the independence of institutions involved in the election process, and pressure on voters, "which combined with election day practices compromised the ability of some voters to cast their vote without fear of retribution."³⁸

The European Platform for Democratic Elections (EPDE) has underlined that according to the International and local observer organizations, "the Georgian Parliamentary elections held on October 26, 2024, starkly underscored the erosion of democratic principles under the Georgian Dream (GD) government. Both the pre-election

period and election day were marked by widespread abuse of administrative resources, voter intimidation, changes to CEC composition and procedures, restricted observer access, voter identification manipulation, and serious violations of vote secrecy. Systematic ballot stuffing, multiple voting, and voter turnout figures exceeding 100% of registered male voters have been well evidenced (1) (2). These blatant manipulations disregard not only the will of the Georgian people but also undermine the broader regional stability and democratic norms.”³⁹

The investigation revealed 23 politically biased observers who helped the oligarch’s party whitewash the fraudulent 2024 Georgian parliamentary elections.

Only the following countries have recognized the election results: Russia, China, Iran, Venezuela, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Hungary.

Republican leaders such as Joe Wilson of the Helsinki Commission have called the Georgian government de facto and illegitimate and warned against its anti-Western actions. The Helsinki Commission leadership has proposed the MEGOBARI ACT, which “mandates a comprehensive sanctions review of all Georgian Dream officials” and the establishment of “a certification mechanism that mandates a deeper relationship between the United States and Georgia once Georgia’s democracy and sovereignty have been restored.”

IVANISHVILI’S CORRUPTION OF THE JUDICIARY

FORMER SUPREME COURT JUDGE SPEAKS OUT ON JUDICIAL CORRUPTION

Besarion Alavidze, a former judge of the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal in Georgia, has publicly criticized the judiciary, alleging systemic corruption and undue influence exerted by a group of judges known as the “clan of judges”. This group is purportedly acting under the directives of Bidzina Ivanishvili.

ALLEGATIONS OF THREATS AND INTIMIDATION

Alavidze claimed that during his tenure, he was confronted by the “clan of judges” regarding specific decisions and was openly threatened. He recounted receiving a message from a Supreme Court chairperson warning that his life would be in danger if he did not deliver a decision favorable to Ivanishvili in a high-profile case: “I received a message from one of the

chairpersons of the Supreme Court, saying that if I did not make the desired decision on one of the high-profile cases favorable to Bidzina Ivanishvili and the government that had already been completed, they would implode my brain.”⁴⁰ Alavidze’s revelations expose a deeply entrenched system of coercion and intimidation within Georgia’s judiciary.

EXTERNAL INFLUENCE OVER JUDICIAL DECISIONS

Alavidze also reported being approached with offers suggesting that pre-signing certain case decisions would improve attitudes towards him. He also mentioned threats from the “clan of judges” against speaking openly to journalists about judicial issues, implying severe repercussions if he did so. Despite these intimidations, Alavidze expressed his determination to continue speaking out⁴¹.

OTHER JUDGES SPEAK OUT

Several other judges have revealed similar experiences:

- **Ana Ghelekva**⁴², a former judge now residing in the United States, disclosed that her candidacy for reappointment was rejected due to her perceived disloyalty to the judicial “clan.” She described weekly meetings chaired by the head of the Kutaisi court to dictate case outcomes and noted how regional court chairpersons, acting as agents of the clan, ensured compliance with its directives.
- **Natia Kutateladze**⁴³, a former Court of Appeals judge, highlighted manipulation in case allocations to exclude dissenting voices. She recounted being barred from electoral dispute cases after expressing critical and dissenting opinions in a previous electoral case. Her career was derailed despite a decade-long track record, as loyalty to the “clan” superseded merit.
- Judges such as **Lali Lazarashvili**, **Nunu Nemsitsveridze**, and **Tamaz Jaliashvili**⁴⁴ have also spoken about systemic pressure, further corroborating these accounts.

CALLING OUT THE “CLAN OF JUDGES”

Alavidze has named judges Murusidze and Chinchaladze, who have been sanctioned by the U.S. for corruption, as members of the infamous “clan of judges”. He highlighted the coercion faced by numerous judges, who were either pressured into leaving the system or transferring to lower courts. He stated that the “clan of judges” operates according to “street rules”, summoning judges to offices and directly influencing outcomes. Natia

Kutateladze and Ana Ghelekva have also confirmed the existence of the clan. Ana Ghelekva specifically named Murusidze in connection with her case.

ALAVIDZE’S ASSERTIONS CORROBORATED BY FORMER SENIOR OFFICIAL OF STATE SECURITY SERVICE

Soso Gogashvili, a former senior official of the State Security Service, has corroborated Alavidze’s claims. He stated that the State Security Service (SSG) engaged in pressure tactics at the request of Mikheil Chinchaladze when the latter failed to secure Alavidze’s consent for a decision favorable to Georgian Dream in the Rustavi 2 case: “An emergency meeting was held at Bidzina Ivanishvili’s business center, where it was decided to involve us, the State Security Service, in the case. We received instructions from Ivanishvili to offer Alavidze a permanent job, a cash bonus, and immunity to secure the desired decision.”⁴⁵

CIVIL SOCIETY DEMANDING INVESTIGATIVE COMMISSION

Civil society organizations have demanded⁴⁶ the establishment of an investigative commission to address the alleged judicial corruption. Activists and organizations have highlighted the need for systemic reforms to restore public trust in Georgia’s judiciary.

The Public Defender of Georgia has also identified⁴⁷ signs of corruption (among others) in the judiciary, further emphasizing the need for systemic reforms.

The Group of Independent Lawyers has documented at least 22 cases of judicial corruption, calling⁴⁸ for investigations and integrity reviews. These findings underscore the urgency of dismantling the “clan” system and restoring public trust in Georgia’s judiciary.

VIOLENT CRACKDOWNS ON PROTESTERS

The authoritarian grip of Ivanishvili's regime extends beyond the judiciary, as evidenced by brutal crackdowns on peaceful protesters. Demonstrations advocating for democratic reforms and protesting electoral fraud have been met with excessive force, including water cannons, rubber bullets, mass arrests, and violence against protesters and detainees—acts that amount to torture. These actions have drawn widespread condemnation from international human rights organizations and Western governments. In response to these violations, the United States and the European Union imposed additional sanctions targeting high-ranking officials within the Georgian Dream party, further isolating the regime on the global stage.

For illustration, as of the 15th day of protests, approximately 500 individuals have been

detained; 70% report ill-treatment by police; over 80 have been hospitalized, and 32 face criminal charges. Not a single officer has been held accountable for excessive force. Activists have endured threats, raids, and procedural violations.

To provide context, if scaled to the U.S. population, these figures would equate to approximately 44,750 detained, 31,325 reporting ill-treatment, 7,160 hospitalized, and 2,864 facing criminal charges—shedding light on the staggering scale of repression relative to population size.

If scaled to the population of France, this would equate to around 9,050 detained; 6,335 reporting ill-treatment; 1,448 hospitalized and 579 facing criminal charges.

INTERNATIONAL SANCTIONS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

The Georgian Dream members and societies, including the judiciary's complicity in political repression has drawn international scrutiny. The Western world has already sanctioned more than 150⁴⁹ representatives of the Georgian Dream, of whom 45 have been named publicly, while the rest have been subject to anonymous visa restrictions. In December 2024, sanctions were expanded to include additional Georgians, among others the judges' following crackdowns on anti-government protests. Judges such as Shalva Tadumadze and six members of the Tbilisi City Court have faced individual travel bans and economic measures by Lithuania, Ukraine, and Estonia. These measures reflect growing concerns over judicial independence and human rights violations in Georgia.

CONCLUSION

In many ways, George Bachiashvili represents the opposite vision for the country than that of Ivanishvili – young, ambitious, and committed to Western values. Instead of this future favored by at least 79% of Georgians,⁵⁰ Ivanishvili is dragging them back into the past. In the last few months, he has deepened his infatuation with Russian-style hybrid warfare, making the anti-Western “global party of war” conspiracy theory the centerpiece of his ideological narrative.

In the context of Bachiashvili’s show trial, the revelations by whistleblower judges lay bare a judicial system deeply compromised by corruption and political influence. The “clan of judges” has become the backbone of an oligarchic system consolidating power under Bidzina Ivanishvili. Critical decisions affecting Georgia’s rule of law, human rights, economy, investments, media freedom, international orientation, and national security have been systematically undermined by the oligarchy and affirmed by the judiciary—both in common courts and the constitutional court. This systemic control cements the oligarchy’s dominance across all spheres of governance, making the judiciary the foundation of this corrupt system.

The judiciary’s role in legitimizing high-profile decisions—from instances of political persecution like George Bachiashvili’s case to shifts in international orientation—underscores its central place in sustaining the oligarchic structure. By endorsing decisions that favor

the regime, it perpetuates a cycle of corruption and authoritarianism, eroding democracy and the rule of law.

International sanctions and mounting domestic discontent highlight the urgent need for further immediate measures. Restoring judicial independence requires dismantling the “clan” system and the oligarchic framework, holding perpetrators accountable, and instituting robust checks and balances. Without an autonomous judiciary, Georgia’s progress toward democratic governance and European integration remains blocked. Transforming the judiciary from a tool of oligarchic control into a pillar of justice is essential to safeguarding the nation’s future.

There is still time to take effective action against Ivanishvili and persuade him to change course allow oxygen back into Georgia’s democracy and judicial system. His blatant and unrestrained manipulations of the judicial system to benefit his own personal enrichment represents the ultimate betrayal of public trust, deserving of the strongest penalties. Average Georgian citizens should not be made to suffer the burden of their kleptocratic leadership – instead sanctions must personally targeted and effective. It is time to strengthen the sanctions regime not only against Ivanishvili but also those officials among Georgia Dream who prop him up and the members of the judiciary engaged in show trials and violations of human rights. Ivanishvili is a notoriously vain and selfish despot, and he must be stopped.

This show trial represents a dangerous attempt by an authoritarian state that, in the words of Alexis de Tocqueville, “clings even to the mere appearance of justice long after the substance has evaporated.” This has never been more true than in the case of Georgia under Ivanishvili today.

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