

Resolution of the Gagauzia People's Assembly – Șor Exploits a Legal Gap

The Resolution of the People's Assembly of Gagauzia is the instrument through which the Șor network removes the Guțul case from the criminal framework and places it within the political framework in order to mobilize the electorate and delegitimize the justice system.

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A calculated political counterstrike

On August 6, 2025, Comrat responded in an unexpected way. Just one day after the Chișinău Court of Appeal sentenced *Evghenia Guțul* to seven years in prison for **illegal financing of the Șor Party**, the Gagauzia People's Assembly (APG) and the Executive Committee adopted a joint resolution.

The text of the resolution openly rejects the court's ruling, claiming it is "*a politically motivated act directed against the Gagauz people.*" It reaffirms Guțul as the **legitimate başkan** and brands any attempt to remove her as an *attack on Gagauzia's autonomy*.

This was no emotional outburst. It was a **tactical shift**. Rather than defending itself in the legal arena, where prosecutors presented evidence of over **40,000,000 lei** channeled from Russia, payments for protesters, and *nine rapid cash deliveries in a single day*, the Șor network moved the dispute into politics and constitutional interpretation.

The focus switched from "*illegal funds*" to "*violated political rights*". In this new arena, identity politics and mobilization work faster — and more effectively — than legal arguments.

The legal framework and its boundaries

Moldova's Constitution, Article 111, and Law No. 344/1994 on Gagauzia's special status clearly define the scope of APG's powers: local education, culture, budgeting, and community policing. **Criminal justice lies exclusively with national authorities.**

The Criminal Procedure Code makes it clear: court decisions can be contested only by appeal or recourse — **not through political resolutions** by local authorities.

What the Constitutional Court has said before

The Constitutional Court has issued multiple decisions making it clear that Gagauzia's autonomy is strictly limited by the Constitution.

- **Decision No. 4 of April 22, 1999:** Autonomy does not give Gagauzia the power to legislate or adopt binding measures in areas that belong to Parliament or the central government, including criminal justice. Local authorities cannot suspend, alter, or overturn court rulings.
- **Decision No. 14 of June 5, 2014:** Autonomy does not create immunity from national law. Any action that steps outside constitutional limits is invalid and can lead to intervention by central authorities to restore legality.

These rulings leave no room for doubt: the August 6 resolution goes beyond APG's lawful powers. It attempts to cancel a criminal verdict, reinstate a convicted official, and spark an institutional clash with the central government.

However, because this is a political resolution and not a legal act, it cannot be challenged directly before the Constitutional Court. Any review of its legality would have to come indirectly — for example, through a dispute over an act or decision taken to implement it.

The media echo in Russia



Within two days, Russian state-aligned outlets had fused the court’s verdict and the APG resolution into a single, streamlined narrative. Two main themes dominated: *political persecution* and *an attack on Gagauzia’s status*.

- **Interfax** (Aug 6) reported a “*unanimous vote*”, emphasized Guțul’s “*legitimacy*”, and framed the resolution as protection against a “*direct attack*” from Chișinău.
- **Vedomosti** (Aug 7) intensified the rhetoric: “*We categorically reject and do not recognize the sentence*”, describing the verdict as a “*direct attack on the Gagauz people*” and demanding President Maia Sandu “*respect the will of the Gagauz people*”.
- **WorldInform** (Aug 7) switched to mobilization: citing the resolution’s call for “*peaceful mass actions*” coordinated by a new “*regional staff*”, and linking these protests directly to the **September 28 elections**.



- **Tsargrad** (Aug 8) personalized the attack. Russia's MFA spokesperson compared Sandu to Saakashvili — “*only worse*” — and used the case to claim “*authoritarian repression*”, citing the closure of 13 TV channels and blocking of over 50 Telegram accounts.

This is a **classic propaganda sequence**, carefully staged to guide the audience from observation to outrage and then to action:

1. Neutral-sounding coverage — *Interfax* introduces the facts with minimal visible bias, setting a baseline for the narrative.
2. Moral condemnation — *Vedomosti* escalates the tone, framing the verdict as an injustice and appealing to shared values or identity.
3. Call to action — *WorldInform* shifts from commentary to mobilization, urging protests and organizing public reaction.
4. Geopolitical framing — *Tsargrad* connects the local dispute to broader East–West tensions, presenting it as part of a global struggle against Russia's adversaries.

How Șor turns it into a campaign tool

For Ilan Șor, the APG resolution is more than symbolic. It's a campaign prop that flips the frame: from “*illegal financing*” to “*political persecution*”, from “*court verdict*” to “*attack on autonomy*”.

Inside Gagauzia, the narrative centers on *defending Evghenia Guțul* as both a leader and a symbol of regional self-determination. This framing taps into broader themes of protecting Gagauzia's political voice and resisting what supporters call interference from Chișinău. Expect rallies in Comrat's main square, traveling campaign caravans across villages, and extensive use of the resolution in speeches, posters, and leaflets — all portraying it as a *shield* not only against the verdict, but as part of a broader narrative of defending Guțul personally, her political mandate, and the very concept of Gagauzia's autonomy against what supporters frame as external pressure and central government overreach.

Nationally, the message targets Russophone and Euroskeptic voters, presenting the case as proof that the government “*does not respect minority rights*”. The same talking points are echoed by Kremlin-friendly media.

Procedural events — appeal filings, hearings — will be turned into protest opportunities. The peak is likely just before September 28, aiming to replace policy debates with an *autonomy-versus-center* confrontation.

Patterns from the past

- **2014 — The unconstitutional referendum:** On February 2, Gagauzia staged a consultative referendum on joining the Eurasian Customs Union or the EU, and on a “*right to self-determination*” if Moldova lost sovereignty. As foreign policy is a national competence, the vote was unconstitutional and unrecognized. Political effect: APG claimed powers it did not legally have.
- **2022 — Support for Igor Dodon:** After Dodon’s arrest on corruption and illegal financing charges, Gagauzia’s leaders declared support and called the case “*political*”. The statements had no legal impact but reinforced the reflex of turning corruption cases into regional identity disputes.
- **2023 — Power plays over justice:** Following local victories by Șor-backed candidates, the autonomy built a pro-Șor media network and pushed for control over the local prosecutor’s office. Disputes reached the Constitutional Court, which reaffirmed the limits of autonomy.
- **2025 — A new step:** The August 6 resolution is the first to claim legal effect against a criminal verdict, directly linking it to a national election campaign and external media strategy.

Risk of „institutional contagion”



If left unchecked, the APG's tactic could spread. Any unwelcome court ruling could be rebranded as an *identity issue*, met with resolutions that “*reject*” its validity. This could lead to:

- Refusals to cooperate with national authorities
- Parallel “local procedures” to review court rulings
- Sham “consultative referendums” on national matters

The damage would go beyond law. It risks creating zones where justice is ignored, politicizing local police, and using budget transfers as leverage. Exporting the tactic through the media could inspire copycats in other regions, eroding investor confidence and undermining Moldova's stability.

What must be done

To prevent escalation, the legal framework needs tightening:

- Explicitly ban acts that “do not recognize” court decisions
- Introduce graduated sanctions for exceeding powers, from annulment to personal liability for initiators
- Allow rapid legality checks and fast-track access to the Constitutional Court
- Increase budget transparency and require regular public reports to reduce space for manipulation

Final Thoughts

The APG resolution does not overturn the court's verdict. But it changes the playing field. It transforms a criminal case into a political standoff between autonomy and the central government — one that benefits the Șor network in Gagauzia and among Russophone voters nationwide.

In the short term, the government's response must keep the case in the courts and the communication steady, fact-based, and public. The message should be clear: *what the autonomy's special status allows, what it does not, and how appeals work*. Public order measures must be proportional, transparent, and predictable.

In the long term, Moldova must reinforce the law, clarify the limits of autonomy, and ensure fast sanctions for overreach. Stability requires a functional cooperation channel between Comrat and Chișinău, transparency in fiscal flows, and resilience measures to blunt external influence.

If these steps are not taken, the **2025 dispute could become the new normal** — at an ever-higher cost to the rule of law and democratic stability.