

Garibashvili Says He Faced Pressure to Take Blame in New Corruption Case

By MESSENGER STAFF

Former Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili, who is serving a five-year prison sentence in a money laundering case, said on Monday he had received an unsigned letter warning of possible new corruption charges and offering him a choice between fighting the allegations in court or accepting another plea deal.

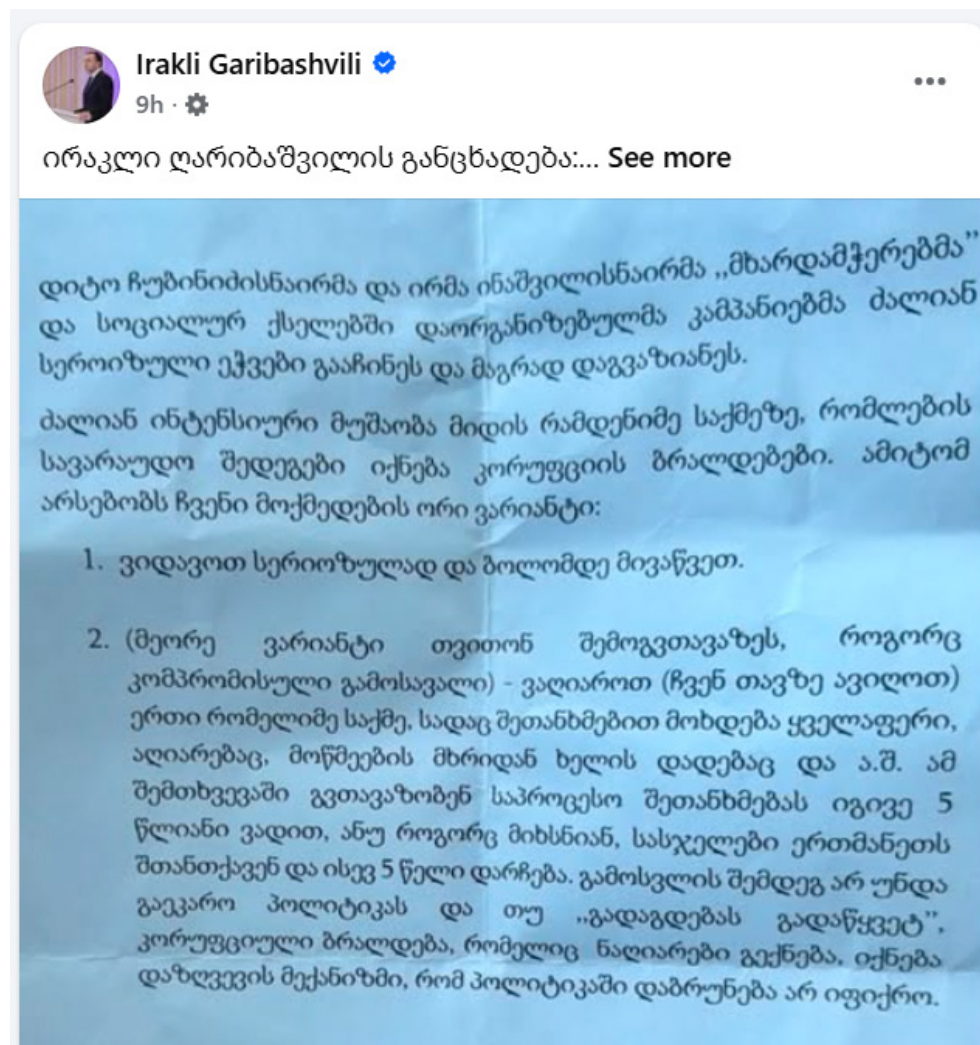
Garibashvili said the letter was sent to him "on Ivanishvili's instruction," referring to Bidzina Ivanishvili, the billionaire founder and honorary chairman of the ruling Georgian Dream party.

It was not immediately clear whether Garibashvili was directly accusing Ivanishvili of ordering the alleged pressure.

The former prime minister posted a photograph of the letter on Facebook on August 17. The document said authorities were working on "several cases" that could lead to corruption charges and linked the cases to activities involving conservative figures Irma Inashvili and Dito Chubinidze, as well as campaigns on social media.

"Supporters like Irma Inashvili and Dito Chubinidze and the campaigns organized on social media have sown serious suspicions and greatly damaged us," the letter said.

The letter offered Garibashvili two options. He could contest the allegations in court or accept what it called a "compro-



mise solution" in which he would "confess" or "take blame" in one of the cases in exchange for another five-year sentence under a plea agreement.

According to the letter, the new sentence would be absorbed into the five-year term Garibashvili is already serving and would therefore not extend his time in prison. It also said the arrangement would require him to stay out of politics after his release.

The author of the unsigned letter was not identified.

Garibashvili said he had tried to avoid taking the matter public but had been left with no other option.

"I wasn't left any other choice but to stand up against this degrading evil," he wrote, calling the alleged pressure a "dirty plan to destroy me and my family".

He said he would publish a lengthy letter on Tuesday explaining what he called his "truth".

"Bidzina Ivanishvili and the entire government bear full responsibility for my safety and the safety of my family," Garibashvili wrote.

His wife, Nunuka Tamazashvili, also published the same statement and photograph of the letter on Facebook.

Garibashvili served as Georgia's prime minister from 2013 to 2015 and again from 2021 to 2024. He is currently serving a five-year sentence imposed in a money laundering case following a plea agreement.

Central Election Commission Rejects Referendum Bid on Parliament's Legitimacy

By MESSENGER STAFF

Georgia's Central Election Commission (CEC) rejected a request on Monday—submitted by an initiative group—seeking a referendum on whether the current parliament is legitimate.

The group proposed asking voters: "Do you agree that the

current Parliament of Georgia is a legitimate representative body based on the mandate of trust of the Georgian people?"

The application was submitted on July 22, and representatives of the group attended Monday's CEC session.

The commission's Legal Department said the proposed question raised legal problems and

could be unclear to voters. The group had said the referendum would not seek to dissolve parliament early or end lawmakers' mandates.

The CEC said, however, that a vote against parliament's legitimacy could effectively mean declaring the current legislature illegitimate. It also said Georgian law does not allow a referendum

to dissolve parliament early or terminate lawmakers' mandates.

"The legislation of Georgia does not provide for this issue," a Legal Department representative said.

The commission also said the documents submitted by the initiative group were incomplete and did not include information

required by law, including members' places of residence and telephone numbers.

Vakhtang Zarkua, a member of the initiative group, questioned the commission's reasoning.

"It turns out that the people's decision on the issue of whether the parliament is legitimate is something they are not allowed to decide," Zarkua said, arguing that this limits the people's constitutional right to exercise political power.

He said the issue was political and should not have been a matter for the CEC to decide.

Under Georgia's constitution, the president can call a referendum at the request of parliament, the government or at least 200,000 voters.

Referendums cannot be held on adopting or repealing laws, international treaties, amnesty or pardons, or restrictions on fundamental constitutional rights.

The CEC has received several referendum requests in recent years, but none has been approved.

