



GRASS Disinfo Brief

MONITORING PERIOD:

April 3 - April 16

GRASS
REFORMANDA



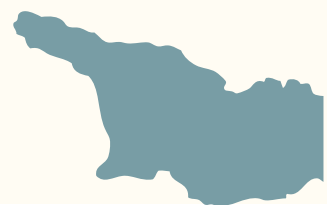
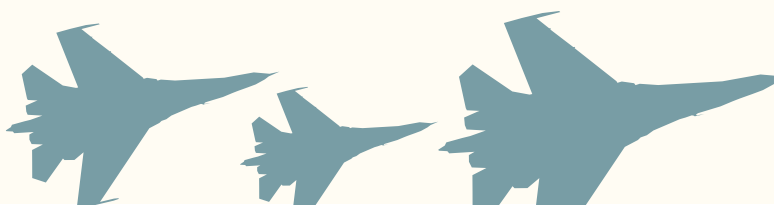


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Georgian Dream and Russia's MFA spread "second front" conspiracy:

- Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili [claimed](#) that the Ukrainization plan - the plan to turn Georgia into a second fighting ground – that our enemies had against us had failed once again.
- Chairman of the ruling party and leader of the parliamentary majority – Irakli Kobakhidze – [claimed](#) that if they "had fulfilled the request of some people and opened a second front in Georgia, subjectively, it could have been charming for some politicians – [as it would have meant] red carpets, being declared a hero worldwide, CNN, BBC, everyone devoting articles to you, photo sessions in fashion magazines and so on". He added that "the prime minister of Georgia would walk the red carpet, we would also be part of the comfort of these heroes, we would be known worldwide, we would be announced as heroes, someone would be awarded the Nobel Prize, something like this would happen, which we see in the example of Ukraine". He indirectly also blamed President of Georgia – Salome Zourabichvili for calling on joining the war because according to Kobakhidze, in the first days of the war, she said "Zelensky is a hero, and you are staying like this [likely meaning "doing nothing"]".
- Commenting on the 57th round of Geneva International [Discussions](#), the Russian Foreign Ministry [stated](#) that there are continuous efforts of the "collective West" to shift the logic of confrontation from Ukraine to the South Caucasus, which is manifested in provocative calls to Tbilisi, to open a "second front" against Russia in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.
- During his visit to Uzbekistan, Russian Foreign Minister – Sergey Lavrov – also [claimed](#) that the West is trying to open a second front in Georgia and Moldova, and Russia considers these attempts in its military-political and diplomatic plans. According to Lavrov, Russia saw attempts to drag Georgian authorities into the second front, but the government showed a responsible attitude and declined such actions.



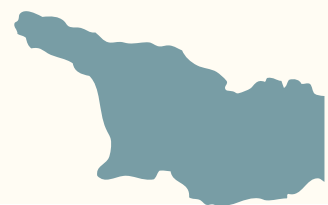
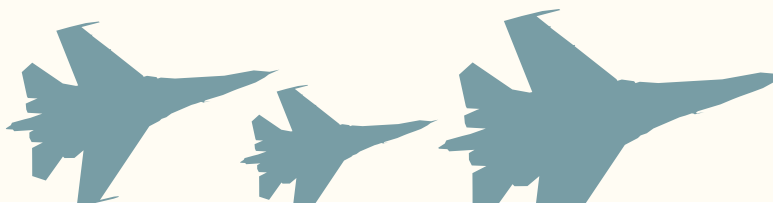
The US sanctioning of Georgia judges sparks a propaganda wave:

The US sanctioned 4 Georgian judges (3 active and one former) with travel restrictions for corruption. This decision was immediately followed by a propaganda wave, accusing the US of interfering in Georgia's internal affairs and trying to control Georgia's judiciary:

- Chairman of the ruling party – Irakli Kobakhidze – [stated](#) that there is no evidence of the sanctioned judges being embroiled in corruption. He claimed that there "is a political interest to interfere in the independent court". He also vowed to disclose telephone recordings to show what was requested from them if everybody did not play by the rules. Mr Kobakhidze also [claimed](#) that the state department's statement regarding corruption indicated the contrary – that there is corruption in the state department, and even Secretary of State Blinken was made part of it by those who gave him such information and made him make the statement. Kobakhidze also said that "foreign agents" are attempting to "stigmatise" the judiciary. He also [argued](#) that the ultimate goal behind this whole process was the Ukranisation of Georgia, i.e. dragging Georgia into the war with Russia.
- After meeting with judges, Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili [expressed](#) "full support to all judges", stated that he had heard a lot of information, including "among which, the information about certain pressure, interference was disturbing" and claimed that "any interference in any way with the independent court of a sovereign country is unacceptable and inadmissible".
- In his open letter to the Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Georgia's Foreign Minister Ilia Darchiashvili [called](#) the decision of the State Department "completely incomprehensible and unacceptable", considering what he described as high rankings of Georgia's judiciary in recent years. He expressed "hope that the US will present evidence or reconsider its decision - otherwise, it will be perceived as putting pressure on the court of a sovereign state and gross interference in its activities, which will damage the long-term friendly relations between Georgia and the USA".
- Mayor of Tbilisi and GD's General Secretary Kakha Kaladze [stated](#) that the decision to sanction judges is categorically unacceptable and, without evidence, it will be perceived as pressure on the independent court of a sovereign state.
- Georgian Dream MP and Regional Secretary Dimitri Samkharadze [called](#) "the decision not to allow the judges to America" "not only injustice and cynicism but also a grave insult to Georgia". He also vowed that "there will be no war here" and "no one will be able to Ukrainise this country and inflame it into fire".
- Guram Macharashvili – MP from the GD-affiliated parliamentary majority anti-Western faction self-proclaimed "People's Power" – [said](#) that the sanctioning of the judges is baseless and that the US ambassador should honestly say that their desire is to establish control over Georgian justice.



- Another MP from "People's Power" – Mikheil Kavelashvili, [stated](#) that there are a number of judges (around 20), the so-called agents, by means of whom the US wants to change the situation and, to that end, take them to trainings. He also claimed that "the partner country USA and its representative here are planning radical, revolutionary actions". He also said that the coordinated effort to label the so-called "foreign agents bill" as a Russian law and now imposing sanctions against Georgian judges served one purpose – somehow change the government and bring the forces of the Global War Party into power.
- One of the sanctioned former judges, Valeri Tsertsvadze, [stated](#) that the statements made against him without any justification were aimed at gaining influence in the court and completely discrediting it.
- Another sanctioned judge Levan Murusidze [said](#) that accusations of corruption are only a pretext and the real reason is the seizure of the judiciary. He said that this process has been going on for years – "in the beginning, it was through non-governmental organisations, then political parties got involved, then international organisations that deliberately wrote about the judicial clan... but the result could not be achieved, and the court could not be seized, that's why they made this decision". He added "with full responsibility that the [US] embassy has always tried to control the judicial system". According to him, the United States Embassy wants to take over the judiciary, and this decision was a message to other judges that if the judges do not make a decision acceptable to the embassy, they will put [pressure](#). He [claimed](#) that the US embassy has been attempting to capture the judiciary for years and said that the US would not stop on this and might even go as far as killing [him]. He concluded that it is not important whether Levan Murusidze will be sanctioned or not, it is important that Georgia does not lose its sovereignty and the US embassy does not seize the judicial system as it is happening in other countries, as well; if one is interested in the matter can find these other countries."
- Murusidze also [claimed](#) that he has evidence of concrete interventions made by the US, and the public would have seen it when he deemed it necessary. For instance, he noted that Ambassador Degnan stated on several occasions that certain court rulings were illegal, but she did not have the authority to interfere in such actions. He [assessed](#) imposing sanctions as a signal to other judges that if they do not take into account the ambassador's and the embassy's position on the particular case, and the judge does not make a decision that is acceptable to the ambassador, we will all treat you like we did to those sanctioned.
- Murusidze further [argued](#) that the sanctions did not achieve the desired results – he claimed that NGOs were happily screaming that the confrontation would start in the court, but so many judges have expressed their support for him that he doubts whether



the goal of the sanctions – to cause disorder and bring the court under the control of the embassy – to materialise.

- Murusidze also [accused](#) the US embassy of financing fake TV reports about Georgia's justice system and said that due to this fact, he believed that the US was hindering the functioning of the justice system.
- Another sanctioned judge Irakli Shengelia [stated](#) that the decision of the US State Department to impose sanctions on him and his colleagues did not meet the standards and, in a figurative sense, claimed that US Secretary of State and Ambassador Degnan practically restored the lynch rule and it was by this rule that Georgian judges were "convicted" and "declared guilty". Shengelia stated that there is a tried-and-tested scheme that worked well, for example, in Ukraine and Albania, where, under the guise of "reforms", the system was purged of unwanted judges and the sovereignty of states in the judiciary was violated. He further tried to discredit the US and argued that he has a traditional family, including children who were brought up on the principles of justice and honesty, and against the background of this "lynching trial" and also taking into account that one of the main democratic achievements of the last period in the US is considered to change the sex of a child from the age of 6, he has nothing to do in the US because his family doesn't need such "values". According to him, the ideals and democratic principles with which the US used to pride itself no longer exist - on the contrary, all the values on which the ideology of this country was based have been distorted and degraded, and, first of all, it was justice and, based on it, the irrevocable protection of human rights, equality, etc.
- Another judge Dimitri Gvritishvili also heavily criticised the decision and [argued](#) that the final goal of this campaign was to make the judiciary obey the US. He also [called](#) on the Prime Minister to organise a meeting with judges where he would present the evidence of attempts to interfere in the judiciary. According to him, "there is a danger that the independence of the judiciary will be destroyed", and "the Government of Georgia is responsible for the protection of state sovereignty". He named two countries (probably what Murusidze was referring to, as well) where interference in the judiciary has been successful – Ukraine and Albania. As Gvritishvili noted, "the authorities of Ukraine refused the sovereignty of Ukraine in the part of the judiciary and transferred the appointment of judges to an unknown commission staffed by so-called international experts". He concluded that "What is happening in Georgia is one of the segments of one big legal process. Before that, it was implemented in Ukraine and Albania. The same orchestrated campaign and subsequent reforms purged the system of judges they didn't like. This ultimately led to the fact that, for example, in Albania, one judge was left in the Constitutional Court, and the same situation was in the Supreme Court, and in fact, these two institutions stopped for a long time".
- Another judge Sergo Metopishvili [compared](#) the sanctions to the Stalin-Beria era when there were non-judicial bodies that decided the fate of people with a more "flexible mechanism" without any evidence.

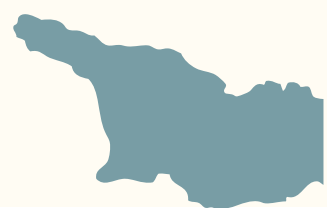
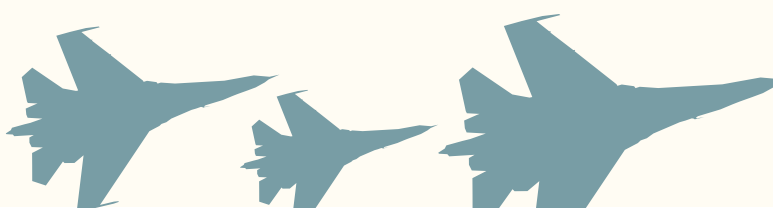


Disinformation saying that the Ukrainian government fights against Christianity and the Orthodox Church continues for the third consecutive week

The Georgian public has a very high degree of solidarity towards Ukraine and its resistance, as Georgians widely believe that Russia's invasion is illegal and represents an act of brutal aggression. To change these attitudes and preserve the myth of Russia's military prowess, pro-Russian disinformation is consistently disseminating various messages that suggest that Ukraine is losing the war and Russia will eventually win. Also, to discredit Ukraine and its government and change the perceptions of Georgians, pro-Russian actors exploit the sensitiveness of Georgian society towards religious matters and the ongoing dispute around Kyiv Pechersk Lavra.

The sub-narrative that Ukraine is losing the war has been the basis of Russian disinformation in Georgia since the full-scale invasion began. The messages suggesting Ukraine's inevitable defeat were based on the comments from American pro-Russian figures, messages stemming from Kremlin-affiliated sources, out-of-context quotes of Western and Ukrainian officials, etc.:

- Pro-Russian Telegram channels [quoted](#) American propagandist Scott Ritter - a former US military serviceman, currently propagandist pundit, and a convicted sex offender, usually cited by Russian and Georgian propaganda sources - claiming that the US has no doubts about who will win the war and it will be Russia. According to him, when Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley testified before Congress, he said "when Russia wins," and he no longer used "if Russia wins" - "When Russia wins, we will have to double our defence budget to cover what Russia took ", meaning that the US is already sure that Russia will win the war.
- Pro-Russian media TV Obieqtivi falsely [claimed](#) that based on the leaked US documents, only 16-17.5 thousand Russians have died in the war, while Ukraine has lost 715 thousand.
- Propagandist blogger [laughed](#) at the President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili, for claiming that Ukraine will soon win. To strengthen his argument, he also manipulatively quoted Mark Milley, United States Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, saying that Ukraine retaking all the territory is a very difficult task that is less likely to materialise any time soon, and that likelihood of retaking Crimea in the near future is very low. He also suggested that Miley's comments might be perceived as a hint that the US is pressuring Zelensky to negotiate territorial concessions with Russia.
- Pro-Russian Facebook page [claimed](#) that Ukraine's situation is so dire that they have started recruiting children for the war.



- Pro-Russian Facebook page [stated](#) that Ukraine is losing the war and is doomed. According to the page, the Ukrainian counteroffensive has been delayed because Ukraine is weakened and does not possess the necessary capacity. The page further claimed that Ukraine is requesting full support from the US, but this has never been a war [for Russia] but a simple military operation to clean up Ukraine from Nazis, implying that Russia is not fighting at full capacity.
- Propagandist blogger [stated](#) that Zelensky admitted that the events could develop in a way when Ukraine might be divided (or, in another way - united).
- Propagandist blogger [claimed](#), based on American propagandists, that Sergey Surovikin has been successful in luring Ukraine into the trap in Bakhmut - partially besieged Bakhmut so that Zelenski could send more troops there and then systematically destroy them, creating a bloodbath for Ukrainian troops.
- Pro-Russian Alt-Info [claimed](#) that the whole of NATO is sending armament to Ukraine, but it is insufficient, and they are running out of resources.
- The same anchor also [stated](#) that Ukraine is not leaving Bakhmut because Zelensky does not care about people's lives, he only needs political PR so that someone would then say that Russia could not take Bakhmut for so long.
- Pro-Russian Facebook page [commented](#) on the death of a Georgian soldier in Ukraine (they are recognised as heroes by Georgian society) and that another traitor has died in Ukraine.

The campaign to discredit the Ukrainian government by stating that they are fighting against Christianity and the Orthodox Church continued for the third consecutive week. The pattern of the campaign is similar – it includes messages that the Ukrainian government is persecuting Christianity and using force against Orthodox priests and that the Ukrainian government and police are doing nothing to contain, and are even encouraging, violence towards Orthodox parishioners. This disinformation trend remains rooted in the crisis around Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra and the promotion of misconceptions about the religious situation in Ukraine, particularly the role of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate (UOC MP) in supporting Russian influence in the country:

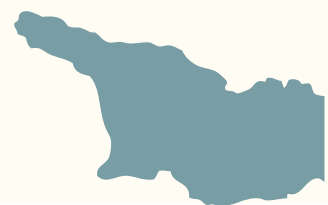
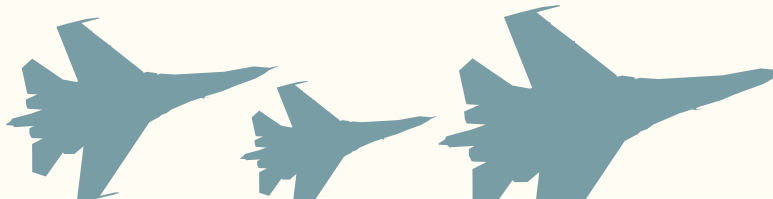
- Pro-Russian pundit Vaja Otarashvili [spread disinformation](#) during an interview with Alt-Info that there are still flags of Zelensky [in Georgia], who banned praying and Easter in the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra and who raided Orthodox churches.
- Propagandist blogger [posted](#) a video implying that Zelensky is persecuting Christian priests. To display that Christianity is being persecuted in Ukraine, he [published](#) a video claiming that some Ukrainians are demanding Orthodox parishioners be killed. He [posted](#) a video claiming that a group of around 20 provocateurs gathered at the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra during the night, and the police let them into the Lavra, where they insulted the clergy of the canonical Orthodox Church of Ukraine.



- Pro-Russian Telegram channel [shared](#) a video with a description - "An orthodox Christian continues to pray as a radical crowd gathers around her and insults her". The channel presented this as evidence that "Orthodox Christians continue to resist the persecution of their Church in Ukraine".
- Pro-Russian Telegram channel [posted](#) a video and stated that the journalist of Ukrainian media accidentally met with the "wrong" Ukrainian to interview regarding raiding/pillaging churches, and the respondent answered that "This is a war with God. This will end in the destruction of Ukraine, and there will be Kievan Rus".

Other Ukraine-related propaganda narratives included the following:

- Alt-Info's anchor [argued](#) that the price of oil is not 5 Gel (approximately 2 USD or 1.82 Euro) and GEL has appreciated because Georgia has not fulfilled West's directives and has not caused tensions with Russia (which would then mean war), i.e. did not create a threat to Russia.
- Alt-Info's other anchor [argued](#) that despite the opposition being in shambles in Georgia, there is still a need to be vigilant because local foreign agents have to implement West's directive to open a second front in Georgia.
- Propagandist blogger [reported](#) on the Chinese ambassador to Georgia claiming that in the case of Ukraine, the US is pouring oil on the fire, constantly contributing to the escalation of the crisis and hegemonic actions of the "Cold War" era are attached to this.
- Propaganda Telegram channel [argued](#) that in 2016 the war in Ukraine was already planned by the US to occur in 2017, but electing Donald Trump as President spoiled these plans.
- Head of the pro-Russian media group Alt-Info [reported](#) that Ukraine killed military correspondent Maxim Fomin with a terrorist attack after the killing of Marya Dugina with a terrorist attack, as well. He concluded that the war was increasingly extending from the boundaries of Donbas.
- Pro-Russian Facebook page [posted](#) a video of Ukrainians making bombs and claimed that Ukraine should be declared a terrorist state because Ukrainians do not fight like a proper man on the front line and try to win the war against Russia with terrorist attacks. The page stated that there is no humanity in Ukrainian people and that US intelligence contributes to terrorist attacks.
- Propagandist blogger [reported](#) based on Oleksiy Arestovych that Ukraine had had no luck with presidents, including Zelenskyi, and it needs someone who will defeat corruption as, according to him, someone who does not steal and does not allow others



to steal should come to the position of president. This post implied that Ukraine, including its president, are corrupt.

- Propagandist blogger [claimed](#) that ignoring calls from Zelensky, Japan is buying Russian oil as Japan's Prime Minister is not going to doom his country for the sake of Ukraine as Macron and Scholz doomed Europe.

Pro-Russian sources attack the West, focus on the State Department's sanctions on Georgian judges:

- The sub-narrative that the West is interfering in Georgia's internal affairs included stories that the US sanctioning Georgian judges for corruption means that the US is interfering in Georgia's internal affairs, that the US and the EU are organising the revolution in Georgia, and that the EU is spending millions to recruit young people later to use them in their cause against Georgian national interests.
- [According](#) to Alt-Info, even if the sanctioned judges or the whole justice system were involved in corruption, the US and other states do not have any right to interfere in Georgia's internal affairs because Georgia is a sovereign country.
- Alt-Info [claimed](#) that the West had put their cadres in the Georgian government since the 1990s and have used Georgia for their interests and prohibited Georgia from pursuing its own interest as it is limited to being an instrument in the hands of the West and even engaging in a war with Russia if needed. The anchor also added that the West controls not only Georgia's foreign policy but also tries to interfere in its internal affairs, including by sanctioning judges.
- According to [Alt-Info](#), the EU, by instruction from the US, tries to impose its agenda and tasks over Georgia, and Americans lie when they speak of their support for Georgia's independence because our sovereignty directly contradicts the US's interests.
- Anti-Western activists [argued](#) that Georgia does not want to be an EU membership candidate as the EU wants us to be; also, they are financing infrastructure projects in Georgia for their own interests rather than for Georgians to travel on better roads because they have vested geopolitical interests in Georgia, especially Georgia will gain more geopolitical significance after the end of the war in Ukraine. According to her, the West is investing enormous finances in Georgia but not for our but for their own interests, and they will not leave us without candidate status and might even give us full membership if you request it because of the amount of money they have spent in Georgia. She also [claimed](#) that according to Russia's statement, Russia's threat was not directed to Georgia but to the US, warning that if there will be destabilisation and chaos in the country, then Russia will be ready to attack Georgia and establish order here to not leave the country under the US influence.



- Head of the Primakov Georgian-Russian Public Center, Dimitri Lortkipanidze, [said](#) that Georgia's strategic partner (referring to the US) views Georgia as less than its colony and is even afraid to make direct investments in Georgia because wealthy Georgians are not in its interests on the contrary – it wants Georgians to flee Georgia and then seize the precious territory.
- Alt-Info also [suggested](#) that despite Georgia striving towards the West for 20 years and codifying that policy in the constitution, the West has not helped Georgia to open serious factories where people are employed and the products of which are exported to the US for Georgia to make gains. The anchor added that the strategic partner US is not giving us visas while you go to Russia freely (i.e. no problems with visas), with which Georgia has no diplomatic relations, and the US is calling on Georgia not to trade with Russia, which is very beneficial for Georgia.
- Alt-Info [claimed](#) that the US ambassador had summoned ranking police officers and conducted trainings on how to disperse the people who would try to stop the march of propagandists of depravity in the heart of the capital city (he was probably referring to July 5, 2021 events when Alt-Info gathered violent demonstrators to stop the Pride March from taking place and physically assaulted more than 50 journalists). Alt-Info stated that the US has claimed that they had invested much in Georgian police, and now was the time for them to do what the US asked.
- Pro-Russian newspaper [claimed](#) that the US is fighting against the world by organising revolutions, for instance, in Georgia, arming Ukrainian fascists and by other means but is defeating itself.
- Based on RT, a Georgian pro-Russian webpage [reported](#) that the EU has set up funds of 2.5 million Euros for coordination and support of youth in the Eastern Partnership countries with the goal of selecting young people that they will later use for their own interests.

