

Human Rights Situation in Georgia

12th Periodic Review

This briefing was prepared by Georgia's European Orbit and is based on publicly available sources.

July - August, 2026

- **Ongoing Public Protests**

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

In recent months, large crowds have gathered for weekly Saturday evening marches to protest growing authoritarianism and democratic backsliding.

On 5 July, demonstrators on Rustaveli Avenue issued an [open letter to the European Union](#) and its Member States, pledging to continue their protests until all political prisoners are released, Georgia's European course is restored, and free and fair elections are held.

At present, 42 individuals detained in connection with the pro-European protests held between 2024 and 4 October 2025 remain in custody. A further 40 people remain detained in connection with the events of 4 October 2025.

- **Repression Against Citizens Involved in the Protests**

Repression against protesters continues through unlawful and arbitrary detention, as well as physical violence. Such measures target not only participation in street protests but also posts and comments published on social media.

- Fines and Detention for Facebook Posts and Comments

Administrative penalties imposed for “insulting” public officials on social media have become comparable in severity to criminal sanctions. For example, [Vakho Sanaia, a journalist with Formula TV, was sentenced to 14 days of administrative detention](#) for allegedly insulting Parliament Speaker Shalva Papuashvili and MP Vladimer Bozhadze on social media. Giorgi Akhobadze, an activist and prominent participant in the protests, was likewise [sentenced to 25 days in detention](#) for allegedly insulting public officials in a Facebook post.

- Detention Over a Slogan on a T-Shirt

A 69-year-old protester was [sentenced to 15 days in detention over a slogan printed on his T-shirt](#). Police deemed the slogan “insulting” and also accused him of insulting police officers - an allegation that was reportedly not supported by police body-camera footage.

- Coordinated Smear Campaign, Ambush and Physical Assault

Following a coordinated, days-long smear campaign by pro-government media outlets, several individuals ambushed and [physically assaulted](#) comedian and prominent protest participant Onise Okriashvili late on 22 July. He required hospitalisation and medical examinations. This was not the first such attack against actors and [comedians](#) who have publicly supported the protests, with [similar incidents previously reported](#).

The assault was preceded by a [smear and dehumanisation campaign](#) in pro-government media. The campaign involved the deliberate circulation of a short, out-of-context video clip that purported to show Okriashvili insulting a prominent Georgian writer.

Representatives of Georgian Dream effectively [expressed support for the violence](#). Concerns that the attack may have been organised were further reinforced by the fact that the accused was released on bail of GEL 5,000. Members of the [Georgian Dream youth organisation](#) and other party supporters gathered outside the courthouse to express support for him.

- Attempt to Form So-Called “Punitive Squads”

On 27 July, MMA fighter and Georgian Dream supporter Giorgi Kartvelishvili [announced the formation of a group](#) to defend “national values” and fight “foreign-funded pseudo-liberal groups.” At a press conference, Kartvelishvili stated that, if necessary, he would not hesitate to risk imprisonment - implying a willingness to engage in potentially unlawful conduct.

Georgian Dream expressed support for the initiative. [Archil Gorduladze, a party representative and Chair of Parliament’s Legal Affairs Committee, stated](#): “It is positive when people wish to defend and speak out against deliberate attacks on the country’s culture, faith, people’s rights and history.” The initiative’s apparent links to the ruling party were further underscored when, following the strong public backlash, [pro-government media publicly defended Kartvelishvili](#).

The initiative was immediately perceived by the public as an attempt to establish punitive squads and an informal “morality police.” The issue prompted widespread ridicule of the authorities, ultimately leading the group to withdraw from public view.

- **Police Violence**

On 17 July, an [interview](#) was published with a friend of [Alan kakitashvili](#), who witnessed the events surrounding his detention and alleged ill-treatment at a police station in July 2025. The witness gave a detailed account of the physical violence allegedly inflicted on both men inside the police station. Kakiitashvili was taken from the station by ambulance and died two days later.

Immediately after the incident, [civil society organisations stated](#) that Kakitashvili had been subjected to torture. They called for the immediate identification and arrest of the police officers and public officials involved in his questioning, their prosecution on charges of torture, and a transparent, thorough and effective investigation into his death.

The investigation into Alan Kakitashvili's case remains ongoing, and no police officer has been held accountable to date.

- **Prison Conditions for political prisoners**

- Overcrowding and Restricted Access to Medical Care

In a [letter from prison](#), prisoner of conscience Zviad Tsetskhladze described prison conditions as amounting to “systemic torture and inhuman or degrading treatment”. He reported:

- severe overcrowding that makes normal movement within cells impossible, as well as shortages of essential items, including bedding;
- the placement of seriously ill individuals in ordinary cells, leaving cellmates responsible for their care despite their need for urgent medical assistance and inability to move or use the toilet independently - conditions that continually undermine their dignity;
- denial or prolonged restriction of access to medical care and doctors, in some cases for more than two weeks;
- quarantine areas infested with cockroaches and rats and permeated by sewage odours;
- the placement of smokers and non-smokers in the same cells, causing serious discomfort and health concerns for non-smokers;
- restrictions on participation in religious observances, including attendance at services in the prison church;
- threats against prisoners who raise complaints.

- Transfer to a Closed-Type Facility as a Form of Punishment

[Giorgi Okmelashvili](#), who was arrested during protests against the “Russian Law,” was transferred from a semi-open to a closed-type penitentiary facility after the authorities [raised his risk classification](#). No reasons were provided for the decision.

- Barriers to Education

Some prisoners of conscience are attempting to continue their studies from prison but face significant obstacles. According to student Zviad Tsetskhladze, the [prison administration allowed him to receive video lectures on a memory card](#), but Tbilisi State University, where he is enrolled, declined to provide the recordings.

- Restrictions on Books

Prisons and detention facilities reportedly follow a widespread practice of [screening and censoring books](#) sent to detainees based on their perceived political nature or content. The criteria and standards used to determine whether a book is “political” remain unclear.

Most recently, prison authorities refused to admit [Lasha Bugadze’s novel *The Observer*](#). The Special Penitentiary Service stated that the “title created ambiguity regarding the novel’s content and did not allow for an unequivocal interpretation.” It therefore considered the book unsuitable for admission to a penitentiary facility. A prominent civil society organisation [described this justification as censorship and a violation of European Court of Human Rights case law](#).

- **Pardoning of Protest-Related Detainees**

On 28 August, in connection with the Christian Feast of the Dormition, Georgian Dream President Mikheil Kavelashvili pardoned 226 individuals. They included [nine people detained during the 2024 - 2025 protest movement](#) who had submitted requests for clemency.

At present, 42 individuals detained in connection with the pro-European protests held between 2024 and 4 October 2025 remain in custody. A further 40 people remain detained in connection with the events of 4 October 2025.

[Pro-government media](#) have used the pardons to discredit the former prisoners and the broader protest movement. Their coverage portrays the decision as a humanitarian act benefiting individuals who admitted to “crimes committed against the state,” expressed remorse, and petitioned Kavelashvili for clemency.

- **Politically Motivated Prosecution of Political Figures**

- Case Against Opposition Politicians

Court proceedings are ongoing in the so-called “sabotage case” against eight opposition leaders: Elene Khoshtaria, Nika Gvaramia, Mikheil Saakashvili, Zurab Girchi Japaridze, Giorgi Vashadze, Nika Melia, Mamuka Khazaradze and Badri Japaridze. The proceedings advanced rapidly during the summer but were suspended in August, with hearings adjourned until September.

In the [so-called sabotage case](#), which carries potential prison sentences ranging from two to 15 years, the eight politicians are accused of acting against the state by providing international organisations with information about human rights violations.

The [hearings are being held behind closed doors](#). The court [rejected requests](#) from the EU Delegation and the embassies of Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Poland to allow their representatives to attend.

The defendants have described the case as entirely absurd, arguing that the [charges are unfounded and unsupported by evidence](#). Notably, the prosecutor pursuing allegations that opposition politicians lobbied Western governments to impose sanctions on certain individuals [is himself subject to sanctions](#).

In his testimony, Levan Nikoleishvili - who initiated the proceedings and is described as a Georgian Dream-aligned “expert” - named [European and US diplomats](#) as participants in the alleged offence. He claimed that Kaja Kallas, Marta Kos, Ursula von der Leyen and Kelly Degnan were “supporters and associates of an agent network.”

- Imprisonment of a Former Georgian Dream Prime Minister

Irakli Gharibashvili, who served twice as prime minister and is currently serving a five-year prison sentence for money laundering, has been charged with an additional corruption offence.

In response, Gharibashvili broke his silence from prison and published several [letters](#) accusing Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze and former State Security Service chief Mamuka Mdinardze of pressuring him and falsely implicating him in a crime. He also alleged an [attempt to destroy his family](#) and held Bidzina Ivanishvili responsible for his family’s safety.

Mdinardze, whom Gharibashvili identified as the person who conveyed the alleged threats, subsequently [resigned](#) and announced his complete withdrawal from politics.

- **Harassment of Critical Media**

The Communications Commission [fined Formula TV GEL 5,000](#) for using terms such as “the Georgian Dream government,” “the Georgian Dream president,” “repressive laws” and “repression by the Georgian Dream regime.” This was the third content-related sanction imposed on the broadcaster within four months.

The Commission also [fined TV Pirveli GEL 5,000](#), marking the second such penalty imposed on the channel under controversial legislative amendments adopted in 2025. The amendments granted the regulator broader powers to [oversee media content](#). The Commission identified phrases including “launched a major hunt,” “scrolling and screenshot agency,” “Chechen-style squad,” “hunting down activists” and “the police lost their nerve” as violations.