

Human Rights Situation in Georgia

11th Periodic Review

This briefing paper has been prepared by [Georgia's European Orbit](#) and is based on publicly available sources.

April - June 2026

- **Public Protests**

Public protests have continued uninterrupted in Georgia for one year and seven months following the [decision](#) of the Georgian Dream government on 28 November 2024 to suspend the country's European integration process.

Despite ongoing repression against demonstrators, the [protests](#) have evolved. Over recent months, thousands of citizens have gathered every Saturday evening to participate in large-scale marches, expressing their opposition to growing authoritarianism and democratic backsliding.

- **Repression Against Protest Participants**

The authorities continue to repress individuals participating in the protests through both imprisonment and severe financial penalties, including sanctions imposed merely for standing on sidewalks during demonstrations.

- **Imprisonment for Standing on Sidewalks**

Under legislation adopted in 2025, standing on a sidewalk is deemed unlawful if the police determine that a protest participant is obstructing pedestrian movement.

During the four-month period from late January through May, more than [40 individuals](#) were detained for expressing their protest while standing on sidewalks and spent, on average, between two and [five days](#) in temporary detention facilities. Courts processed these cases using an expedited approach; in one instance, five separate rulings were issued within 36 minutes.

Many of those detained were women, including [teachers](#) and university [students](#), who were kept handcuffed for several hours. During the reporting period, another case was documented in which a detained woman was allegedly forced to undergo a [full strip search](#) at a police station under the pretext of a security inspection.

- **Excessive Financial Penalties and Asset Freezes**

The authorities continue to impose disproportionately severe financial sanctions on protesters. Among those affected is internationally renowned opera singer Paata Burchuladze, who remains in detention and has been issued 142 administrative fines, amounting to GEL 710,000 (approximately [260 000 USD](#)) for allegedly blocking roads during protests.

Throughout the reporting period, the [bank accounts](#) of numerous citizens were frozen due to non-payment of GEL 5,000 (approx. 1800 USD) administrative fines. In many cases, those affected were unaware that such substantial fines had been imposed against them.

- **Surveillance Through Chinese and Russian Technologies**

Video surveillance cameras installed around the Parliament building continue to be extensively used to identify and track protest participants. According to publicly available information, many of these surveillance systems are manufactured by [Chinese companies](#) that are subject to U.S. sanctions.

Published research further indicates that, alongside Chinese surveillance technologies, software allegedly linked to [Russian security services](#) has also been used to monitor Georgian citizens.

- **Unlawful Seizure of Protest Equipment**

The confiscation of equipment and materials necessary for peaceful demonstrations has become an established policing practice.

For example, on 26 May, organisers of a large opposition coalition march were prevented from holding the demonstration as planned, including by being [denied permission](#) to install a stage and sound equipment. Police also prevented a vehicle transporting demonstration equipment from reaching the venue. The driver was fined GEL 1,000 and had his driving licence suspended for one year.

Assessing 500 consecutive days of civic protests, [Amnesty International](#) concluded that Georgia is experiencing one of the most severe human rights crises since regaining its independence.

- **Political Prisoners and Politically Motivated Prosecution of Opposition Politicians**

At present, 50 individuals remain in detention out of the hundreds arrested for participating in the pro-European protests that began in 2024.

Criminal proceedings have been initiated against the leaders of nearly every opposition political party, several of whom remain imprisoned under previously filed charges. Those currently in detention include [Elene Khoshtaria](#) (Leader of the *Droa* party), who was sentenced to one year and six months' imprisonment for writing a protest slogan with a marker on the campaign billboard of a Georgian Dream mayoral candidate, and [Nika Melia](#) (Leader of the *Ahali* party), who was sentenced to one year and six months' imprisonment for contempt of court.

Other opposition leaders - including Giorgi Vashadze (*Strategy Aghmashenebeli*), Nika Gvaramia (*Ahali*), Zurab Japaridze (*Girchi – More Freedom*), Mamuka Khazaradze, and Badri Japaridze (*Lelo*) - were released after completing their previous prison terms in December and January. However, immediately upon their release, [they](#) were charged in the so-called "[Sabotage Case](#)" and released on bail. The charges carry prison sentences ranging from two to fifteen years. Within these proceedings, the opposition politicians are accused of acting against the interests of the state by providing international organisations with information concerning alleged human rights violations.

Former Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia, now leader of the opposition party *For Georgia*, has also been charged and ordered into pre-trial detention [in absentia](#). Two criminal charges have been brought against him, carrying a combined maximum sentence of 13 years' imprisonment.

At the same time, Georgian Dream has announced its intention to seek a ruling from the Constitutional Court banning several opposition parties. The proposed constitutional application initially targets the United National Movement, Coalition for Change, and Strong Georgia/Lelo, with plans to extend the request to include the [Federalists party](#).

The health condition of [Elene Khoshtaria](#) has significantly [deteriorated](#) during her imprisonment. She now requires a walking stick to move. Despite her condition, she was denied access to adequate medical care for an extended period. Only after sustained public pressure was she transferred to a medical [clinic for treatment](#).

Imprisoned poet [Zviad Ratiani](#) continues to serve his sentence under a strict prison regime. The Special Penitentiary Service has justified these conditions on security grounds. His lawyer has dismissed this explanation as unfounded, arguing that the regime severely restricts his ability to receive family visits and communicate by telephone. According to [PEN Georgia](#), by subjecting Ratiani - a prisoner of conscience and one of Georgia's most distinguished contemporary poets - to such restrictive conditions, the authorities are treating him with particular severity.

- **Non-Compliance with an Interim Measure Issued by the European Court of Human Rights**

Two days before the visit of the President of Azerbaijan to Tbilisi, [Afgan Sadygov](#), an Azerbaijani journalist and outspoken critic of the Aliyev government, was detained and transferred to Azerbaijan. The court hearing that resulted in his expulsion from Georgia was held at 4:00 a.m.

Upon his return to Azerbaijan, Sadygov was re-arrested on criminal charges. Although the Azerbaijani authorities had sought his extradition for an extended period, the transfer had been suspended pursuant to an interim measure indicated by the European Court of Human Rights.

Accordingly, Sadygov's transfer to Azerbaijan constitutes not only a violation of the interim measure issued by the European Court of Human Rights, but also an example of transnational repression targeting a journalist and civil society activist.

- **Individuals Detained in Connection with the 4 October 2025 Protests**

Proceedings before the courts of first instance concerning [individuals arrested](#) in connection with the 4 October 2025 protests have now been largely concluded.

The defendants were charged with the attempted seizure and blockade of strategically and specially protected facilities, allegedly committed as part of a group, as well as participation in group violence. Defendants in the so-called "4 October Case" were tried in several separate groups.

Some detainees were released after entering into [plea agreements](#) and admitting guilt. Of the [61 defendants](#), 22 concluded plea agreements with the prosecution. An additional seven individuals, including a [72-year-old paediatrician](#), who refused to plead guilty, were each sentenced to five years' imprisonment.

In a number of cases, the prosecution failed to present sufficient evidence demonstrating that the defendants had engaged in acts of violence. In several instances, the video recordings included in the case files did not allow for the clear identification of the accused.

Several [politicians](#) prosecuted in connection with the 4 October Case, including internationally renowned opera singer Paata Burchuladze, were sentenced to prison terms ranging from five to seven years.

Separately, [Levan Khabeishvili](#), one of the leaders of the United National Movement, who had been arrested prior to the 4 October protests, was sentenced to two years and six months' imprisonment on charges of sabotage and publicly calling for the overthrow of the government.

- **Restrictions on Freedom of Expression on Social Media**

In the stated aim of "systematically monitoring and responding to hate speech, offensive campaigns and aggressive communication in the public sphere, the Georgian Dream government has established a dedicated unit within the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In practice, however, the unit has functioned as a [mechanism of censorship](#) and has already generated numerous [controversial cases](#). It has become widely known among the public and the media as the "[Scroll-and-Screenshot Department](#)."

The unit's monitoring extends beyond traditional forms of hate speech to include ordinary [insults, offensive language](#), and even [profanity](#). To date, it has referred [150 cases](#) involving 170 alleged violations to the courts. In several instances, individuals were [fined](#) GEL 2,000 and GEL 4,000 for Facebook comments following court hearings lasting only [eight or nine minutes](#). The relevant legal provision also allows for the imposition of administrative detention.

In an apparent effort to create the appearance of political neutrality - and thereby legitimise future enforcement against criticism directed at Georgian Dream officials - authorities have also fined individuals for Facebook comments about [opposition politicians](#), despite the fact that the politicians concerned were unaware of the comments and had neither filed complaints nor requested any [official action](#).

- **Police Violence**

Video footage continues to emerge showing police officers subjecting detainees to cruel and inhuman treatment, reinforcing concerns that excessive use of force and ill-treatment remain systemic practices within law enforcement.

On 27 May 2026, the regional media outlet Kartlis Ambebi [released footage](#) recorded in the city of Gori, showing approximately ten police officers collectively and severely assaulting two individuals, including one who had already fallen to the ground. Following widespread public condemnation, the Prosecutor's Office arrested [six officers](#) on charges of exceeding official authority through the use of violence.

On 12 June 2026, TV Pirveli published video footage recorded inside a police station in Kobuleti in 2022, showing police officers [beating detainees](#) - including a minor - and subjecting them to verbal abuse in an apparent attempt to extract confessions. The footage had reportedly been recorded by the officers themselves and circulated within a group chat.

After the footage became public, the Ministry of Internal Affairs [stated](#) that three police officers had already been arrested on 23 February 2026 in connection with the incident and accused the media of attempting to discredit the Ministry. However, it failed to address serious concerns regarding the delayed investigation, the lack of public disclosure, and the failure to identify and prosecute any additional perpetrators.

According to the [Public Defender](#) of Georgia's 2025 Parliamentary Report, Public Defender's representatives visited 573 individuals detained during protests. Of these, 302 alleged that they had been subjected to ill-treatment, while 194 displayed visible physical injuries. Among those visited were 49 women and two minors.

Although more than 100 individuals have been officially recognised as victims of unlawful violence by law enforcement officers, criminal proceedings have been initiated against only four members of the special police forces.

Approximately one and a half years after the violent dispersal of protests in 2024 and the infliction of serious injuries on demonstrators, the Prosecutor's Office, in May 2026, arrested three former and one serving [special forces officers](#), as well as one serving officer of the Ministry of Internal Affairs' Protection Police Department, in connection with the severe assaults on protester [Zviad Maisashvili](#), opposition politician [Levan Khabeishvili](#), and journalist [Guram Rogava](#).

The identities of the accused have not been disclosed, and the proceedings are being conducted in closed court hearings. Journalist Guram Rogava, one of the victims, has publicly stated that he is not convinced that the individual arrested is the officer who assaulted him.

- **Independent Media**

Independent media outlets continue to operate under increasingly restrictive legislative and financial conditions. During the first quarter of 2026, more than three-quarters of all television advertising revenue was concentrated in pro-government [broadcasters](#).

All major independent broadcasters are experiencing severe financial difficulties. Two of them were forced to [temporarily suspend](#) broadcasting to part of their audience due to outstanding debts. In addition, [17 regional broadcasters](#) were unable to resume operations in 2025 as a result of financial hardship.

The Georgian National [Communications Commission](#) continues its practice of imposing sanctions on independent media outlets.

Television channel Formula was fined for allegedly violating the principles of "impartiality and balance." According to the broadcaster, the [Commission found](#) that the use of expressions such as "*Georgian Dream's State Security Service*," "*Ivanishvili's government*," and "*pro-government Rustavi 2*" in news programmes constituted breaches of broadcasting legislation.

[Criminal proceedings](#) have also been initiated against journalists from Formula, following a complaint lodged by an individual affiliated with Georgian Dream.

At the Adjara Public Broadcaster, [14 employees were dismissed](#) as part of a purported reorganisation. Several of those dismissed maintain that the restructuring was used to suppress critical and dissenting editorial voices within the broadcaster.

Parliament, controlled by Georgian Dream, appointed an individual affiliated with the ruling party to the Board of Trustees of the Georgian [Public Broadcaster](#) under the parliamentary quota formally allocated to the opposition. In addition, the former Head of the Legal Department of the pro-government television channel Imedi TV was appointed as a member of the Georgian National Communications [Commission](#).

As a consequence of these developments, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) downgraded Georgia in the [World Press Freedom Index](#) from 114th to 135th place.

- **Anti-Western Propaganda and Narratives**

Georgian Dream and its affiliated actors have continued to pursue a systematic campaign of anti-Western - particularly anti-European - propaganda. This campaign has repeatedly sought to discredit European institutions through [inflammatory rhetoric](#) and has accused Georgia's international partners and [foreign ambassadors](#) of attempting to destabilise the country.

Despite this sustained campaign, the [2026 annual public opinion survey](#) indicates that public support for Georgia's European integration remains strong. According to the survey, 71% of respondents support Georgia's accession to the European Union, 67% express trust in the EU, and 40% report a favourable overall perception of the Union.