

Information on the Ongoing Repression Against Pro-European Protesters and the Initiated Anti-Democratic Legislation in Georgia

Part VI

(February 10 – March 14, 2025)

This document was prepared by *Georgia's European Orbit* and the *Human Rights Center of the University of Georgia* using publicly available sources, including media reports, victim testimonies, and statements from NGOs and state agencies. It is intended for informational purposes and presents the findings of human rights lawyers based on these sources.

Please see the updated database on victims of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment, and violence against protesters here: [Link 1](#)

Please see the updated database of protest participants detained on criminal charges here: [Link 2](#)

Please see the updated database of crimes committed against journalists here: [Link 3](#)

1. Ongoing Protests

For over 105 days, daily protests have been taking place in Tbilisi and various cities across Georgia. These protests erupted in response to the Georgian Dream party's falsification of parliamentary elections and its subsequent decision to halt Georgia's European integration process. The protesters' key demands include: the scheduling of new elections, the release of political prisoners, and the restoration of Georgia's European course.

Daily demonstrations are also held outside the [Georgian Public Broadcaster](#), calling for changes in its editorial policy and management. Although some employees of the Public Broadcaster have joined these demands, the station's daytime broadcasts [remain closed](#) to public and political discussions.

On February 25, Soviet Occupation Day, a large-scale [protest march](#) and a nationwide strike took place.

2. Forms of Repressions Against Protesters

For more than three months, authorities have been employing various repressive measures to suppress pro-European protests and public dissent.

- **Financial Repressions Against Protest Participants**

One of the most pressing issues is the practice of imposing disproportionately harsh financial sanctions on peaceful protesters. The fine for merely standing at a protest is 5,000 GEL (approximately \$1,800). Some protesters have been fined more than 10 times. The severity of these fines is equivalent to criminal liability as the average salary in Georgia is around \$500, and social assistance can be as low as \$130.

The fines are imposed in violation of [data protection regulations](#), without proper legal

assessment of the proportionality of restrictions on the freedom of assembly and expression.

- **Financial Penalties Against Journalists**

Journalists are also [being fined](#) for “artificially blocking roads” while covering protests, despite carrying visible press identification and performing their professional duties.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) has filed a case [against a reporter](#) who was violently arrested and brutally beaten by masked special forces officers while covering the protests. Like other similar cases, the perpetrators of this attack have not been identified or held accountable.

- **Ongoing Repressions Against Public Servants**

Repressions publicly announced by Georgian Dream leaders against public servants continue. Those who signed a petition in December demanding the restoration of Georgia’s European integration or spoke out against police violence have been subjected to political persecution.

Politically motivated dismissals have affected hundreds of public servants employed in both central government and local self-government institutions, including in the [Government Administration](#), the [Ministry of Defense](#), the [Ministry of Internal Affairs](#), [Tbilisi State University](#), [Tbilisi City Hall](#), the [Georgian Public Broadcaster](#), [Batumi State Theatre](#) and in Various municipal agencies.

These politically motivated unlawful dismissals are often disguised as structural reorganizations.

For the past three months, the Public Registry has unlawfully and without justification refused to register a [trade union for public servants](#), preventing them from effectively protecting their labor rights.

- **Repressions Against Students**

On March 9, following 83 consecutive days of protest at the Theatre University, the university [administration demanded](#) that students vacate the occupied space within the university building under the pretext of conducting disinfection. When students refused to comply, police fined each of them with 5,000 GEL (approximately \$1,800 per student). Additionally, the university’s Ethics Commission [revoked the student status](#) of those participating in the protests. However, following continued [student protests](#), the university’s rector was ultimately forced to reverse this decision.

3. Physical Attacks on Activists and Politicians, Including Women, Continue

[Physical attacks](#) on protest activists in [public spaces](#) continue as part of a broader campaign of intimidation. [Masked and unidentifiable police officers](#) have been abducting citizens from the streets in an apparent attempt to spread fear and suppress dissent.

Attacks on [female activists](#) persist. Despite clear evidence of violence, the perpetrators have not been detained by the court and were instead [released](#) on a mere 3,000 GEL (\$1,000) bail.

Plain-clothes and armed police officers stopped journalist Gela Mtvlishvili's car on the highway without any reason, [beat and insulted him](#).

Particular targets of these attacks include [opposition leaders](#) and Georgia's [legitimate president](#), Salome Zourabichvili, who have been subjected to organized assaults. Police officers have stood by without intervening in these incidents.

4. Politically Motivated Justice and Political Prisoners

The criminal prosecution of protest participants continues. Since the 2024 parliamentary elections, 56 protesters have faced criminal charges, with **42 currently in pretrial detention**. Among them are over 10 students and one female journalist. For details on the detainees and the charges brought against them, see [\[here\]](#).

A review of these cases has revealed [serious procedural violations](#) in their arrests and [indictments](#):

- Personal and home searches were conducted in violation of legal procedures and without proper guarantees for the right to defense.
- The prosecution has relied on inadmissible and illegally obtained evidence.
- The charges fail to establish any direct evidence linking the detainees to alleged crimes or harm caused to others.

Regarding the spring 2024 arrests, all **10 individuals detained** during protests against the so-called "Russian Law" were found guilty in court. Seven of them received prison sentences. The Prosecutor's Office and the courts deliberately delayed rulings on these cases until President Salome Zourabichvili's term ended, thereby preventing her from issuing pardons to the convicted protesters.

5. Draconian Legislative Initiatives as a Repression Mechanism

In response to the ongoing protests, the Georgian Dream government continues to escalate its repressive measures, introducing draconian legal amendments aimed at silencing dissent, intimidating activists, and effectively banning independent media.

Key legislative changes include:

- **Restrictive Initiatives on Freedom of Assembly and Expression:**
 - Verbal insults or any other "insulting" conduct toward an official or public servant are now punishable by up to 45 days in detention;
 - Penalties for protest-related administrative offenses have been increased by 20 to 30 times;
 - The maximum period of administrative detention has been extended from 15 days to 60 days;
 - Even spontaneous or unplanned rallies now require prior notice;
 - Public criticism and demonstrations in buildings or enclosed spaces are now prohibited without the prior consent of the property owner;
 - The use of temporary structures such as stages, tents, or other equipment essential for prolonged demonstrations has been restricted.

On March 6, the OSCE/ODIHR issued a highly [critical urgent opinion](#), recommending that these changes be "removed or reconsidered entirely" due to their incompatibility with Article

- **Initiatives violating procedural rights and guarantees:**

- Police have been granted the authority to “preventively” detain individuals, even if they have not committed any offense;
- In protest-related administrative offenses, the burden of proof has shifted from law enforcement to the individual citizen;
- Personal searches are no longer required to be conducted in the presence of a witness, increasing the risk of abuse, planted evidence, and procedural violations.

- **Legislative Initiatives Targeting Free Media and Civil Society Organizations:**

- All legislative provisions ensuring CSO participation in policy-making have been abolished;
- A legislative proposal seeks to prohibit direct or indirect foreign funding for media outlets while also establishing a state-controlled oversight body tasked with monitoring media "objectivity." This measure would effectively wipe out independent online media;
- Georgian Dream has initiated [a legislative act identical](#) to the U.S. Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) but without incorporating U.S. enforcement practices or legal safeguards;
- Amendments to the Criminal Code introduce fines or imprisonment of up to 5 years for violations of the “Foreign Agents Registration Act”;
- A State Grant Management Agency has been established, which will only provide funding to non-governmental organizations that comply with the “Foreign Agents” Law and register as "representatives of foreign interests."

- **Initiatives Undermining the Independence of the Public Service**

- The neutrality and professionalism-based employment system in the public sector has been replaced with a political appointment system, allowing the ruling party to consolidate control over public institutions;
- Public servants, including judges, can now engage in scientific, educational, or creative activities only with the approval of their superiors, effectively limiting their academic freedom and professional independence.

- **Other Populist and Anti-Democratic Initiatives**

- The government is reviving the term “state treason”;
- The term "gender" has been completely removed from Georgian legislation.
- The criminal liability for drug-related offenses is being significantly toughened without strengthening preventive or rehabilitation programs. Given the documented practice of planting drugs on civil activists and political opponents, this change raises serious concerns about its potential misuse for politically motivated prosecutions.