

Eroding Human Rights Protections in Georgia: A Review of Legislative, Policy and Institutional Changes

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Introduction

Since 2024, Georgia's legal and institutional framework has been changing at an unusually rapid pace. A series of legislative and institutional measures targeting the independent civil society operational space and media included the adoption of the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence (2024), the Foreign Agents Registration Act (2025), amendments to the Law on Grants and rules governing assemblies, changes to parliamentary procedures, and the abolition of specialised oversight bodies. In March 2026, restrictions on foreign funding were further strengthened, including through the introduction of criminal penalties for civil society activities.

These vague legislative and institutional changes have, essentially, limited in practice the space for civil society organisations (CSOs), independent media, activists and citizens to access funding, advocate for policy change, scrutinize public institutions, organize or participate in protests, carry out political and civic activity, and work with international partners. Their combined impact is crucial to understanding the general deterioration of human rights and civic space in Georgia.

Key legislative timeline

DATE	DEVELOPMENT
May 2024	Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence adopted.
Dec 2024–Feb 2025	Assembly-related restrictions and sanctions intensified; fines and detention increased.
April 2025	FARA adopted; Law on Grants amended to require prior government approval for foreign grants; Broadcasting Law tightened; mandatory CSO participation in public decision-making removed.
May–June 2025	Political-party ban rules widened; parliamentary transparency reduced; Special Investigation Service abolished; defamation, court-access and media rules tightened.
October 2025	Further escalation of assembly-related sanctions and criminal liability; political-party restrictions expanded.
Dec 2025	Assembly restrictions extended to pedestrian areas and sidewalks; advance notification and compliance with police relocation instructions became enforceable by detention, with repeat violations potentially criminalised.
November 2025–March 2026	Personal Data Protection Service abolished and functions transferred to the State Audit Office.
4 March 2026	New Grants package adopted, broadening the definition of grants and introducing criminal penalties, including imprisonment of up to six years.
April and June 2026	Further clarification of the Grants Law adopted; enforcement of protest fines and funding restrictions continued.

Legislative and Policy Changes - Affected Areas

I. Foreign funding, association and the operating space for CSOs

Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence¹

The 2024 law created the first broad foreign-funding registration regime in the current cycle of restrictions. It applies to non-entrepreneurial (non-commercial) legal persons receiving more than 20% of their total annual income from a “foreign power”, excluding entities established by administrative bodies, the National Sports Federation of Georgia and blood establishments covered by the relevant legislation. For broadcasters and legal persons operating specified print and digital media, the threshold is more than 20% of their annual non-commercial income.²

WHAT CHANGED

- CSOs meeting the statutory foreign-funding threshold must register as organisations “pursuing the interests of a foreign power.”
- The regime applies where more than 20% of relevant annual revenue derives from a “foreign power.”
- Both direct and indirect foreign funding count toward the threshold, including funds whose original source cannot be identified.
- Registered organisations must submit detailed annual reports on revenue, other material benefits and expenditure, including sources, amounts and purposes.
- Registration information and annual financial declarations must be made publicly available.
- The competent authority may obtain personal data, special-category personal data and confidential information, except state secrets.
- Persons, public bodies, organisations and institutions must provide requested information available to them.
- The competent authority may initiate compliance monitoring on its own motion or upon written application, with each entity subject to monitoring once every six months.
- The competent authority may register an organisation found through monitoring to meet the statutory criteria, even absent voluntary registration.

¹ Law of Georgia on Transparency of Foreign Influence, No. 4194-XIV06-X03, adopted 28 May 2024, *Legislative Herald of Georgia*, published 3 June 2024, registration code 040030040.05.001.102262, official text in English, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/6171895?publication=1>

² Law of Georgia on Transparency of Foreign Influence, No. 4194-XIV06-X03, 28 May 2024, as amended, Articles 2(1)(a)–(d), 3 and 4(1), *Legislative Herald of Georgia (Matsne)*, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/6171895?publication=1>

- GEL 5,000–25,000 (approximately EUR 1,719–8,596) for failures to register,³ report, correct deficiencies or provide requested information.
- Administrative liability may be imposed within six years of the offence.
- Appealing a legal act under the law does not suspend its effect.
- Registration, review, monitoring, information-gathering and enforcement functions moved from the Ministry of Justice/National Agency of Public Registry to the State Audit Office, with the Auditor General now setting procedures and forms (effective 15 May 2026).

IMPACT ON CSO SPACE⁴

- CSOs meeting the revenue-based threshold must register as “pursuing the interests of a foreign power,” regardless of whether any foreign donor actually directs or controls their activities, potentially damaging their public credibility.
- The 20% threshold captures indirect and anonymous foreign funding, making it difficult for CSOs to trace the ultimate source of donations from local intermediaries or public fundraising.
- Qualifying CSOs face detailed registration and annual financial-declaration requirements covering revenue, benefits and expenditures, all of which become publicly available once published by the State Audit Office.
- The State Audit Office may obtain personal, special-category and confidential data (except state secrets) from CSOs and third parties alike, raising serious confidentiality risks for organisations handling sensitive information about employees, donors, beneficiaries or clients.
- The Office can investigate any entity, registered or not, on its own initiative or via complaint, no more than once in six months, and may compel registration of non-compliant organisations without excusing prior violations.
- Fines range from GEL 5,000 to 25,000 (approximately EUR 1,719–8,596) for various violations and don't suspend obligations even if paid; appeals don't halt enforcement. Administrative liability may be imposed within six years of the offence.

³ Based on the exchange rate of EUR 1 = GEL 2.9084 as of 8 October 2026.

⁴ In May 2024, the ECNL/ICNL analysed the institutional framework established by the Law as adopted in 2024. The Law originally assigned registration, examination, monitoring and enforcement functions to the National Agency of Public Registry and Ministry of Justice-authorized persons, which is why 2024 assessment attributes these powers to the Ministry and Agency. Law No. 1490 (14 April 2026, effective 15 May 2026) transferred these functions to the State Audit Office and shifted rule-making authority from the Minister of Justice to the Auditor General. See: European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL), “Georgia: Overview of the Foreign Influence Law,” 24 May 2024, available at <https://ecnl.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/ECNL%20ICNL%20Georgia%20Law%20Transparency%20Foreign%20Influence%2005.23.2024.pdf>

- Since 15 May 2026, the State Audit Office (with the Auditor General setting procedures) controls registration, examination, monitoring and enforcement, centralizing oversight in a single institution.

Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA)⁵

Georgia adopted a separate FARA regime in April 2025, which entered into force on 1 June 2025. Unlike the 2024 law, it can apply to both organisations and individuals and uses broad concepts of acting under the direction or in the interests of a foreign principal.

WHAT CHANGED

- Individuals and organisations acting under a foreign principal's order, direction or control, or substantially supervised, managed, financed or subsidised by one, must register as agents of a foreign principal when engaging in specified activities (political activity, public relations, fundraising, representation before state bodies).
- Registration requires extensive disclosure covering organisational structure, leadership, staff and roles, foreign principals, agreements, activities, and all financial transactions.
- Registered agents must update information every six months, report specified changes within 10 days and may face additional or more frequent reporting demands.
- All registration statements and updates are published in an accessible electronic database.
- Materials distributed on a foreign principal's behalf must be submitted and labelled to show their connection to a registered agent.
- Agents must retain financial and activity records, available to the enforcement authority on request.
- Managers and directors bear personal responsibility for compliance; dissolving the organisation doesn't extinguish this liability.
- Wilful violations or materially false statements/omissions carry fines up to GEL 10,000 (approximately EUR 3,438) or up to five years' imprisonment; disclosure/labelling violations carry fines up to GEL 5,000 (approximately EUR 1,719) and/or up to six months' imprisonment.
- Failure to file required statements is treated as ongoing for as long as it persists.
- The enforcement authority can seek court orders compelling compliance or halting prohibited activity.

⁵ Law of Georgia, *Foreign Agents Registration Act*, No. 399-II06-XI03, adopted 1 April 2025, published 2 April 2025, registration code 040030040.05.001.102541, *Legislative Herald of Georgia (Matsne)*, as amended, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/6461578?publication=1>

	• The State Audit Office now administers registration and disclosure, with the Auditor General assuming regulatory/enforcement powers previously held by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (from 2 March 2026).
IMPACT ON CSO SPACE	• Vague definitions of “agent of a foreign principal” and “political activities” sweep in ordinary CSO work—advocacy, communications, research, fundraising, engagement with authorities—wherever a foreign-principal relationship is deemed to exist. • The Act binds both organisations and individuals, exposing managers, directors and staff, not just legal entities, to obligations and liability. • Extensive disclosure of relationships, staff, agreements, activities and finances significantly raises reporting obligations. • Published registration data lays bare organisational, financial and leadership details to public scrutiny. • Mandatory “agent of a foreign principal” labelling on materials may brand CSOs as serving foreign rather than independent interests. • Recordkeeping and disclosure duties persist beyond periodic filings, requiring ongoing availability of records to authorities. • Criminal liability—up to five years’ imprisonment for wilful violations or false statements, up to six months for labelling/disclosure breaches, raises the stakes of non-compliance considerably. • Directors and managers remain personally responsible even after an organisation dissolves. • Cooperation with international donors and partners may be discouraged wherever such relationships fall within the Act’s broad definitions. • The Act operates alongside, not instead of, the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence, subjecting CSOs to two parallel frameworks with distinct criteria, registration/disclosure duties, monitoring mechanisms and sanctions.
IN PRACTICE	• By 2025–2026, authorities had issued compliance inquiries to civil society organisations, while many independent groups continued to reject the foreign-agent label as degrading and inaccurate.⁶

Law on Grants: 2025 restrictions and March 2026 expansion

The Law on Grants has become one of the most consequential tools affecting the financial viability of independent civil society. The April 2025 amendments introduced prior government approval for

⁶ ProtectDefenders.eu, “Georgia’s Crackdown on Civil Society Deepens as ‘Foreign Agents’ Law Comes into Force,” 28 July 2025, available at <https://protectdefenders.eu/georgias-crackdown-on-civil-society-deepens-as-foreign-agents-law-comes-into-force/>

foreign grants; later amendments expanded the concept to technical assistance and knowledge-sharing.

On 4 March 2026, a further legislative package sharply widened the definition of grants and introduced criminal penalties.

WHAT CHANGED

- Since April 2025, foreign donors generally need advance approval from the Government of Georgia, or its authorised body, before issuing a grant; receiving a grant without this consent is prohibited.
- Since June 2025, the concept of “grant” includes technology-sharing, specialised knowledge, skills and other forms of technical assistance.
- March 2026 broadened the grant definition and included foreign monetary or in-kind support that falls within the regime whenever it is used, or could be used, to influence Georgian authorities, institutions or any segment of society regarding domestic or foreign policy.
 - The expanded definition also covers support tied to a foreign government's or foreign political party's political or public interests, subject to limited exceptions.
 - The regime extends beyond conventional grants to technical assistance, expertise, services and free assistance of various kinds.
 - Transfers from a foreign entity to its own Georgian representative office or branch also count as grants, unless used for entrepreneurial activity.
- Donors must submit a written decision and draft agreement; the Government may demand additional documentation.
- Structuring funds to disguise their true nature as a grant can trigger criminal liability, regardless of the transaction's formal label.
- Since March 2026, unauthorised receipt or use of covered foreign funding can result in up to six years' imprisonment.
- The State Audit Office monitors unauthorised grant activity and refers indications of criminal conduct to investigative authorities.
 - The Office can request financial reports, interview individuals, seek judicial questioning, and demand information from public bodies, individuals, companies, payment providers and others.
 - These powers reach special-category and other personal data and non-state secrets; non-public information requires a court order.
 - Administrative proceedings can run up to three months, extendable by another three months by the Auditor General.
- Georgian branches of foreign legal entities face fines of twice the grant amount for unauthorised receipt.
- Certain educational, scientific and EU programmes, and grants to specified organisations, remain exempt.

IMPACT ON CSO SPACE

- Prior government approval gives the state direct control over CSOs' access to foreign funding.
- The expanded grant concept forces CSOs and foreign partners to assess a much wider range of relationships, including in-kind support and technical assistance, for compliance.
- Vague language about influencing “any segment of society” on policy matters could capture advocacy, public awareness campaigns, policy analysis and watchdog activities.
- Approval affects not just funding access but whether specific foreign-backed projects can proceed at all.
- Donors may delay, restructure or withdraw support to avoid legal risk, even before a formal government decision is made.
- Organisations with limited reserves or alternative funding are especially vulnerable to funding interruptions.
- Non-compliance is no longer merely administrative, it can expose individuals to criminal investigation and punishment.
- Attempts to informally structure support outside the grant framework carry added legal exposure.
- The State Audit Office's monitoring powers reach financial records, personal and special-category data, and third-party information.
- Authorities can obtain information from payment providers and other third parties, not just the CSO.
- Prior approval, the broadened grant definition, criminal liability and extensive monitoring together substantially raise the legal and administrative risk of foreign-funded civil society work.

IN PRACTICE

- A late-2025 Social Justice Center unpublished study based on interviews with 100 civil-society representatives (cited by Human Rights Watch) found 96% of 100 surveyed CSOs facing acute financial difficulty and 94% reducing activities, with some ceasing operations entirely.⁷
- Only 37 of 114 community organisations active in 2024 remained operational in 2025; GYLA suspended its free legal-aid programme after major staff and resource cuts.⁸
- Government figures show 222 grant applications submitted between April 2025 and June 2026: 177 approved, 10 rejected, 35 still pending, with no detailed reasons given for refusals.⁹
- A UK-funded election-monitoring project for four Georgian organisations was cancelled amid uncertainty over government approval ahead of the 2025 municipal elections.

⁷ Human Rights Watch, “Georgia: New Laws Devastate Independent Civic Groups”, 9 July 2026, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2026/07/09/georgia-new-laws-devastate-independent-civic-groups>

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

State Grant Management Agency

Georgian Dream members had long claimed that foreign-funded NGOs lacked genuine independence and sought to destabilize Georgia's political environment.¹⁰ Against this backdrop, in February 2025, the party announced the establishment of the State Grant Management Agency as a new mechanism for providing state funding to CSOs.¹¹ The Agency was formally established by Government Ordinance No. 119 of 15 April 2025.¹² Under the Ordinance, its purpose was to support CSOs registered and operating in Georgia through the provision of state grants, in accordance with priority areas and targeted programmes approved by the Government.¹³

In September 2026, though, approximately seventeen months after its establishment, Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze announced that it was being phased out and would close by the end of the year. The rationale offered for its announced closure marked a striking reversal from the premise underlying its creation: Kobakhidze now described NGOs themselves as an “artificial phenomenon” created for the purpose of foreign political intervention, arguing that the state should not “invent NGOs and fund such things.”¹⁴ Thus, a mechanism established to provide a state-funded alternative for supporting CSOs seems to be abandoned on the basis of a rationale that questioned the very legitimacy of NGOs as a form of civic organisation.

WHAT CHANGED

- A State Grant Management Agency - a public-law legal entity (LEPL) financed from the state budget. The Government exercises state control over it, the Prime Minister appoints and dismisses its head, and the Government Administration may provide its administrative support.
- The Agency was presented as an alternative to foreign funding, supporting CSOs registered and operating in Georgia in line with priority areas and targeted programmes approved by the Government.
- Grant decisions were assigned to a 19-member Grant Application Review Council chaired by the Agency's head. All other members represent government and executive bodies, and the Ordinance provides no seats for civil society or independent members.

¹⁰ iPress, “Irakli Kobakhidze: We Will Establish a Grant Program for Georgian Non-Governmental Organizations, Which Will Be Funded from the State Budget,” 9 September 2024, available at <https://ipress.ge/news/politika/irakli-kobakhidze-qartuli-arasamtavrobo-organizatsiebtvis-davafudznebt-sagranto-programas-romelits-sakhelmtsifo-biujetidan-dafinansdeba>

¹¹ Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, *Reply by Georgia to the Reporting Form on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Committee of the Parties Adopted on 6 December 2022*, IC-CP/Inf(2025)15, received 1 December 2025, published 12 December 2025, p. 28, available at <https://rm.coe.int/reply-by-georgia-to-the-reporting-form/488029c755>

¹² Civil.ge, “GD Government Creates State Grant Agency Amid Controversial Legal Changes”, 23 April 2025, available at <https://civil.ge/archives/677192>

¹³ Legislative Herald of Georgia (Matsne), Government of Georgia, Ordinance No. 119, “On the Establishment of the Legal Entity under Public Law – State Grant Management Agency and Approval of Its Statute,” 15 April 2025, published 16 April 2025, registration code 040030000.10.003.025010, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/6475416?publication=0>

¹⁴ Interpressnews, “Government to close Grant Management Agency”, 17 September 2026, available at <https://www.interpressnews.ge/en/article/149600-government-to-close-grant-management-agency/>

	• In January 2026, Ordinance No. 24 amended the Agency's statute to let it award state grants directly, without a public competition, to a category of recipient defined in the Law on Grants. It also removed the requirement that grant contracts be concluded with candidates selected through a public competition.
IMPACT ON CSO SPACE	• During the period reviewed, the Agency increased the state's role in deciding which CSO activities received funding, within priorities set by the Government. • Combined with restrictions on foreign funding, this risked making CSOs dependent on funding channels controlled by the authorities, raising concerns about their financial independence and autonomy. • The closure does not ease these concerns. Foreign funding remains restricted, and the state-funded alternative is being withdrawn on the grounds that NGOs themselves are illegitimate. This narrows CSOs' funding options further and reinforces the delegitimising narrative against them. • State funding cannot substitute for an enabling environment in which CSOs are free to seek diverse sources of funding and operate independently of government priorities.
IN PRACTICE	In its first nationwide grant competition, launched in July 2025, the Agency received 366 applications. After a multi-stage selection process, it awarded approximately GEL 1.66 million (approximately EUR 570,761) to only 17 organisations by November 2025,¹⁵ a success rate of under 5%. The September 2025 Institutional Development Grant Competition resulted in no grants being awarded. No detailed public reasoning was given for rejecting all applications.¹⁶ The Agency's record was therefore limited: one small round of awards and one competition with no awards before its closure was announced.

II. Peaceful assembly, protest-related sanctions and surveillance

Throughout 2025, Parliament repeatedly amended the Administrative Offences Code and rules governing assemblies imposing a chilling effect on the free speech and assembly.¹⁷ The changes transformed protest-related sanctions from comparatively modest fines into a system combining very

¹⁵ RFE/RL, "The Government's Favourites — Who Received State Grants and for What?", 18 November 2025, available at <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/33594784.html>

¹⁶ BM.ge, "Why did the Government-announced GEL 700,000 (approximately EUR 240,684) grant competition fail? Civil society organisations demand an explanation", 26 June 2026, available at <https://bm.ge/news/ratom-chavarda-mtavrobis-mier-gamotskhadebuli-gel700-000-iani-sagranto-konkursi-sazogadoebrivi-organizatsiebi-ganmartebas-itkhoven>

¹⁷ Venice Commission, CDL-AD(2025)001, Urgent Opinion on the amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences and the Law on Assemblies and Demonstrations, issued 3 March 2025 and endorsed at its 142nd plenary session, 14–15 March 2025, paras. 47, 49, 54, available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/tbilisi/-/amendments-to-code-of-administrative-offences-and-law-on-assemblies-and-demonstrations-need-to-be-reviewed-in-a-proper-law-making-process-says-venice-commission>

high financial penalties, lengthy administrative detention and, for repeated conduct, criminal exposure.¹⁸ In December 2025, a further package extended these controls to pedestrian areas and sidewalks; because of its distinct significance and subsequent enforcement, that package is addressed separately below.

WHAT CHANGED

- Parliament tightened the rules in two rounds, on 13 December 2024 and 6 February 2025, both through an accelerated procedure without meaningful stakeholder consultation or impact assessment.¹⁹
- The December 2024 amendments raised fines roughly tenfold for a broad range of assembly-related offences, from GEL 500 to GEL 5,000 (approximately EUR 172–1,719) for participants,²⁰ with organisers facing GEL 5,000–20,000 (approximately EUR 1,719–6,877).²¹ They also banned face coverings, laser devices and pyrotechnics at assemblies, and added “preventing repeat offences” as a ground for administrative arrest.²²
- The February 2025 amendments raised the maximum administrative detention from 15 to 60 days for certain assembly offences, and for disobeying police orders, minor disorderly conduct and vandalism. They also created a new offence of verbal insult of officials, with the same 60-day maximum.²³ They further added detailed bans on blocking roads, entrances and transport routes, and widened the definition of “organiser”.
- October 2025 amendments removed the fine alternative for several offences, making detention the prescribed sanction in specified cases. Masks, road-blocking and similar conduct carry up to 15 days, or 20 for organisers.²⁴
- Repeat violations connected with assemblies, and repeated disobedience of police, can trigger criminal liability, with prison terms of up to two years for participants and up to four years for the organisers (in cases when the alleged violation is resulting in grave consequences).²⁵

¹⁸ Legislative Herald of Georgia (Matsne), Code of Administrative Offences of Georgia, adopted by Resolution No. 161-XI of the Supreme Council of the Georgian SSR, 15 December 1984, entered into force 1 June 1985, as amended, Article 174¹, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/28216?publication=641#>!

¹⁹ Venice Commission, CDL-AD(2025)001, Urgent Opinion on the amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences and the Law on Assemblies and Demonstrations, issued 3 March 2025 and endorsed at its 142nd plenary session, 14–15 March 2025, paras. 23–26, 52, available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/tbilisi/-/amendments-to-code-of-administrative-offences-and-law-on-assemblies-and-demonstrations-need-to-be-reviewed-in-a-proper-law-making-process-says-venice-commission>

²⁰ Human Rights Watch, “Georgia: Repressive Laws Effectively Criminalize Peaceful Protests”, 4 December 2025, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/12/04/georgia-repressive-laws-effectively-criminalize-peaceful-protests>

²¹ Transparency International Georgia, “De Facto Abolition of Freedom of Assembly – A Law Turned into a Repressive Mechanism”, 4 November 2025, available at <https://transparency.ge/en/blog/de-facto-abolition-freedom-assembly-law-turned-repressive-mechanism>

²² *Ibid*, paras 11, 16

²³ *Ibid*, paras 12, 14, 47

²⁴ ICNL, Georgia: New Amendments Further Restrict Peaceful Assembly, October 2025, available at <https://www.icnl.org/post/analysis/georgia-new-amendments-further-restrict-peaceful-assembly>

²⁵ Legislative Herald of Georgia (Matsne), Criminal Code of Georgia, Law of Georgia No. 2287, adopted 22 July 1999, No. 41(48), 13 August 1999, registration code 080.000.000.05.001.000.648, as amended, Articles 347 (Violation of the Rules for Holding an Assembly or Demonstration) and 353³ (Failure to Comply with Lawful Orders of Law Enforcement or Other Authorised Official), available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/16426?publication=296>

- Appeals do not suspend enforcement, increasing the immediate financial and practical consequences.

IMPACT ON CSO SPACE

- The Venice Commission found that the new custodial penalties and fine increases appear excessive and are likely to have a chilling effect on assembly and expression. It noted that the GEL 5,000 (approximately EUR 1,719) fine is well over twice average monthly earnings of about GEL 2,057 (approximately EUR 707).
- Sanctions on organisers, combined with a broad definition of “organiser”, are likely to have a stronger chilling effect on the active part of civil society. This directly affects CSO-led mobilisation.
- Vaguely drafted bans give law enforcement excessive discretion, for example the mask ban, which could cover scarves or medical face coverings. Journalists, monitors and human rights defenders documenting protests are exposed to the same enforcement environment.
- The new arrest ground of preventing repeat offences allows detention based on the risk of a future offence. Its necessity had not been established.
- Repeated fines can accumulate without meaningful consolidation, producing potentially ruinous liabilities for individual activists.
- Asset freezes and enforcement measures can affect families and livelihoods, not only the immediate exercise of assembly rights.

IN PRACTICE

- By March 2025, civil society organisations reported approximately GEL 2 million (approximately EUR 687,668) in protest-related fines.²⁶
- Civic activist Gota Chanturia accumulated 73 fines totalling GEL 315,000 (approximately EUR 108,308) for alleged road blocking.²⁷
- In April 2026, enforcement measures included seizure of property and bank accounts. Journalist Maka Chikhladze reportedly learned of an October 2025 fine only when her accounts and assets were seized in April 2026.²⁸

²⁶ Business Media, “The Amount of Fines Imposed on Protest Participants Reaches GEL 2 MLN – GYLA”, 19 March 2025, available at <https://bm.ge/en/news/the-amount-of-fines-imposed-on-protest-participants-reaches-gel-2-mln-gyla>

²⁷ Amnesty International, “Georgia: Authorities built coordinated system to crush dissent and entrench power”, 15 June 2026, available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2026/06/georgia-authorities-built-coordinated-system-to-crush-dissent-and-entrench-power/>

²⁸ Media Freedom Rapid Response, “Georgia: An escalating media freedom crisis”, 6 May 2026, available at <https://www.mfrr.eu/georgia-an-escalating-media-freedom-crisis/>

Restrictions on protests in pedestrian areas and sidewalks (December 2025–2026)

In December 2025, Parliament extended the protest restrictions that had previously focused mainly on roadways to areas intended for pedestrian movement, including sidewalks.²⁹ The amendments were adopted under an expedited procedure and entered into force immediately. Their subsequent enforcement has turned ordinary presence on sidewalks during peaceful protests into a potential basis for detention and repeated-offence criminal liability.³⁰

WHAT CHANGED

- Organisers must notify the Ministry of Internal Affairs at least five days in advance when an assembly or demonstration is planned in an area intended for pedestrian movement.
- The Ministry may issue binding instructions to change the place, time or route of a gathering where it considers that the protest would obstruct pedestrian movement, traffic, public safety, the operation of institutions, or the rights of others.
- The law prohibits the artificial obstruction of pedestrian walkways unless the participants objectively makes use of that space unavoidable; similar restrictions apply to pedestrian areas with vehicles, structures or other objects.
- Failure to comply with notification requirements or police instructions can lead to administrative detention of up to 15 days, or up to 20 days for organisers. A repeated violation may trigger criminal liability carrying imprisonment of up to one year.
- The Ministry may require participants to clear pedestrian or transport routes; failure to comply after a warning can lead to the assembly being treated as unlawful and terminated.

IMPACT ON CSO SPACE

- The rules give police broad discretion to determine when ordinary protest activity on a sidewalk amounts to an unlawful obstruction, making the boundary between lawful presence and punishable conduct difficult to predict.
- The restrictions reduce access to highly visible public spaces, including areas around Parliament, and can weaken the effectiveness of small or symbolic protests that depend on proximity to decisionmakers rather than large participant numbers.
- CSO staff, activists, human rights defenders, journalists and observers may face detention even where a gathering is peaceful and does not block a roadway.

²⁹ Legislative Herald of Georgia (Matsne), Law of Georgia No. 763, *On Assemblies and Manifestations*, adopted 12 June 1997, published in *Parliamentary Gazette*, No. 33, 31 July 1997, entered into force 14 August 1997, registration code 010.300.000.05.001.000.219, as amended, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/31678?publication=27>

³⁰ Legislative Herald of Georgia (Matsne), Code of Administrative Offences of Georgia, adopted by Resolution No. 161-XI of the Supreme Council of the Georgian SSR, 15 December 1984, entered into force 1 June 1985, as amended, Article 174¹, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/28216?publication=641#!>

- The combination of immediate administrative detention and possible criminal liability for repetition creates a strong chilling effect on recurring protest activity and on organisations that support, monitor or mobilise participants.³¹

IN PRACTICE

- Human Rights Watch reported that, after the December 2025 amendments entered into force, police pursued dozens of cases involving people standing on sidewalks near Parliament, including by imposing administrative arrests.³²
- On 29 April 2026, the Public Defender stated that common courts were hearing a large number of cases concerning alleged obstruction of pedestrian movement and submitted an amicus curiae brief stressing that assemblies inevitably cause some disruption and that restrictions should depend on the seriousness, duration and actual impact of the obstruction.³³
- On 6 May 2026, several peaceful demonstrators were detained on the stated ground of obstructing pedestrian movement; the Social Justice Center reported that courts imposed two to three days of administrative detention.³⁴
- The Public Defender has challenged the sidewalk and pedestrian-area restrictions before the Constitutional Court, arguing that the norms are vague and raise concerns regarding foreseeability and the constitutional guarantees of assembly and expression.³⁵
- In July 2026, the Constitutional Court refused to suspend, pending its final decision, provisions imposing administrative detention for intentionally obstructing pedestrian movement during protests. In a dissenting opinion published in August, Judge Giorgi Kverenchkhiladze warned that custodial sanctions for peaceful protest-related conduct could have a chilling effect on the exercise of freedom of expression and assembly.³⁶

³¹ Social Justice Center, *Analysis of Court Decisions Restricting Protest on Sidewalks*, 20 August 2026, available at <https://socialjustice.org.ge/ka/products/trotuarze-protestis-shemzghudveli-sasamartlo-gadatsqvilebebis-analizi>

³² Human Rights Watch, “Georgia: Police Arbitrarily Detain Peaceful Protesters,” 23 January 2026, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2026/01/23/georgia-police-arbitrarily-detain-peaceful-protesters>

³³ Public Defender of Georgia, “Public Defender Files Amicus Curiae Brief with Tbilisi Court of Appeal,” 1 May 2026, available at <https://ombudsman.ge/en/sasamartlo-megobris-mosazreba/260501115403sakartvelos-sakhalkho-damtsvelma-sasamartlos-megobris-zogadi-mosazrebit-mimarta-tbilis-saapelatsio-sasamartlos>

³⁴ Social Justice Center, “The Use of Handcuffs against Peaceful Demonstrators Amounts to Degrading Treatment,” 9 May 2026, available at <https://socialjustice.org.ge/en/products/mshvidobiani-demonstrantebis-tsinaagmddeg-khelborkilebis-gamoqeneba-ghirsebis-shemlakhav-mopqrobas-utoldeba>

³⁵ Public Defender of Georgia, “Public Defender’s Response to Amendments Made to Legislative Acts Regulating Rules for Holding Assemblies and Demonstrations,” 19 May 2026, available at <https://www.ombudsman.ge/en/akhali-ambebi/sakhalkho-damtsvelis-reagireba-shekrebekisa-da-manifestatsiebis-chatarebis-tsesebis-maregulirebel-sakanonmdeblo-aktebshi-shetanil-tsvilebebtan-dakavshirebit> and Public Defender of Georgia, “Constitutional Court Accepts Public Defender’s Constitutional Complaint for Consideration on Its Merits,” 7 August 2026, available at <https://www.ombudsman.ge/en/akhali-ambebi/sakonstitutsio-sasamartlom-sakhalkho-damtsvelis-konstitutsiuri-sarcheli-arsebitad-gansakhilvelad-miigho>

³⁶ Constitutional Court of Georgia — Judge Giorgi Kverenchkhiladze’s dissenting opinion, 30 July 2026 (published 13 August 2026), available at <https://www.constcourt.ge/ka/judicial-acts?legal=20120>

Biometric surveillance and protest tracking

The rise in protest-related sanctions has coincided with the development of a large-scale biometric surveillance infrastructure. As of April 2026, the Ministry of Internal Affairs had 9,822 cameras within the framework of the “Safe City, Safe Region, Safe Country” programme, comprising 7,233 general vision cameras and 2,589 licence plate recognition devices. The system is integrated with automated facial-recognition technology that can match people against government databases. In Tbilisi, surveillance cameras cover known protest sites and established march routes. Since 2024, biometric matching using the Ministry’s unified video-surveillance system has been at least part of the basis for protest-related arrests.³⁷

WHAT CHANGED

- Protest participants have been identified retrospectively through CCTV footage and automated facial recognition, in some cases leading to arrests weeks or months after the demonstrations.
- The surveillance system combines CCTV feeds with facial-recognition software and cross-references results against government databases containing personal photographs.
- The legal basis for biometric processing derives from ministerial orders and the Law on Police. According to the Democracy Research Institute, this framework lacks sufficiently detailed safeguards governing the scope, conditions, retention, oversight and use of biometric data.
- Independent data-protection oversight was further weakened in 2026. The Personal Data Protection Service was abolished with effect from 2 March 2026 and its functions transferred to the State Audit Office. The Service had been the only specialised institution formally mandated to investigate complaints concerning unlawful processing of personal data by state authorities.

IMPACT ON CSO SPACE

- Post-factum biometric identification substantially increases the deterrent effect of protest-related restrictions: participation in a demonstration can result in identification and sanctions weeks or months later.
- The use of facial recognition against peaceful demonstrators creates broader privacy and freedom-of-assembly concerns, particularly where surveillance infrastructure is concentrated around established protest locations.
- CSOs, activists and human rights defenders monitoring demonstrations or supporting protesters operate in an environment in which participants can be

³⁷ Democracy Research Institute, “Biometric Surveillance and Tracking in Georgia”, 1 July 2026, available at <https://www.democracyresearch.org/eng/1750/>

systematically identified and their movements retrospectively reconstructed through state surveillance infrastructure.

- The abolition of the specialised data-protection authority and transfer of its functions to the State Audit Office raises concerns about the availability of independent, specialised oversight and effective remedies against potentially unlawful biometric surveillance.

IN PRACTICE

- As of April 2026, the Ministry of Internal Affairs' "Safe City, Safe Region, Safe Country" system comprised 9,822 surveillance cameras, including 7,233 general-vision cameras and 2,589 licence-plate recognition cameras.
- Surveillance infrastructure is particularly concentrated around established protest locations and march routes in Tbilisi, enabling the identification and tracking of demonstrators.
- According to procurement data, since December 2024 the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Tbilisi Municipality had purchased approximately USD 1.2 million worth of surveillance equipment and software licences, including 251 Dahua cameras equipped with AI-powered facial-recognition capabilities.
- Facial-recognition technology has been used in connection with protest-related enforcement. The arrests of demonstrators since 2024 have relied, at least in part, on biometric matching through the unified video-surveillance system, allowing participants to be identified retrospectively from protest footage.

Criminal Code and related procedural amendments

In 2025, a series of amendments expanded criminal liability in areas including repeated protest-related offences, drug policy and financial crimes, as well as general investigative and procedural powers. The March 2026 amendments expanded criminal law to cover foreign funding, civil-society activity and political participation, with prison terms of up to six years for some unauthorized foreign grants and cooperation and a new offense of "extremism against the constitutional order."³⁸

Taken together, these changes increased the potential criminal consequences of protest, advocacy and other forms of civic and political activity.

WHAT CHANGED

- Repeated protest-related administrative offences can escalate into criminal liability.

³⁸ Legislative Herald of Georgia (Matsne), Criminal Code of Georgia, Law of Georgia No. 2287, adopted 22 July 1999, No. 41(48), 13 August 1999, registration code 080.000.000.05.001.000.648, as amended, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/16426?publication=296>

- Drug offences, including cannabis-related conduct, were made substantially more punitive.
- July 2025 amendments allow a prosecutor, with the consent of the Prosecutor General or a deputy, to conceal the identity of a person cooperating in an operative-investigative or covert investigative activity where disclosure would endanger them or substantially harm the interests of justice. The defence receives evidence in a form that prevents identification, and the person is questioned remotely. Their identity remains available to the judge throughout the proceedings.³⁹⁴⁰
- 2025 procedural amendments expanded mechanisms for securing compensation in certain economic and financial crime cases, including property seizure and restrictions on convicted persons leaving Georgia.⁴¹
- In March 2026, new Article 319¹ introduced criminal liability of up to six years' imprisonment for several forms of unauthorised receipt, use, provision or concealment of foreign grants and technical assistance.
- New Article 316¹ criminalised “extremism against the constitutional order,” including specified systematic public conduct aimed at creating a perception of the illegitimacy of Georgia’s constitutional order or constitutional bodies where it harms, or creates a real threat of harm to, Georgia’s interests. The offence carries up to three years’ imprisonment.
- “Non-recognition” of Georgia’s constitutional order or constitutional bodies was also introduced as an aggravating sentencing circumstance.

IMPACT ON CSO SPACE

- The criminalisation pathway for repeated protest conduct is particularly relevant for activists and CSOs involved in demonstrations, protest monitoring and legal assistance.
- More punitive drug laws are significant in the protest context given the use of drug charges against several individuals associated with demonstrations in 2025. This raises particular fair-trial and due-process concerns where drug allegations arise in connection with arrests of protesters.⁴²
- Expanded possibilities for protecting or concealing the identities of cooperating persons may make it more difficult for defendants and independent monitors to scrutinise the reliability and origins of evidence, particularly in politically sensitive or protest-related proceedings.

³⁹ Legislative Herald of Georgia (Matsne), Law of Georgia No. 923, *On Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code of Georgia*, 2 July 2025, published 3 July 2025, amending, inter alia, Arts. 14, 83 and 115 and introducing Arts. 118¹–118², available at <https://new.matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/6560747>

⁴⁰ Legal Issues Committee of the Parliament of Georgia, *Opinion on the Draft Law of Georgia “On Amendments to the Criminal Code of Georgia” and Other Draft Laws Included in the Package of Legislative Amendments*, No. 07-3/80/11, 25 June 2025, available at <https://info.parliament.ge/file/1/BillPackageContent/49350>

⁴¹ Legislative Herald of Georgia (Matsne), Criminal Procedure Code of Georgia, as amended by Law of Georgia No. 954 of 3 September 2025, Arts. 165⁵–165⁸, available at <https://www.matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/90034>

⁴² JamNews, “Cases of Georgian activists accused of drug possession: two freed, four await verdict”, 18 August 2025, available at <https://jam-news.net/cases-of-georgian-activists/>

- The March 2026 amendments substantially increased risks for CSOs dependent on foreign support: covered grant or technical-assistance arrangements undertaken without the required consent may result in criminal liability carrying up to six years' imprisonment.
- The broadly framed concepts of “political activity,” a “political issue connected with Georgia,” and “extremism against the constitutional order” increase uncertainty for CSOs engaged in advocacy, policy work, public campaigning and protest mobilisation.

IN PRACTICE

- Six activists and protest participants were prosecuted on serious drug charges in connection with the 2024–2025 protests.⁴³ Three were acquitted in 2025, while three were convicted. The cases raised concerns over reliance on undisclosed information and the absence of video recordings or independent witnesses during searches.⁴⁴
- In 2025, authorities froze the bank accounts of 12 CSOs as part of an investigation into alleged sabotage, assistance to foreign actors in hostile activities, and financing activities directed against Georgia's constitutional order and national security. CSO representatives were also summoned for questioning.⁴⁵
- Eight opposition figures were sentenced to seven or eight months' imprisonment in 2025 under Article 349 of the Criminal Code for refusing to appear before Parliament's Temporary Investigative Commission and were barred from holding public office for two years.⁴⁶
- In July 2026, Transparency International Georgia identified 91 individuals whom it considered to meet one or more PACE criteria for recognition as political prisoners, including journalist Mzia Amaghlobeli.⁴⁷
- The March 2026 amendments introduced the offence of “extremism against the constitutional order,” punishable by up to three years' imprisonment, alongside aggravated sentencing for certain crimes motivated by “non-recognition” of the constitutional order or constitutional bodies. Georgian Dream representatives have also

⁴³ JAMnews, “Two Russian Activists Sentenced to 8.5 Years in Georgia on Drug Possession Charges,” 13 September 2025, available at <https://jam-news.net/two-russian-activists-sentenced-to-8-5-years-in-georgia-on-drug-possession-charges/>

⁴⁴ Amnesty International, Georgia: 500 Days of Protest, Crackdown and Resilience, June 2026, available at <https://www.amnesty.org/zh-hans/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/EUR5611152026ENGLISH.pdf>

⁴⁵ Human Rights Watch, “Georgia: New Laws Devastate Independent Civic Groups,” 9 July 2026, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2026/07/09/georgia-new-laws-devastate-independent-civic-groups>

⁴⁶ OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), *Report of the Moscow Mechanism Mission of Experts Invoked in Respect of Georgia*, 2026, available at https://odihr.osce.org/sites/default/files/documents/official_documents/2026/03/odgal0009c1%20ODIHR%20NV%2082-2026%20report_Moscow%20Mechanism%20invoked%20in%20respect%20of%20Georgia_0.pdf

⁴⁷ Transparency International Georgia, “List of Political Prisoners,” 21 July 2026, available at <https://www.transparency.ge/en/blog/list-political-prisoners>

used rhetoric of extremism, treason and threats to the constitutional order in reference to political opponents and protest-related actors.⁴⁸

III. Freedom of expression, media freedom and public scrutiny

Broadcasting Law amendments

Amendments adopted in 2025 significantly expanded regulation of broadcasters, restricting foreign funding, bringing journalistic standards under the Communications Commission's enforcement powers, and expanding the regulator's access to broadcasters' financial information. In June 2026, the foreign-funding rules were partially revised, allowing certain specialised broadcasters to receive foreign funding.

WHAT CHANGED	
	• From April 2025, broadcasters were prohibited from receiving direct or indirect funding from a “foreign power,” subject to limited commercial exceptions. Foreign powers were also prohibited from purchasing broadcasting services, except for specified commercial activities, or directly or indirectly financing or co-financing programme production or broadcasting.⁴⁹ • Requirements concerning factual accuracy, fairness, impartiality, privacy, covert methods of obtaining information and other journalistic standards, previously largely enforced through broadcasters' self-regulatory mechanisms, became subject to enforcement by the Communications Commission.⁵⁰ • June 2025 amendments empowered the Communications Commission, through court procedures, to obtain confidential banking information concerning broadcasters where requested information was not provided or was incomplete.⁵¹ • In June 2026, specialised broadcasters were exempted from the general prohibition on receiving foreign funding. At the same time, the Commission was empowered to require broadcasters receiving prohibited funding to transfer those funds to the state budget.

⁴⁸ Civil Georgia, “British Embassy Rejects GD’s Accusations of Funding ‘Propaganda and Extremism,’ Urges Invitation of ODIHR Observers,” 18 June 2025, available at <https://civil.ge/archives/687504> and Georgian Public Broadcaster (1TV), “PM Kobakhidze: Staging Rallies at Home to Trigger Sanctions Abroad Is Pure Treason,” 10 July 2026, available at <https://1tv.ge/lang/en/news/pm-kobakhidze-staging-rallies-at-home-to-trigger-sanctions-abroad-is-pure-treason/>

⁴⁹ Parliament of Georgia, “Parliament Adopts Three Bills Amending the Law on Broadcasting,” 1 April 2025, available at <https://parliament.ge/en/media/news/parlamentma-mautsqeblobis-shesakheb-kanonshi-tsvlilebebis-taobaze-sami-kanonproekti-miigho>

⁵⁰ Communications Commission of Georgia, “ComCom Develops a Guide to Ensure Effective Enforcement of Legal Content Requirements for the Media,” 2025, available at <https://comcom.ge/en/yvela-siaxle/comcom-develops-a-guide-to-ensure-effective-enforcement-of-legal-content-requirements-for-the-media.page>

⁵¹ Legislative Herald of Georgia (Matsne), Law of Georgia No. 667-II06-XI03, *On Amendments to the Law of Georgia on Broadcasting*, 12 June 2025, available at <https://new.matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/6524765>

IMPACT ON CSO SPACE	• The restrictions reduced access to foreign financial support for independent broadcasters and increased regulatory scrutiny of editorial and financial activities. • The Venice Commission concluded that the blanket prohibition on foreign funding failed to distinguish between funding posing genuine risks to democratic integrity and support for legitimate journalistic and civic activities and found that it did not meet necessity and proportionality requirements.⁵² • Reduced access to independent media may also limit opportunities for CSOs to disseminate research, document rights violations and reach wider audiences.
IN PRACTICE	• In October 2025, the Communications Commission issued warnings to Formula, Formula Multimedia and three radio broadcasters, ordering them to cease receiving funding that it considered prohibited foreign funding. Formula and Formula Multimedia had received funding from a Cyprus-registered company associated with Formula's founder.⁵³ • The Communications Commission also began enforcing the expanded content standards in 2025, issuing warnings to broadcasters including TV Pirveli and Formula, as well as pro-government broadcasters, for alleged violations of impartiality and related requirements.⁵⁴

Freedom of Speech and Expression / defamation amendments

Alongside broader legislative amendments significantly affecting freedom of speech, the June 2025 amendments to the Law on Freedom of Speech and Expression substantially weakened protections in defamation cases. The revised framework remained in place in 2026, amid continuing concerns about its impact on independent journalism and public-interest speech.⁵⁵

WHAT CHANGED	• Defendants in defamation cases must prove that the disputed statement does not contain a materially false statement; for statements concerning public figures, liability
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⁵² European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), *Georgia – Opinion on the Law on the Registration of Foreign Agents, the Amendments to the Law on Grants and Other Laws Relating to “Foreign Influence”*, CDL-AD(2025)034, adopted at its 144th Plenary Session, Venice, 9–10 October 2025, paras. 103–105, available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/venice-commission/-/cdl-ad-2025-034-e>

⁵³ OC Media, “Georgian Comms Regulator Moves to Block Funding from TV Formula,” 10 October 2025, available at <https://oc-media.org/georgian-comms-regulator-moves-to-block-funding-from-tv-formula/>

⁵⁴ Communications Commission of Georgia, “ComCom: TV Pirveli, Formula and Mtavari Arkhi Violated Impartiality Standards while Broadcasting the News,” 10 July 2025, available at <https://comcom.ge/en/yvela-siaxle/comcom-tv-pirveli-formula-and-mtavari-arkhi-violated-impartiality-standards-while-broadcasting-the-news.page>

⁵⁵ Law of Georgia No. 220, *On Freedom of Speech and Expression*, adopted 24 June 2004, published in the Legislative Herald of Georgia, No. 19, 15 July 2004, registration code 010.100.000.05.001.001.515, as amended, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/33208?publication=9>

may be avoided by demonstrating good faith and reasonable efforts to verify the information.

- Article 15, which provided qualified-privilege protections for certain public-interest statements, was repealed.
- The amendments repealed Article 12(3), which protected against liability in defamation proceedings for refusing to disclose a confidential source. However, Article 14(3) provides a good-faith defence in public-figure cases where the respondent took all reasonable steps to verify the information and was unaware of its falsity, while Article 16 excludes liability where the person did not know and could not have known that they were disseminating defamation.
- The period available for court-facilitated reconciliation was reduced to a maximum of 10 days.
- The new rules do not apply to cases already initiated before their entry into force but may apply to subsequently filed claims concerning earlier statements within the applicable 100-day limitation period.

IMPACT ON CSO SPACE

- Journalists, CSOs and researchers face greater litigation risks when publishing allegations concerning public officials and other powerful actors. Although a good-faith defence remains, its practical effectiveness depends on courts adequately considering source reliability, reasonable verification efforts and documented barriers to obtaining information. Treating an inability to establish the underlying misconduct as proof that a reported allegation was fabricated risks discouraging scrutiny of suspected corruption and documentation of torture or ill-treatment.
- The removal of qualified privilege weakens protection for public-interest reporting and advocacy.
- Weaker safeguards for confidential sources may deter whistle-blowers and impede investigative journalism and CSO documentation.
- In 2026, international human-rights monitoring continued to identify the amended defamation regime, particularly the reversed burden of proof, as part of broader restrictions affecting freedom of expression and independent media.

IN PRACTICE

- In 2025–2026, Georgian Dream politicians, former officials and individuals associated with or supportive of the ruling party pursued defamation claims against journalists, media outlets and government critics.
 - In October 2025, a court ordered philosopher Levan Ghambashidze to pay GEL 10,000 (approximately EUR 3,438) to Georgian Dream MP Nino Tsilosani over allegations concerning her family.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Civil.ge, “Court Orders Critic to Pay GEL 10,000 to GD Lawmaker Tsilosani in Defamation Case”, 29 October 2025, available at <https://civil.ge/archives/708827>

- Georgian Dream MP Tea Tsulukiani also initiated defamation proceedings against journalist and activist Nanuka Zhorzholiani.⁵⁷
- Defamation litigation also affected independent media.⁵⁸
- In December 2025, the Tbilisi Court of Appeal upheld a judgment requiring TV Pirveli and journalist Sopho Niauri to retract reporting concerning former Interior Minister Aleksandre Chikaidze and pay GEL 10,000 (approximately EUR 3,438) in moral damages.⁵⁹
- In July 2026, Formula was ordered to retract investigative reporting concerning Goga Khaindrava and pay GEL 10,000 (approximately EUR 3,438).⁶⁰ GYLA described the decision as posing a serious threat to media independence and freedom of expression.⁶¹
- Following the introduction of administrative liability for insulting public officials, proceedings were initiated against government critics over social-media posts allegedly insulting Georgian Dream MPs.⁶²
- On 12 June 2025 alone, Tbilisi City Court considered cases against 18 people: six journalists, seven civil-society activists and five opposition representatives for alleged insults directed at Georgian Dream politicians.⁶³ The proceedings included posts concerning MPs Mariam Lashkhi, Mamuka Mdinaradze, Lasha Talakhadze and Tea Tsulukiani.

Hate Speech Prevention Division and restrictions on insulting public officials (2025–2026)

In June 2026 the Ministry of Internal Affairs established a Hate Speech Prevention Division within its Human Rights Protection Department to monitor proactively public utterances, including social-media content, that are deemed degrading, insulting or constitute hate speech and to initiate administrative proceedings where such expression is deemed to fall within the Administrative

⁵⁷ Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), *Fact Sheet, Part 9: Sharp Democratic Backsliding and Continuous Systemic Repression in Georgia*, covering developments from 28 June to 28 July 2025, available at https://idfi.ge/public/upload/02.INFOREPS/IDFI_Fact-Sheet_9.pdf

⁵⁸ Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and Media Advocacy Coalition (MAC), *Georgia: Joint Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review*, 2025, available at <https://cpj.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Georgia-UPR-joint-submission-CPJ-MAC.pdf>

⁵⁹ Council for Media and Information Security (CMIS), “A Defamation Case against the Television Company TV Pirveli and a Journalist,” 9 December 2025, available at https://cmis.ge/en/incident/page/14/?missing_incident=2818&translation_fallback=1

⁶⁰ Council for Media and Information Security (CMIS), “The Court Upheld Goga Khaindrava’s Lawsuit and Ordered ‘Formula’ to Pay,” 14 July 2026, available at <https://cmis.ge/en/incident/the-court-upheld-goga-khaindravas-lawsuit-and-ordered-formula-to-pay/>

⁶¹ Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association (GYLA), statement concerning the Tbilisi City Court judgment in Goga Khaindrava v. Formula, 15 July 2026, as reported in Georgia Today, “GYLA: Court Ruling in Formula Case Poses Serious Threat to Media Independence”, available at <https://georgiatoday.ge/gyla-court-ruling-in-formula-case-poses-serious-threat-to-media-independence/>

⁶² Social Justice Center, “Punishing Citizens for Expressing Themselves Online Is Unconstitutional and Serves to Legitimize Total Censorship,” 13 June 2025, available at <https://socialjustice.org.ge/en/products/onlain-sivrtsehi-gamokhatvistvis-mokalakeebis-dasja-arakonstitutsiuria-da-totaluri-tsenzuris-dakanonebas-isakhavs-miznad>

⁶³ Council for Media and Information Security (CMIS), Documented Incidents Against Civil Activists – June 2025, 30 June 2025, available at https://cmis.ge/en/activist_incident/documented-incidents-against-civil-activists-june-2025/

Offences Code. It was created after the introduction of a special administrative liability for insulting state-political officials, political officials and civil servants in February 2025.⁶⁴

WHAT CHANGED	• In February 2025, Article 173¹⁶ was added to the Administrative Offences Code, introducing specific administrative liability for verbal insults, swearing, insulting harassment or other offensive conduct directed at state-political officeholders, political officials and specified public servants in connection with their official duties.⁶⁵ The provision has also been applied to expression on social media.⁶⁶ • On 1 June 2026, the Ministry of Internal Affairs established the Hate Speech Prevention Division within its Human Rights Protection Department. The Division is headed by Tamta Kimbarishvili and was initially staffed by ten employees.⁶⁷ • The Division proactively monitors publicly disseminated statements, including social-media content, identifies suspected offenders, collects evidence and initiates administrative proceedings for referral to the courts. • In its enforcement practice, the Division has relied primarily on Article 173¹⁶, concerning insults directed at state-political officeholders, political officials and public servants, and Article 166, concerning petty hooliganism, including public swearing and other conduct disturbing public order.⁶⁸ • The establishment of the Division did not itself create a new administrative offence of “hate speech.” Instead, the Division applies existing provisions of the Administrative Offences Code to expression it identifies through its monitoring activities.
IMPACT ON CSO SPACE	• Systematic state monitoring of social-media and other public expression creates risks of a chilling effect on freedom of expression,⁶⁹ particularly political speech, criticism of public officials, journalism and civil-society advocacy.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Democracy Research Institute, “State-Enabled Hate Speech and Hate Speech Prevention in Georgia”, 27 August 2026, available at <https://www.democracyresearch.org/eng/1758/>

⁶⁵ Legislative Herald of Georgia (Matsne), Code of Administrative Offences of Georgia, as amended on 6 February 2025, Art. 173¹⁶, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/28216?publication=641>

⁶⁶ OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), *Urgent Opinion on the Amendments to the Law on Assemblies and Demonstrations, the Code of Administrative Offences and the Criminal Code of Georgia (as adopted on 6 February 2025)*, 6 March 2025, paras. 98–101, available at <https://cdn.osce.org/sites/default/files/f/documents/d/2/587466.pdf>

⁶⁷ Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, “Newly Established MIA’s Hate Speech Division Commences Operations Today,” 1 June 2026, as reported by Georgian Public Broadcaster (1TV), available at <https://1tv.ge/lang/en/news/newly-established-mias-hate-speech-division-commences-operations-today/>

⁶⁸ CSO Meter, “Roundup of Developments in Georgia: August 2026,” August 2026, available at <https://csometer.info/updates/roundup-developments-georgia-august-2026>

⁶⁹ OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), *Urgent Opinion on the Amendments to the Law on Assemblies and Demonstrations, the Code of Administrative Offences and the Criminal Code of Georgia (as adopted on 6 February 2025)*, 6 March 2025, paras. 98–101, available at <https://cdn.osce.org/sites/default/files/f/documents/d/2/587466.pdf>

⁷⁰ Human Rights Watch, “Georgia: Critics Jailed for Online Speech – Vague ‘Insult’ Offenses, Police Monitoring Deepens Free Speech Crackdown,” 18 September 2026, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2026/09/18/georgia-critics-jailed-for-online-speech>

- Article 173¹⁶ extends administrative liability beyond threats or incitement to forms of insulting and offensive expression directed at public officials, increasing the potential legal consequences of harsh or provocative political criticism.
- The use of a specialised “hate speech” mechanism to enforce provisions concerning insults and petty hooliganism risks conflating genuinely harmful or inciting speech with expression that is merely offensive, crude, disrespectful or strongly critical of political officials.
- Neither the applicable legislation nor publicly available information from the Ministry establishes clear criteria explaining how particular social-media accounts, individuals or statements are selected for monitoring, raising concerns regarding foreseeability, transparency and the potential for selective enforcement.
- The number of cases initiated shortly after the Division became operational demonstrates the significant practical reach of the monitoring mechanism. Within two weeks, nearly 60 cases had been referred to courts; by 1 August 2026, more than 300 cases involving public expression had reportedly been referred, with around 130 already completed.⁷¹

IN PRACTICE

- By 15 June 2026, approximately two weeks after becoming operational, the Division had referred nearly 60 administrative cases concerning publicly expressed statements to the courts. By 1 August, more than 300 cases had reportedly been referred to courts, with around 130 already completed.
- Lawyer Shota Tutberidze was fined GEL 4,000 (approximately EUR 1,375) under Article 173¹⁶ over a Facebook comment concerning Georgian Dream MP Nino Tsilosani. The case was initiated after an inspector from the Division identified the comment online, preserved screenshots and identified its author through a government electronic system.
- Formula TV journalist Vakho Sanaia was fined GEL 6,000 (approximately EUR 2,063) on 10 July 2026 in proceedings initiated by the Division over Facebook posts concerning Parliament Speaker Shalva Papuashvili and MP Vladimer Bozhadze. After Sanaia subsequently published further posts criticising the fine, another proceeding was initiated and, on 22 July, he was sentenced to 14 days’ administrative detention.
- Separately, on 26–27 July 2026, protesters displaying banners containing an obscene reference to Georgian Dream honorary chairman Bidzina Ivanishvili were detained under Articles 166 and 173 of the Administrative Offences Code. Ten protesters were

⁷¹ Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, statement on the activities of the Anti-Hate Speech Division, 15 June 2026, as reported by Georgian Public Broadcaster (1TV), “MIA: Nearly 60 Cases Brought before Courts since Establishment of Anti-Hate Speech Division; Seven Concluded with Final Rulings,” available at <https://1tv.ge/lang/en/news/mia-nearly-60-cases-brought-before-courts-since-establishment-of-anti-hate-speech-division-seven-concluded-with-final-rulings/>

detained near Tbilisi City Council after one protester's initial detention prompted others to display banners containing the same wording.⁷²

- In September 2026, the Division initiated administrative proceedings against activist and blogger Tornike Razmadze under Article 166(1) (petty hooliganism) over a Facebook comment posted beneath his video comparing statements by Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze with those of Russian propagandists Margarita Simonyan and Vladimir Solovyov. Razmadze stated that his comment was directed at Simonyan and Solovyov. The case materials reported by the media did not identify the target of the comment and did not charge him under Article 173¹⁶ for insulting a public official.⁷³ The Ministry subsequently issued a statement whose wording suggested that the proceedings concerned insulting comments identified alongside a separate case involving an insult to Prime Minister Kobakhidze.

- In September 2026, civil activist Ana Bdeiani was fined GEL 4,000 (approximately EUR 1,375) over Facebook comments, including an alleged insult directed at Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze. The case was initiated by the Hate Speech Prevention Division following its monitoring of her Facebook activity.⁷⁴

- In September 2026, the Tetrtskaro District Court dismissed an administrative case initiated by the Division concerning a Facebook comment. It was reported as the first publicly known case in which a court rejected the Division's request to impose administrative liability for social-media expression.⁷⁵

Restrictions on court coverage and access to judicial information

Changes to the Law on Common Courts in June 2025 reduced public and media access to court proceedings and judicial information. Recording/broadcasting is prohibited in the court building, courtroom and courtyard unless carried out by the court or an authorised person; recording/broadcasting of a particular hearing may be permitted by a decision of the High Council of Justice.

⁷² Civil Georgia, "Police Arrest 10 Protesters in Tbilisi Over 'Insulting Banners' About Ivanishvili," 27 July 2026, available at <https://civil.ge/archives/746002>

⁷³ Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA), "GYLA Considers the Initiation of Administrative Proceedings against Tornike Razmadze over a Facebook Comment to Constitute a Precedent of Censorship," September 2026, available at <https://www.gyla.ge/post/GYLA-tornikeRazmadze-Case>

⁷⁴ SOVA, "Activist Ana Bdeiani Fined 4,000 GEL for Facebook Comments", 21 September 2026, available at <https://sovanews.tv/en/2026/09/21/activist-anna-bdeyan-fined-4000-gel-for-facebook-comments/>

⁷⁵ Georgia Today, "Precedent-Setting Decision – Judge Khuchua Dismisses Administrative Offense Case Against Citizen over Facebook Comment," 11 September 2026, available at <https://georgiatoday.ge/precedent-setting-decision-judge-khuchua-dismisses-administrative-offense-case-against-citizen-over-facebook-comment/>

WHAT CHANGED	• Filming and broadcasting inside court buildings were restricted and require court authorisation.⁷⁶ • Court officers received powers to restrict or confiscate electronic recording devices in court premises.⁷⁷ • Public access to some court decisions was delayed until final judgments.⁷⁸
IMPACT ON CSO SPACE	• CSOs monitoring politically sensitive trials have less ability to document proceedings independently. • Restrictions reduce transparency around cases involving protesters, activists, journalists and opposition figures.⁷⁹ • Delayed access to judgments complicates legal analysis, strategic litigation and public accountability.
IN PRACTICE	• On 30 June 2025, immediately after the amendments took effect, journalists were reportedly prevented from entering Tbilisi City Court with cameras and were restricted from filming with mobile phones in the courtyard during the trial of 11 people detained in connection with the pro-European protests. Media representatives had sought permission from the High Council of Justice to record the hearing but reportedly received no response.⁸⁰

Media access to Parliament

Parliamentary accreditation and access rules were further tightened in 2025–2026, increasing restrictions on journalists’ ability to report directly from Parliament and interview MPs.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Legislative Herald of Georgia (Matsne), Organic Law of Georgia No. 827, *On Amendments to the Organic Law of Georgia on Common Courts*, 26 June 2025, Art. 4, amending Art. 13¹ of the Organic Law on Common Courts, available at <https://manage.matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/6544848>

⁷⁷ Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association (GYLA), *Amendments of 2025 to the Organic Law on Common Courts*, 2025, available at https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/saerto-sasamart_eng%20%282%29%20%281%29.pdf

⁷⁸ Parliament of Georgia, “Parliament Supports Amendment to the Law on Common Courts,” 26 June 2025, available at <https://www.parliament.ge/en/media/news/parlamentma-saerto-sasamartloebis-shesakheb-kanonshi-tsvlilebas-mkhari-dauchira>

⁷⁹ Transparency International Georgia, “Amendments to Organic Law of Georgia ‘On Common Courts’ Completely Exclude Judicial System’s Accountability to Society,” 27 June 2025, available at <https://transparency.ge/en/node/14291>

⁸⁰ Council for Media and Information Security (CMIS), “Media Access to Courts Restricted Starting Today,” 30 June 2025, available at <https://cmis.ge/en/incident/media-access-to-courts-restricted-starting-today/>

⁸¹ Parliament of Georgia, “Amendments and Additions Introduced to the Rules on Accreditation of Representatives of Mass Media in the Parliament of Georgia Approved by Order of the Speaker of Parliament,” 12 November 2025, available at <https://www.parliament.ge/media/news/parlamentis-tavmjdomaris-brdzanebit-damtkitsebul-sakartvelos-parlamentshi-masobrivi-informatsiis-sashualebata-tsarmomadgenlebis-akreditatsiis-tsesshi-tsvlilebebi-da-damatebebi>

WHAT CHANGED

- Amendments adopted in November 2025 introduced revised procedures for one-time special accreditation, effective from 1 January 2026.
- In June 2026, Parliament further tightened its accreditation rules. Repeated violations may result in early revocation of a journalist's accreditation and restrictions of up to one year on obtaining accreditation. Sanctions may also affect the accreditation of the journalist's media outlet.⁸²
- Accreditation rules require journalists to terminate an interview when an MP, parliamentary employee or visitor refuses to continue. This requirement has been used as a basis for suspending journalists' accreditation.

IMPACT ON CSO SPACE

- Restrictions on journalists' physical access to Parliament and MPs reduce independent scrutiny of legislative activity and limit the ability of CSOs and the public to receive timely information about parliamentary decision-making.
- Lengthy accreditation suspensions and the possibility of sanctions affecting entire media outlets may discourage journalists from persistently questioning public officials and reduce direct reporting from Parliament.

IN PRACTICE

- Between September 2025 and August 2026, media monitors documented eight cases of suspension or early termination of parliamentary accreditation. In five of six suspension cases, the stated reason was that journalists continued asking questions after an MP had declined to answer.⁸³
- In June 2026, Parliament suspended the accreditation of three TV Pirveli journalists: Maka Andronikashvili for one month, Maka Chikhladze for six months and Natalia Kajaia for one year.⁸⁴
- In June 2026, Formula journalist Nini Balanchivadze's parliamentary accreditation was suspended for six months for allegedly continuing an interview after an MP had refused to answer.⁸⁵
- Media monitors recorded seven refusals of applications for one-time special accreditation under the procedure introduced in 2026, most reportedly without explanation.

⁸² Parliament of Georgia, "Amendments Introduced to the Rules on the Accreditation of Media Representatives in the Parliament of Georgia by Order of the Speaker of Parliament, Based on the European Parliament Model," 8 June 2026, available at <https://parliament.ge/en/media/news/sakartvelos-parlamentis-tavmjdomaris-brdzanebit-sakartvelos-parlamentshi-masobrivi-informatsiis-sashualebata-tsarmomadgenlebis-akreditatsiis-tsesshi-tsvlilebebi-shevida-romelits-1>

⁸³ Council for Media and Information Security (CMIS), *The State of Journalists' Safety in Georgia – September 2025–August 2026*, 21 September 2026, available at <https://cmis.ge/en/the-state-of-journalists-safety-in-georgia-september-2025-august-2026/>

⁸⁴ Civil Georgia, "Disputed Parliament Temporarily Suspends Accreditations of Three TV Pirveli Journalists," 30 June 2026, available at <https://civil.ge/archives/742994>

⁸⁵ Council for Media and Information Security (CMIS), "Interference," 2026. CMIS documents the six-month suspension and states that Parliament relied on Article 15(2) of the accreditation rules, requiring a journalist to terminate an interview when the interviewee refuses to continue, available at <https://cmis.ge/en/incident-type/interference/>

Law on Family Values and Protection of Minors

The Law on Family Values and Protection of Minors was adopted in September 2024 as part of a package of amendments to 18 other laws that was signed into law in October 2024.⁸⁶ Wide-ranging restrictions were introduced by the framework on sexual orientation and gender identity affecting freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, education, broadcasting, healthcare and cultural activities.⁸⁷ The legislative framework remained in force in 2026.

WHAT CHANGED

- Public assemblies and demonstrations aimed at the “popularisation” of same-sex relationships or gender identities different from a person’s biological sex are prohibited, providing a legal basis for preventing Pride marches and similar public events.
- The legislation restricts the dissemination of information and public expression considered to “popularise” same-sex relationships or gender identities different from biological sex. Its broad definition of “popularisation” covers information or actions presenting such relationships or identities positively or as exemplary.
- Related amendments restrict broadcasting, advertising and the dissemination or public presentation of certain films, literature and other content falling within the prohibited categories.
- The legislation prohibits information considered to “popularise” same-sex relationships or gender identities different from biological sex in educational programmes and restricts its dissemination by employees of educational institutions.
- The framework also prohibits adoption and foster care by specified LGBT persons, gender-transition medical interventions and legal recognition of a gender different from a person’s biological sex.
- Violations may result in administrative sanctions. Repetition of conduct covered by Article 172¹⁰ of the Administrative Offences Code after an administrative sanction may constitute a criminal offence under Article 176¹ of the Criminal Code, punishable by up to two years’ imprisonment.

IMPACT ON CSO SPACE

- The legislation substantially restricts the ability of LGBTQ rights organisations and other CSOs to organise public events, demonstrations and awareness-raising activities, limiting freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Legislative Herald of Georgia (Matsne), Law of Georgia No. 4437-XVI06-X03, *On the Protection of Family Values and Minors*, 17 September 2024, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/6283110?publication=0>

⁸⁷ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), “UN Human Rights Office Spokesperson Liz Throssell: Call to Rescind Law on ‘Family Values and Protection of Minors’ in Georgia,” 17 September 2024, available at <https://georgia.un.org/en/278852-un-human-rights-office-spokesperson-liz-throssell>

⁸⁸ Public Defender of Georgia, “Communication to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe relating to Execution of ECHR Judgements on Cases of Identoba Group,” 27 January 2025, available at <https://ombudsman.ge/eng/akhali->

- Broad restrictions on “popularisation” constrain CSO advocacy, public campaigning and human-rights education and create legal uncertainty for organisations, activists and media communicating on LGBTQ-related issues.⁸⁹
- Restrictions affecting broadcasting, education and cultural content narrow the space for independent media, educators, artists, publishers and cultural organisations to address sexual orientation and gender identity.⁹⁰
- The availability of administrative sanctions and, for repeated violations, criminal liability increases the potential consequences for organisations and individuals engaging in expression or activities falling within the legislation’s broadly defined prohibitions.
- International human-rights bodies have raised concerns that the legislation discriminates against LGBTIQ people and restricts rights including equality and non-discrimination, privacy, education, freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association.

IV. Parliamentary transparency and civil society participation

Rules of Procedure of Parliament and public participation

Georgia does not have a specific law that establishes a comprehensive system of public participation. While there are existing parliamentary mechanisms for public participation, such as petitions and attendance at public committee sittings, the 2025 changes diminished institutionalized channels specifically involving CSOs.

WHAT CHANGED

- Amendments adopted in April 2025 removed requirements for mandatory NGO participation in public decision-making mechanisms provided for by the Rules of Procedure.⁹¹

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⁸⁹ OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), *Report of the Moscow Mechanism Mission of Experts Invoked in Respect of Georgia*, 2026, available at

https://odihhr.osce.org/sites/default/files/documents/official_documents/2026/03/odgal0009c1%20ODIHR%20NV%2082-2026%20report_Moscow%20Mechanism%20invoked%20in%20respect%20of%20Georgia_0.pdf

⁹⁰ United Nations Office at Geneva, “Experts of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Welcome Georgia’s Pharmaceutical Reforms, Raise Questions on Law on Foreign Influence and on Impact of Family Value Law on Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Persons,” 12 February 2026, available at <https://www.ungeneva.org/en/news-media/meeting-summary/2026/02/examen-de-la-georgie-au-cescr-les-questions-demploi-ainsi-que-la>

⁹¹ Parliament of Georgia, “NGO Participation in Public Decision-Making No Longer Mandatory as the Draft Rules of Procedure Stipulates,” 2 April 2025, available at <https://www.parliament.ge/en/media/news/parlamentis-reglamentit-gatvalistsinebul-sajaro-gadatsqvetelebata-mighebis-protsesshi-arasamtavrobo-organizatsiata-monatsileoba-savaldebulo-aghar-ikneba-1>

- The new Rules of Procedure, adopted in May and effective from 1 July 2025,⁹² abolished parliamentary councils as an institutional format, including Gender Equality Council, the Open Governance Parliamentary Council and the Rights of the Child Standing Parliamentary Council.⁹³ An Interim Parliamentary Commission on Women's and Children's Issues was subsequently established.
- The abolition of the Open Governance Parliamentary Council removed a mechanism whose statutory functions expressly included cooperation with civil-society representatives and annual meetings between Parliament and public organisations.
- Members of the public may continue to use mechanisms such as parliamentary petitions and may be invited to public committee sittings. However, these mechanisms do not provide CSOs with the same institutionalised role in parliamentary decision-making.
- Following its temporary suspension in October 2024, Georgia was permanently suspended from the Open Government Partnership in April 2026. OGP cited continued restrictions on the operating environment for civil society and media and concerns regarding fundamental freedoms.⁹⁴

IMPACT ON CSO SPACE

- CSOs have fewer formal and institutionalised channels through which to contribute expertise to policymaking and legislative processes.
- The removal of mandatory NGO participation increases the extent to which civil-society involvement depends on invitations or decisions by parliamentary bodies and officials rather than established participation requirements.
- The abolition of the Open Governance Parliamentary Council removed a dedicated institutional mechanism for cooperation between Parliament and civil society on transparency, accountability and open-government issues.
- These changes, alongside broader restrictions affecting CSO funding and activities, reduce opportunities for independent civil society to participate systematically in public-policy discussions, legislative scrutiny and monitoring.

⁹² Parliament of Georgia, "Shalva Papuashvili: Parliamentary Majority Initiates New Rules of Procedure," 4 April 2025, available at <https://www.parliament.ge/en/media/news/shalva-papuashvili-saparlamento-umravlesobam-sakartvelos-parlamentis-akhali-reglamentis-initsiireba-moakhdina> and Parliament of Georgia, "Parliament Adopts New Rules of Procedure in Final Reading," 13 May 2025, available at <https://www.parliament.ge/en/media/news/sakanonmdeblo-organom-parlamentis-akhali-reglamentis-proekti-mesame-mosmenit-miigho>

⁹³ Parliament of Georgia, "Interim Parliamentary Commission on Women's and Children's Issues to Be Established," 13 May 2025, available at <https://www.parliament.ge/en/media/news/sakanonmdeblo-organoshi-kalta-da-bavshvta-sakitkhebze-momushave-parlamentis-droebiti-komisia-sheikmneba>

⁹⁴ Open Government Partnership, "Georgia Permanently Suspended from the Open Government Partnership Following Response Policy Review," 22 April 2026, available at <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/news/georgia-permanently-suspended-from-the-open-government-partnership-following-response-policy-review/>

Parliamentary oversight and accountability

The new Rules of Procedure adopted in May 2025 significantly restructured Parliament’s mechanisms for scrutinising the executive and exercising institutional oversight.

WHAT CHANGED

- The Minister’s Hour was abolished and replaced by more frequent interpellations. While Parliament presented this as strengthening regular interaction with the executive, civil-society assessments have noted that interpellation differs from Minister’s Hour in both purpose and procedure.
- The parliamentary thematic inquiry mechanism was abolished, with its functions transferred to interim commissions and working groups. The former mechanism enabled parliamentary committees to examine specific policy issues and involved relevant stakeholders in the process.
- Committees no longer consider several matters previously falling within their functions, including the election of certain officials, establishment of temporary commissions, votes of confidence in the Government, presidential elections and impeachment procedures.
- Committees are required to hold at least one meeting per month, rather than two under the previous Rules.
- Amendments adopted in June 2026 further revised procedures concerning interpellation and parliamentary consideration of reports submitted by officials and bodies accountable to Parliament.

IMPACT ON CSO SPACE

- The abolition of thematic inquiries removes a parliamentary mechanism through which CSOs and other stakeholders could contribute evidence and expertise to committee-level examination of public-policy issues.
- Reduced parliamentary scrutiny narrows opportunities for CSOs to use oversight processes to raise evidence, seek accountability and bring public-interest concerns before decision-makers.
- Weakening or restructuring parliamentary oversight mechanisms may reduce external scrutiny of executive action in areas directly affecting civil society and fundamental rights.

IN PRACTICE

- Between 1 April and 30 June 2026, no parliamentary committee decided to summon a public official to a committee hearing, and no parliamentary faction requested the mandatory attendance of a public official.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Parliament of Georgia, “Procedural Issues Committee Reviewed Findings on Information Submitted by Parliamentary Committees Regarding the Mandatory Attendance and Hearing of Public Officials,” 2026, available at <https://www.parliament.ge/en/media/news/saprotseduro-sakitkhta-komitetma-tanamdebobis-piris-savaldebulo-dastsrebisa-da-komitetis-skhdomaze-tanamdebobis-piris-mosmenis-shesakheb-informatsiis-shestsavlis-shedegebi>

- Civil-society monitoring has also reported limited use of other parliamentary oversight tools following the 2025 changes, reinforcing concerns about the practical weakening of parliamentary scrutiny.

V. Political pluralism and civic participation

Constitutional Court and Political Associations of Citizens

Amendments adopted in 2025 expanded the legal mechanisms for banning political parties and restricting individuals associated with banned parties.⁹⁶ The legislative package of March 2026 created another route to political exclusion,⁹⁷ limiting party membership for certain persons who had worked for organisations classified as pursuing the interests of a foreign power.⁹⁸

WHAT CHANGED

- May 2025 amendments introduced an accelerated procedure allowing the Constitutional Court to decide within 14 days on the prohibition of a party whose declared aims, activities, personnel or electoral list substantially repeat those of a party already declared unconstitutional.⁹⁹
- October 2025 amendments expanded the consequences of a party ban. At the claimant's request, the Constitutional Court may prohibit specified persons connected with a banned party from founding or joining a political party, holding party office, standing in elections, exercising an elected mandate or holding specified political offices.¹⁰⁰
- The Constitutional Court may terminate parliamentary or municipal mandates and remove individuals from electoral lists.
- The March 2026 framework prohibits a person who received employment income from an organisation classified as "pursuing the interests of a foreign power" from belonging to a political party for eight years, calculated from the calendar year in which that person last received such income. The restriction is linked to employment and income rather than a finding that the individual personally engaged in unlawful political conduct.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Parliament of Georgia, "Parliament Approves Amendments to Laws on Political Unions and Constitutional Court in Final Reading," 13 May 2025, available at <https://www.parliament.ge/en/media/news/parlamentma-mokalaketa-politikuri-gaertianebebis-shesakheb-kanonshi-tsvlilebebi-mesame-mosmenit-miigho>

⁹⁷ Parliament of Georgia, materials concerning the amendments to the Organic Law on Political Associations of Citizens, March 2026, available at <https://www.parliament.ge/en/print/news/parlamentshi-grantebis-shesakheb-kanonshi-tsvlilebebis-gankhilva-itsqeba>

⁹⁸ Legislative Herald of Georgia (Matsne), Organic Law of Georgia *On Political Associations of Citizens*, as amended on 4 March 2026, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/28324>

⁹⁹ Legislative Herald of Georgia (Matsne), Organic Law of Georgia No. 95, *the Organic Law of Georgia on the Constitutional Court of Georgia*, 31 January 1996, Article 22, as amended on 4 March 2026, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/32944>

¹⁰⁰ Legislative Herald of Georgia (Matsne), Organic Law of Georgia No. 988-IV05-XI03, *On Amendments to the Organic Law of Georgia on the Constitutional Court of Georgia*, 16 October 2025, published 17 October 2025, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/6647832?publication=0>

¹⁰¹ Legislative Herald of Georgia (Matsne), Organic Law of Georgia No. 1384-V05-XI03, *On Amendments to the Organic Law of Georgia on Political Associations of Citizens*, 4 March 2026, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/6802958?publication=0>

	• The State Audit Office exercises oversight over party and related political finance and may obtain financial and special-category personal data and conduct inquiries in exercising these powers.¹⁰² • A decision restricting party membership takes immediate effect and is not suspended by an appeal.
IMPACT ON CSO SPACE	• The eight-year party-membership restriction creates a direct legal link between previous employment in certain foreign-funded civil-society or media organisations and an individual's subsequent ability to participate through a political party. • This may discourage movement between civil society, independent media and formal political life and may affect the future political participation of CSO employees irrespective of whether they personally engaged in unlawful conduct. • The possibility of extending the consequences of a party ban to persons considered "connected with" the party substantially broadens the effects of prohibition beyond the dissolution of the political organisation itself. • Taken together, the party-ban mechanisms and employment-based restrictions increase the legal consequences attached to association with political parties and certain foreign-funded organisations.
IN PRACTICE	• On 31 October 2025, 89 members of Parliament filed a constitutional claim seeking to have the activities of the United National Movement, Coalition for Change and Strong Georgia – Lelo declared unconstitutional and the parties banned. The claim relied substantially on findings of Parliament's Temporary Investigative Commission. • In April 2026, the Federalists party was subsequently added to the proceedings.¹⁰³¹⁰⁴ • On 21 September 2026, an updated claim was filed with the Constitutional Court adding Gakharia – For Georgia,¹⁰⁵ bringing the number of targeted political forces to five. • The original three targeted blocs had received approximately 31% of valid votes and 49 of 150 mandates in the official 2024 parliamentary results. Together with Gakharia – For

¹⁰² Organic Law of Georgia No. 880, *On the State Audit Office*, adopted 26 December 2008, published in the Legislative Herald of Georgia, Article 6, available at <https://www.matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/17506?publication=29>

¹⁰³ Constitutional Court of Georgia, Constitutional Claim No. 1958, filed by 89 Members of Parliament, 21 April 2026, available at <https://constcourt.ge/ka/judicial-acts?legal=19601>

¹⁰⁴ 1TV (LEPL Public Broadcaster), "The Federalists' party will also be added to the constitutional claim seeking the prohibition of several political parties," 20 April 2026, available at <https://1tv.ge/news/ramdenime-partiis-akrdzalvis-shesakheb-sakonstitucio-sarchels-partia-federalistebic-daemateba/>

¹⁰⁵ Interpressnews, "Updated Lawsuit, in which Georgian Dream Seeks a Ban on Giorgi Gakharia's Political Force – alongside Other Parties, Filed with Constitutional Court," 21 September 2026, available at <https://www.interpressnews.ge/en/article/149680-updated-lawsuit-in-which-georgian-dream-seeks-a-ban-on-giorgi-gakharias-political-force-alongside-other-parties-filed-with-constitutional-court/>

Georgia, the four parliamentary opposition lists received approximately 38% of the vote and were allocated 61 mandates.¹⁰⁶

Electoral rights

Georgia's electoral framework underwent repeated amendments in 2024–2026 affecting the composition and operation of election bodies, domestic and international observation, local electoral rules and voting by citizens residing abroad.

WHAT CHANGED

- Amendments adopted in 2024 changed the appointment and decision-making framework of the Central Election Commission (CEC), including abolishing the position of the opposition-nominated Deputy Chairperson and modifying procedures for appointing CEC members. ODIHR found that these changes reversed some earlier safeguards intended to promote consensus and political balance.¹⁰⁷
- Amendments adopted in 2025 introduced additional eligibility restrictions intended to separate non-partisan observation from party political activity, including restrictions relating to the political activity of heads and representatives of domestic observer organisations.¹⁰⁸
- Further amendments adopted in March 2026 restricted audio monitoring at polling stations and election-commission meetings, while regulating photo and video recording. They also revised the rules for registration of international observers and accompanying interpreters.¹⁰⁹
- The new Election Code defines elections as electoral processes carried out “within the state borders of Georgia” (Article 2(a)). According to the previous Election Code, electoral districts and voter registration abroad, including at the diplomatic missions and consular offices of Georgia, were clearly defined.¹¹⁰ The new framework cancels overseas voting in parliamentary elections. The accompanying parliamentary materials to the

¹⁰⁶ OSCE/ODIHR, *Georgia: Parliamentary Elections, 26 October 2024 – ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report*, 20 December 2024, available at https://cdn.osce.org/sites/default/files/f/documents/1/6/584029_0.pdf

¹⁰⁷ Ibid

¹⁰⁸ Parliament of Georgia, “The Legal Issues Committee Discussing the Draft Election Code,” 3 February 2025, available at <https://parliament.ge/en/media/news/iuridiul-sakitkhta-komitetma-saarchevno-kodeksshi-tsvlileba-ganikhila-3>

¹⁰⁹ Parliament of Georgia, “Legal Affairs Committee Approved Amendments to the Election Code,” 2 March 2026, available at <https://parliament.ge/en/media/news/iuridiul-sakitkhta-komitetma-saarchevno-kodeksshi-tsvlilebas-mkhari-dauchira>

¹¹⁰ Legislative Herald of Georgia (Matsne), Organic Law of Georgia No. 1253-IV0b-XI03, *Election Code of Georgia*, adopted 17 December 2025, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/6720607?publication=2>

reform clearly stipulate that from now on parliamentary elections are to be held only within the state borders of Georgia.¹¹¹

- Changes adopted in 2024 altered elements of the municipal electoral system introduced through the 2021 electoral reform,¹¹² including the 40% threshold for majoritarian municipal candidates. The 2021 reform had been adopted in the context of the political agreement mediated by then-European Council President Charles Michel and had increased the proportional component of municipal elections.

IMPACT ON CSO SPACE

- Additional eligibility and registration requirements increase compliance obligations for CSOs conducting domestic election observation and may restrict which organisations or individuals qualify as non-partisan observers.
- Restrictions on audio monitoring and rules governing recording may reduce observers' ability to independently document aspects of election administration and subsequent electoral disputes.
- Changes to CEC composition and decision-making have reduced safeguards that ODIHR had associated with consensus-based election administration and political balance.
- Eliminating voting abroad affects the practical exercise of electoral rights by Georgian citizens residing outside the country and reduces opportunities for observation of overseas voting.
- Taken together with restrictions affecting CSO funding, the changes increase practical and institutional constraints on independent election monitoring and electoral advocacy.

Criminalisation and financial control of political and civic activity

The March 2026 legislative package expanded criminal liability and financial oversight in relation to foreign funding and broadly defined political activity, creating new points of intersection between grant regulation, party finance, civic advocacy and criminal law.

WHAT CHANGED

- The amendments introduced concepts relating to activity on a “political issue connected with Georgia,” which are used across several new or amended criminal provisions and extend beyond conventional party-political activity.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Parliament of Georgia, The Parliament to Initiate the Consideration of the New Edition of the Election Code, 17 November 2025, available at <https://www.parliament.ge/en/media/news/parlamentshi-saarchevno-kodeksis-akhali-redaktsiis-sakomiteto-gankhilvebi-daitsqeba>

¹¹² Parliament of Georgia, “Parliament Endorsing Draft Election Code with 86 Votes,” 28 June 2021, available at <https://parliament.ge/en/media/news/parlamentma-saarchevno-kodeksis-tsvilebebi-86-khmit-miigho>

¹¹³ Criminal Code of Georgia, Law of Georgia No. 2287, adopted 22 July 1999, published in the Legislative Herald of Georgia, No. 41(48), 13 August 1999, as amended by Law of Georgia No. 1380-V0b-XI03 of 4 March 2026, Arts. 53, 194, 316¹, 319¹, 319² and 355³; Organic Law of Georgia No. 880, *On the State Audit Office*, adopted 26 December 2008, published in the Legislative Herald of

- New Article 319¹ criminalises several forms of unauthorised receipt, use, provision, concealment or transfer of covered foreign support, including certain support exchanged for Georgia-related political activity. Penalties may reach six years' imprisonment.
- Article 319² criminalises the direct or indirect receipt of prohibited foreign funding by a political party, with penalties of up to six years' imprisonment.
- Article 194 was amended so that money laundering carried out for the purpose of political activity related to Georgia constitutes an aggravated form of the offence, punishable by nine to twelve years' imprisonment.
- Article 355³ introduces criminal liability for certain public political activity by commercial legal entities where the activity is unrelated to their principal business, with imprisonment of up to three years and up to four years for a repeat offence; legal entities may also face liquidation and a fine.
- Article 316¹ introduced the offence of “extremism against the constitutional order,” covering specified systematic public calls for mass violation of law, mass disobedience or the creation of alternative governing bodies where the statutory purpose and harm/threat requirements are met.
- The State Audit Office now exercises functions relating both to political finance and to monitoring the legality of grants, linking oversight of foreign funding with regulation of political activity.

IMPACT ON CSO SPACE

- The use of broadly framed concepts of Georgia-related political activity, combined with the interaction between grant regulation and criminal law, creates legal uncertainty for CSOs engaged in advocacy, campaigning, policy research and communication with international partners. Questions concerning foreign funding may carry criminal as well as administrative and financial consequences.
- The State Audit Office's combined responsibilities for grant legality and political finance create an institutional connection between scrutiny of CSO funding and regulation of political participation, while overlapping criminal, financial and administrative mechanisms increase the potential consequences for cooperation among civil society, protest movements and political actors.
- Severe criminal penalties, including imprisonment of up to six years for certain grant-related offences and nine to twelve years for aggravated money laundering, may have a chilling effect on legitimate advocacy and cooperation with international donors where organisations or individuals are uncertain whether their activities fall within broadly defined political concepts.
- The treatment of financial and legal assistance to protesters as relevant to a national-security investigation creates additional risks for CSOs and informal civic initiatives providing legal representation, humanitarian assistance or support with protest-related

Georgia, No. 1, 15 January 2009, entered into force 29 January 2009, as amended by Organic Law of Georgia No. 1385 of 4 March 2026; Law of Georgia No. 331, *On Grants*, as amended by Law No. 1379 of 4 March 2026, Art. 6¹.

penalties. Freezing organisational bank accounts can prevent affected organisations from accessing existing resources and carrying out ordinary operations even before criminal responsibility has been established.

- Importantly, as of June 2026, no criminal charges had been brought against the affected CSOs in connection with the sabotage investigation. The measures concerning these organisations should therefore be described as investigations and asset freezes, rather than as findings that they committed sabotage or other national-security offences.

IN PRACTICE

- Between March and June 2025, several opposition leaders were prosecuted for refusing to appear before Parliament’s Temporary Investigative Commission under Article 349 of the Criminal Code. Several received prison sentences of seven or eight months and two-year bans on holding public office.

- On 6 November 2025, the Prosecutor’s Office announced additional criminal charges against several prominent opposition figures, including allegations of sabotage and, in some cases, assisting hostile activities of a foreign state. These proceedings are distinct from the earlier Article 349 cases.¹¹⁴

- In March 2025, prosecutors froze the bank accounts of five independent organisations and initiatives: Human Rights House Tbilisi, Shame Movement, Nanuka’s Fund, Prosperity Georgia and Fund for Each in connection with an investigation into sabotage and other national-security offences. Authorities alleged that financial and legal assistance provided to protesters, including payment of protest-related fines, supported unlawful activity.

- In August 2025, accounts belonging to seven additional CSOs: ISFED, IDFI, Georgian Democracy Initiative, Sapari, Social Justice Center, Civil Society Foundation and Democracy Defenders, were frozen as part of the same broader investigation.¹¹⁵

- Parliament’s Temporary Investigative Commission completed its work in August 2025. Its findings subsequently formed a central part of the factual and political basis invoked in the constitutional proceedings seeking prohibition of opposition parties.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Reuters, “Georgia charges key opposition figures with seeking to topple government,” 6 November 2025, available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/georgia-opens-criminal-case-against-saakashvili-opposition-leaders-2025-11-06>

¹¹⁵ EU and Its Member States Should Take Urgent, Coordinated Measures to Respond to Georgia’s Crackdown on Civil Society and Human Rights Organisations, 10 September 2025, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/09/10/statement-eu-and-its-member-states-should-take-urgent-coordinated-measures-to>

¹¹⁶ Parliament of Georgia, *Conclusion of the Temporary Investigative Commission of the Parliament of Georgia to Investigate the Activities of the Regime in Power during 2003–2012, the Political Officials of That Regime, and Current and Former Officials Affiliated with Political Parties, from 2003 to the Present*, 4 August 2025, available at <https://web-api.parliament.ge/storage/files/shares/media-32/september/04.09.2025/conclusion.pdf>

VI. Weakening independent accountability institutions

Abolition of the Special Investigation Service

The Special Investigation Service (SIS) was established to investigate crimes committed by law-enforcement officials and other public officials. Parliament abolished the institution in 2025 and transferred its investigative functions to the Prosecutor's Office.

WHAT CHANGED	• The SIS ceased to operate as a separate investigative body from July 2025.¹¹⁷ • Its pending criminal cases and relevant staff functions were transferred into the prosecution system.
IMPACT ON CSO SPACE	• The change weakens the appearance and structure of independent investigation precisely where allegations concern police or other state actors. • For CSOs representing victims of police violence, the loss of a specialised independent body narrows avenues for accountability. • The change is especially significant against the documented pattern of ineffective investigations into alleged police ill-treatment.
IN PRACTICE	• During the 2024–2025 protests, 360 of the 624 people detained or injured during protests (57.7%) visited by the Public Defender reported inhuman or degrading treatment or excessive use of force by law enforcement, demonstrating the scale of alleged police violence against protesters.¹¹⁸ • According to the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia's 2025 Activity Report, investigations were launched into 196 criminal cases concerning alleged ill-treatment by public officials, including 121 cases involving police officers. However, criminal prosecution was initiated in only 6 of the 196 cases. Victim status was granted to 74 individuals.¹¹⁹ • The limited progress in protest-related cases is particularly notable. By May 2026, 360 people had reported ill-treatment to the Public Defender in connection with the 2024–2025 protests, while the Prosecutor's Office reported that 149 people had been recognised as victims of ill-treatment. The first publicly known indictments of police officers for disproportionate force during the 2024–2025 protests were announced only

¹¹⁷ Parliament of Georgia, "Parliament Supports Amendment to the Organic Law of Georgia on the Prosecutor's Office," 24 June 2025; the amendments abolished the Special Investigation Service and transferred criminal cases falling within its jurisdiction to the investigative jurisdiction of the Prosecutor's Office, available at <https://parliament.ge/en/media/news/parlamentma-prokuraturis-shesakheb-sakartvelos-organul-kanonshi-tsvlilebis-shetanas-mkhari-dauchira>

¹¹⁸ Public Defender of Georgia, *Annual Report on the Situation of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia – 2024, 2025*; according to the Public Defender, between 15 April 2024 and 1 March 2025 its representatives visited 624 persons detained or injured during protests, of whom 360 (57.7%) reported ill-treatment, available at <https://www.ombudsman.ge/geo/saqmianobis-angarishebi/sakartvelos-sakhalkho-damtsvelis-aparatis-sakmianobis-2024-tslis-angarishi>

¹¹⁹ Prosecutor's Office of Georgia, *Report on the Activities of the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia for 2025* [საქართველოს პროკურატურის 2025 წლის საქმიანობის ანგარიში], presented to the Parliament of Georgia, 24 June 2026, pg. 136, available at https://pog.gov.ge/uploads_script/resources/tmp/php91QU5i.pdf

in May 2026, when five officers were charged concerning violence against Zviad Maisashvili, Levan Khabeishvili and Guram Rogava: three former and one serving special-forces officer, plus one serving Security Police Department employee.¹²⁰

- The abolition of the SIS is therefore particularly significant in this context: responsibility for investigating alleged law-enforcement abuse was transferred to the Prosecutor's Office from 1 July 2025, despite longstanding concerns about the effectiveness and independence of investigations conducted within the prosecution system.

Abolition of the Anti-Corruption Bureau

The Anti-Corruption Bureau was established as part of reforms linked to Georgia's EU integration process, but concerns regarding its institutional independence persisted. During 2025, its role became increasingly connected with monitoring independent civil society and implementing the restrictive framework governing foreign funding.¹²¹ In November 2025, the Georgian Dream parliamentary majority initiated the Bureau's abolition, and it ceased to operate as a separate institution on 2 March 2026, when its functions and powers were transferred to the State Audit Office.

WHAT CHANGED

- The Anti-Corruption Bureau was established with responsibilities for coordinating and monitoring anti-corruption policy, including oversight of public officials' asset declarations. However, concerns regarding its institutional independence existed from the outset.
- During 2025, rather than strengthening the Bureau's independence and capacity to address high-level corruption, its institutional role became increasingly connected with implementation of the new restrictive framework governing civil society and foreign funding.
- On 12 November 2025, the Georgian Dream parliamentary majority initiated the abolition of the Anti-Corruption Bureau, alongside the Personal Data Protection Service. The authorities justified the restructuring on grounds of resource optimisation and institutional consolidation.¹²²

¹²⁰ Prosecutor's Office of Georgia, "Prosecution Service Arrests Three Former and One Active Special Forces Officer and One Active Employee of Ministry of Internal Affairs Protection Police Department for Acts of Violence Against Zviad Maisashvili, Levan Khabeishvili and Guram Rogava During 2024 Protests," 7 May 2026, available at <https://pog.gov.ge/news/prokuraturam-2024-tsels-mimdinare-aqtsiebis-dros-zviad-maisashvilis-levan-khabeishvilis-da-guram-rogavas-mimart-gankhortsielebuli-dzaladobis-faqtebze-sami-kofili-da-erti-moqmedi-spetsrazmeli-aseve-erti-shinagan-saqmeta-saministros-datsvis-politsiis-departamentis-moqmedi-tanamshromeli-daakava-khuti-braldebulidan-ori-piri-ukve-patimrobashi-imkofeba-skhva-saqmeebze-sami-piris-dakaveba-dghes-mokhda-5631>

¹²¹ Democracy Research Institute (DRI), *Anti-Corruption Bureau as a Mechanism of Political Pressure*, 17 November 2025, available at <https://www.democracyresearch.org/eng/1691/>

¹²² Parliament of Georgia, "The Anti-Corruption Bureau and the Personal Data Protection Service to Be Annulled as of March 2, 2026," 17 December 2025; under the adopted amendments, both institutions were to be abolished on 2 March 2026 and their

- The Bureau was abolished on 2 March 2026, with its functions and powers transferred to the State Audit Office.¹²³ The transferred functions include areas directly relevant to civil society and political activity, including political-finance monitoring and enforcement of legislation concerning foreign-agent registration and grants.
- In parallel, most additional paid employment by civil servants was prohibited, while certain scientific, educational and creative activities became subject to prior written authorisation.

IMPACT ON CSO SPACE

- The abolition weakened the institutional framework for specialised anti-corruption oversight, while the Bureau's powers had increasingly been directed towards scrutiny of independent civil society.
- The transfer of functions to the State Audit Office did not eliminate regulatory scrutiny of CSOs. Relevant financial, monitoring and enforcement powers were instead relocated within the state institutional system, leaving CSOs subject to extensive oversight under legislation governing grants, foreign funding and activities treated as political.
- The sequence raises broader concerns regarding independent checks and balances: rather than strengthening an institution whose independence and effectiveness had already been questioned, the authorities ultimately abolished it and transferred its functions to another state body.
- Restrictions on outside employment may also reduce opportunities for public-sector professionals to contribute expertise to CSO research, training and public debate.

IN PRACTICE

- During 2025, the Anti-Corruption Bureau increasingly used its powers in relation to independent CSOs and media, demanding extensive grant-related documentation. These demands had expanded to a wider group of organisations and included court-backed requests for sensitive and confidential information concerning individuals receiving legal protection from CSOs.¹²⁴
- This contrasted with persistent concerns regarding the Bureau's effectiveness in performing its core anti-corruption functions.¹²⁵ Independent watchdogs documented

functions and powers transferred to the State Audit Office, available at <https://parliament.ge/en/media/news/antikorufsiuli-biuro-da-personalur-monatsemta-datsvis-samsakhuri-2026-tslis-2-marts-gaukmdeba>

¹²³ Parliament of Georgia, "The Budget and Finance Committee Reviewed the State Audit Office's 2027 Budget Proposal," 25 May 2026, noting that from 2 March 2026 the State Audit Office acquired the powers of the Personal Data Protection Service and National Anti-Corruption Bureau, available at <https://parliament.ge/en/media/news/safinanso-sabiujeto-komitetma-sakhelmtsifo-auditis-samsakhuris-2027-tslis-sabiujeto-ganatskhadi-ganikhila>

¹²⁴ Social Justice Center, "Authoritarian Laws Are Now Being Used Against Us – But We Remain Steadfast in Our Fight for Human Rights!", 19 June 2025, describing an Anti-Corruption Bureau information request encompassing the organisation's legal, technical and financial information and records concerning legal and human-rights assistance to beneficiaries, available at <https://socialjustice.org.ge/en/products/avtoritaruli-kanonebis-aghsruleba-chvens-mimartats-daitsqo-vagrdzelebt-adamianis-uflebebistvis-brdzolas>

¹²⁵ Transparency International Georgia, "Anti-Corruption Bureau Head Razhden Kuprashvili Conceals Oligarch Bidzina Ivanishvili's Asset Declaration," 20 June 2025, available at <https://transparency.ge/en/print/14284>

numerous alleged cases of high-level corruption, unexplained or substantial gifts and possible irregularities in public officials' asset declarations.¹²⁶

Abolition of the Personal Data Protection Service

Plans to abolish the Personal Data Protection Service became public in November 2025. The legislative package was formally initiated on 12 November 2025, and on 17 November, Parliament Speaker Shalva Papuashvili publicly announced that the Service and the Anti-Corruption Bureau would be abolished, and their functions transferred to the State Audit Office.¹²⁷ Parliament adopted the legislation on 17 December 2025, and the institutional changes took effect on 2 March 2026.¹²⁸

WHAT CHANGED

- The specialised data-protection supervisory authority ceased to exist as a separate institution. Its functions and powers were transferred to the State Audit Office.
- The transfer covered not only general data-protection supervision, including complaints and inspections, but also the Service's oversight functions concerning the lawfulness of covert investigative actions and certain forms of electronic-communications surveillance.
- Functions previously exercised by a dedicated data-protection authority were therefore consolidated within the State Audit Office, alongside its existing constitutional audit functions and other oversight responsibilities transferred to it during the same reform period.

IMPACT ON CSO SPACE

- The abolition removed a dedicated institutional safeguard for privacy and personal-data protection. This is particularly relevant to civic space because the transferred mandate includes oversight of data processing connected with covert investigative actions and communications surveillance.
- CSOs, journalists, activists and individuals retain legal avenues for lodging data-protection complaints, but these are now handled by the State Audit Office rather than

¹²⁶ Transparency International Georgia, "Anti-Corruption Bureau Conceals the Results of 2023 Monitoring of Public Official Asset Declarations," 8 July 2024, available at <https://transparency.ge/en/post/anti-corruption-bureau-conceals-results-2023-monitoring-public-official-asset-declarations>

¹²⁷ Parliament of Georgia, *Draft Law on Amendments to the Law of Georgia on Personal Data Protection*, No. 198/3-XI03, initiated 12 November 2025, available at <https://www.parliament.ge/en/legislation/31523>; Parliament of Georgia, *New Legal Initiatives Envisage Delegating the Functions of the Anti-Corruption Bureau and the Personal Data Protection Service to the State Audit Office*, 17 November 2025, available at <https://www.parliament.ge/en/print/news/akhali-sakanonmdeblo-initsiativebis-tanakhmad-antikoruftsiuli-biuros-da-personalur-monatsemta-datsvis-samsakhuris-funktsiebi-da-uflebamosilebebi-sakhelmtsifo-auditis-samsakhurs>

¹²⁸ Parliament of Georgia, *The Anti-Corruption Bureau and the Personal Data Protection Service to Be Annulled as of March 2, 2026*, 17 December 2025, available at <https://parliament.ge/en/media/news/antikoruftsiuli-biuro-da-personalur-monatsemta-datsvis-samsakhuri-2026-tslis-2-marts-gaukmdeba>; Law of Georgia No. 1289 of 17 December 2025 on Amendments to the Law of Georgia on Personal Data Protection, published 23 December 2025, effective 2 March 2026, available at <https://www.matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/6699148?publication=0>

by a specialised stand-alone data-protection authority. The reform therefore changes the institutional framework through which potentially unlawful processing of sensitive personal data is independently supervised and challenged.

- The reform forms part of a broader restructuring of specialised oversight institutions: the Anti-Corruption Bureau was abolished on the same date, and its functions were likewise transferred to the State Audit Office.

Public Service Law and abolition of the Civil Service Bureau

A series of legislative and institutional reforms in December 2024 changed the status, tenure, appointment and remedies of public servants and managerial officials. On 4 December 2024, the first major amendments to the Law on Public Service were initiated and adopted on 13 December 2024.¹²⁹ Further changes were made in 2025, including the abolition of the Civil Service Bureau, other changes affecting appointments and employment protection and restrictions on secondary paid employment.¹³⁰

WHAT CHANGED

- Heads of primary structural units of public institutions and their deputies, previously covered by professional civil-service status, were transferred to employment under administrative/public-law agreements.
- The change removed these managerial positions from the ordinary professional civil-service framework and subjected them to the rules governing administrative contractual employment, reducing the tenure protections associated with professional civil-servant status.¹³¹
- Rules governing appointment to certain managerial positions were changed, including the removal or relaxation of competitive-selection requirements for categories of managerial officials.
- Legal remedies following dismissal through reorganisation were significantly restricted. Even where a court or superior authority upholds a claim brought by an officer dismissed

¹²⁹ Parliament of Georgia, *Draft Law on Amendments to the Law of Georgia on Public Service*, No. 07-3/17/11, initiated 4 December 2024, available at <https://parliament.ge/en/legislation/29794>; Parliament of Georgia, *The Draft Law on Public Service Adopted for the III Reading*, 13 December 2024, available at <https://parliament.ge/en/media/news/parlamentma-sajaro-samsakhuris-shesakheb-kanonshi-tsvlileba-mesame-mosmenit-miigho-1>; Legislative Herald of Georgia (Matsne), Law of Georgia No. 165 of 13 December 2024 on Amendments to the Law of Georgia on Public Service, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/6330799?publication=0>

¹³⁰ Parliament of Georgia, *Parliament Endorsing Draft Law on the Structure, Powers and Rules of Operation of the Government of Georgia in III Reading*, 20 February 2025. The amendments abolished the Civil Service Bureau from 1 April 2025 and transferred its functions and powers to the Administration of the Government of Georgia as legal successor, available at <https://parliament.ge/en/media/news/parlamentma-sakartvelos-mtavrobis-strukturis-uflebamosilebisa-da-sakmianobis-tsis-shesakheb-kanonshi-tsvlilebebs-mesame-mosmenit-mkhari-dauchira>

¹³¹ Legislative Herald of Georgia (Matsne), Law of Georgia on Public Service, Arts. 78(1)(e), 81(2), as amended by Law of Georgia No. 165 of 13 December 2024 (published 29 December 2024), available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3031098?publication=74>

as a result of reorganisation, the officer is not entitled to reinstatement. Instead, the law provides for lost salary, three months' compensation and, with the officer's consent, placement in the civil-service reserve. Challenges to decisions concerning reorganisation, liquidation or merger do not suspend their operation.¹³²

- The Civil Service Bureau was abolished with effect from 1 April 2025. Its remaining functions and powers were transferred to the Administration of the Government of Georgia, which became its legal successor within the scope of those functions.

- A separate set of amendments further restricted secondary employment. From 1 November 2025, public servants were generally prohibited from undertaking other paid employment, subject to specified exceptions. Paid academic, pedagogical and creative activities may generally be undertaken only with prior written authorisation from the relevant institution for the specified activity and period.¹³³

IMPACT ON CSO SPACE

- The cumulative changes reduce safeguards associated with a career-based, politically neutral civil service by weakening security of tenure and competitive appointment protections for categories of managerial officials.¹³⁴

- Restrictions on reinstatement following unlawful dismissal in the context of reorganisation reduce the practical protection available to civil servants against potentially arbitrary personnel decisions: even a successful legal challenge does not restore an officer dismissed through reorganisation to the position.

- The abolition of the Civil Service Bureau removed a dedicated institution responsible for supporting and coordinating the professional civil-service system. Its remaining functions were incorporated into the Government Administration rather than exercised by a separate specialised body.

- Restrictions on secondary paid employment may also limit opportunities for public-sector professionals to contribute their expertise to independent research, training and educational activities outside government, including activities organised by CSOs, particularly where the activity does not fall within a statutory exception or requires institutional authorisation.

¹³² Law of Georgia on Public Service, Art. 118(2)–(6), as amended by Law of Georgia No. 165 of 13 December 2024 and Law of Georgia No. 315 of 20 February 2025. Article 118(6) provides that successful challenge of a dismissal resulting from reorganisation does not entail reinstatement and instead provides lost salary, three months' compensation and possible placement in the reserve, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3031098?publication=74>

¹³³ Law of Georgia on Conflict of Interest and Corruption in Public Service, Art. 13, as amended, provisions on incompatibility and secondary paid employment, effective 1 November 2025, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3018579?publication=2>

¹³⁴ Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA), *The Devastating Effects of the Public Service "Reform"*, 2025, pp. 7–8, noting that the reclassification of heads of primary structural units and their deputies from professional civil servants to persons employed under public-law agreements removed the dismissal grounds and safeguards applicable to professional civil servants under Chapter XII of the Law, available at

https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/THE%20DEVASTATING%20EFFECTS%20OF%20THE%20PUBLIC%20SERVICE%20REFORM.pdf

IN PRACTICE

- The legislative changes coincided with a wave of dismissals following public statements by employees of state institutions affirming their commitment to Article 78 of the Constitution and Georgia's European integration, as well as criticism of government decisions. Civil-society monitoring subsequently placed the number of dismissed public-sector employees at more than 800.¹³⁵
- Reported dismissals took several forms. These included expiry or non-renewal of fixed-term contracts, disciplinary proceedings, dismissals following institutional reorganisations or staff reductions, and termination resulting from liquidation of public bodies. Institutions affected included the Ministry of Defence, Parliament, the National Agency of Public Registry and other central and local public bodies.
- Institutional restructuring also resulted in the liquidation of bodies including the Civil Service Bureau and Parliament's Research Centre, with consequent termination or restructuring of employment positions.
- Judicial review provided limited immediate relief. Among 47 cases, by August 2025, court hearings had been scheduled in only 15 cases between January and August. The reports also indicated that public institutions frequently provided requested documentation late or incompletely, contributing to delays in proceedings.¹³⁶

VII. Other legal and institutional changes relevant to the broader human-rights environment

Merger of the Georgian Intelligence Service with the State Security Service

In May 2025, legislation restructuring the Georgian Intelligence Service and placing it under the State Security Service (SSS) was considered in Parliament.¹³⁷ The amendments were adopted by Parliament on 26 June 2025 and the new institutional arrangement entered into force on 1 August 2025.¹³⁸ The then separate Intelligence Service which was directly under the Prime Minister was converted into an Intelligence Agency which is a state sub-agency under the governance of the State Security Service.

WHAT CHANGED

- The Intelligence Service ceased to operate as a separate institution directly subordinate to the Prime Minister and was transformed into an Intelligence Agency under the governance of the State Security Service (SSS).

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ Transparency International Georgia, *Report on the Dismissal of Former Public Servants (Part 2)*, 2025. Of 47 lawsuits accepted by the courts, hearings had been scheduled in 15 cases between January and August 2025. TI Georgia also reported delayed and incomplete provision of documentation by public institutions, available at <https://transparency.ge/en/post/report-dismissal-former-public-servants-part-2>

¹³⁷ Parliament of Georgia, *The Amendments on the Intelligence Service Approved by the Legal Issues Committee*, 23 May 2025, available at <https://www.parliament.ge/en/media/news/iuridiul-sakitkhta-komitetma-dazvervis-samsakhurtan-dakavshirebul-tsvlilebebs-mkhari-dauchira>

¹³⁸ Parliament of Georgia, *Parliament Adopts Amendment to the Law on the Georgian Intelligence Service in Third Reading*, 26 June 2025, available at <https://parliament.ge/en/print/news/parlamentma-sakartvelos-dazvervis-samsakhuris-shesakheb-kanonshi-tsvlileba-mesame-mosmenit-miigho>

- The Head and deputy heads of the Intelligence Agency are appointed and dismissed by the Head of the SSS. The Agency is accountable to the Head of the SSS, who also exercises oversight over its activities.
- The Agency retains a degree of organisational and operational autonomy, while parliamentary oversight formally continues. Information concerning its activities is incorporated into the SSS Head's annual reporting to Parliament, including reporting to Parliament's Trust Group concerning classified activities and special programmes.¹³⁹

IMPACT ON CSO SPACE

- The reform consolidates domestic state-security and foreign-intelligence functions within a common institutional structure headed by the State Security Service, increasing the range of security and intelligence functions ultimately accountable to the leadership of a single security institution.
- Although the direct impact on CSOs is less immediate than under legislation regulating funding, assembly or expression, the restructuring is relevant to civic space because the State Security Service exercises extensive security and intelligence powers, including in areas affecting surveillance and the collection and analysis of information.
- The significance of the reform therefore depends in part on the effectiveness of parliamentary, judicial and other independent oversight over the expanded security and intelligence architecture.

International Protection, expulsion and entry-ban reforms

On 26 June 2025, Parliament adopted a new Law on International Protection as part of a wider package of amendments tightening rules on asylum, migration and the removal of foreign nationals.¹⁴⁰ The reforms introduced sanctions for foreign nationals including expulsion from Georgia and bans on re-entry (including in administrative-offence proceedings), and tightened asylum procedures and expanded the procedural framework for removal and detention pending expulsion. The relevant expulsion provisions came into effect on 1 October 2025.

WHAT CHANGED

- On 26 June 2025, Parliament adopted a legislative package introducing expulsion from Georgia and a prohibition on re-entry as a new type of administrative sanction for foreign nationals under the Administrative Offences Code. The changes took effect on 1 October 2025.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Parliament of Georgia, "Members of the Trust Group Heard Information on the Classified Activities and Special Programmes of the State Security Service," 16 April 2026, available at <https://www.parliament.ge/en/media/news/ndobis-jgufts-tsevrebis-sakhelmtsifo-usaftrkhebis-samsakhuris-saidumlo-sakmianobisa-da-spetsialuri-programebis-shesakheb-informatsias-gaetsnen>

¹⁴⁰ Parliament of Georgia, "Parliament Adopts the Law on International Protection," 26 June 2025, available at <https://parliament.ge/en/media/news/parlamentma-saertashoriso-datsvis-shesakheb-kanoni-miigho>

¹⁴¹ Legislative Herald of Georgia (Matsne), Law of Georgia on International Protection, No. 864-II05-XI03 of 26 June 2025, published 7 July 2025, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/6561538?publication=2>

- The package also introduced expulsion and a re-entry ban as a new type of criminal punishment applicable to foreign nationals.
- The amendments therefore made it possible for a court to impose expulsion and a prohibition on re-entry in addition to sanctions for specified administrative offences. The corresponding Article 57² of the Law on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons regulates enforcement where expulsion and/or a re-entry ban has been imposed as an administrative sanction.¹⁴²
- Where administrative detention is also imposed, expulsion may be enforced after the person has served the detention; where another administrative sanction is imposed, expulsion may be enforced before that sanction is completed.
- The package created a new chapter in the Administrative Procedure Code (Articles 21¹²¹–21¹²⁵) governing judicial proceedings for the expulsion of foreign nationals, including court orders on expulsion, their enforcement and placement in temporary detention pending removal.¹⁴³
- The amendments also simplified procedures for removing foreign nationals unlawfully staying in Georgia, increased fines for violations of stay requirements, and restricted the issuance of residence permits to persons subject to expulsion proceedings or decisions.
- In parallel, the international-protection procedure was tightened: an accelerated asylum procedure was introduced where an application is not submitted within one month of entry; certain applications may be examined at the border without permitting entry on state-security grounds; and time limits for asylum decisions and appeals were shortened.

IMPACT ON CSO SPACE

- For foreign nationals participating in demonstrations, an administrative protest-related offence may therefore carry consequences extending significantly beyond a fine or administrative detention, potentially affecting their right to remain in Georgia.
- The possibility of expulsion creates an additional chilling effect for foreign journalists, activists, human rights defenders and other non-citizens participating in or covering demonstrations.
- Where expulsion concerns a person who claims persecution or other serious human-rights risks in their country of origin, its use also raises questions concerning Georgia's non-refoulement obligations.

¹⁴² Legislative Herald of Georgia (Matsne), Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons, No. 2045-III of 5 March 2014, published 17 March 2014, entered into force 1 September 2014, as amended, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2278806?publication=23>

¹⁴³ Legislative Herald of Georgia, Administrative Procedure Code of Georgia, No. 2352 of 23 July 1999, *Legislative Herald of Georgia*, No. 39(46), published 6 August 1999, document No. 39(46), published 6 August 1999, as amended, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/16492?publication=112>

- The practical application of the new sanction demonstrates that participation by foreign nationals in protest-related activity can result not only in administrative detention or fines but also in loss of the ability to remain in, or return to, Georgia.

IN PRACTICE

- In October 2025, Russian citizen Nikolay Belikov and Azerbaijani journalist Afgan Sadigov were sentenced to 14 days' administrative detention for allegedly blocking the road during a protest on Rustaveli Avenue. The court additionally ordered Belikov's expulsion from Georgia and imposed a two-year entry ban.¹⁴⁴
- Afgan Sadigov was subsequently detained again in April 2026 and found guilty under Article 173 of the Administrative Offences Code for insulting a police officer on social media. The Tbilisi City Court fined him GEL 2,000 (approximately EUR 688), ordered his expulsion and imposed a three-year entry ban. In reaching its decision, the court reportedly also took into account that he had been recorded for 62 previous administrative offences, including violations of assembly and demonstration rules, for which he had twice served administrative detention. Sadigov was expelled to Azerbaijan, where he had previously faced criminal prosecution.¹⁴⁵

Abolition of the National Security Council

In June 2025, the Government initiated a legislative process to restructure the institutions responsible for coordinating national-security policy. The amendments were adopted by Parliament on 26 June 2025 under an expedited procedure. The amendments provided for the dissolution of the Office of the National Security Council as of 1 September 2025 and for the transfer of the functions of coordination of national security policy to the Government.¹⁴⁶

WHAT CHANGED

- The Office of the National Security Council, which had supported the Prime Minister's advisory National Security Council, was dissolved.
- Responsibility for coordinating the planning of national-security policy was assigned directly to the Government.

¹⁴⁴ Civil.ge, "Two Foreigners Detained for 'Blocking Road' at Protest, One Faces Deportation," 24 October 2025, available at <https://civil.ge/archives/708181>

¹⁴⁵ Human Rights Groups urge Council of Europe to Act on Forced Return of Afgan Sadigov, 20 April 2026, available at https://free-anar.site/human-rights-groups-urge-council-of-europe-to-act-on-forced-return-of-afgan-sadigov/?fbclid=IwY2xjawUkmZ1leHRuA2FlbQIxMABwZG9mAWJyaWQRMUw4aVVpYVU1ejVVTnVaT0FzcnRjBmFwcF9pZBAYMjIwMzIxNzg4MjAwODkyAAEe5QsQEDnWtcc5Nmot773Eva2WIXFTbp8nBvWc3CXnlR9a39bAZ67-xxeAe70_aem_FRPGLwxXwTButZDBpukhhg

¹⁴⁶ Parliament of Georgia, *Parliament Supports Amendment to the Law on National Security Policy Planning and Coordination Rules in Third Reading*, 26 June 2025, available at <https://parliament.ge/en/media/news/parlamentma-erovnuli-usaftrkheobis-politikis-dagegmvisa-da-koordinatsiis-tsis-sheesakheb-kanonshi-tsvlilebas-mesame-mosmenit-mkhari-dauchira>

	• The reform retained a crisis-management mechanism through the National Situation Room, which may be activated during crises threatening national interests and through which the Prime Minister may manage a crisis at the political level.
IMPACT ON CSO SPACE	• The direct impact on CSOs is limited. Institutionally, however, the reform forms part of a broader restructuring and consolidation during 2025 of bodies responsible for security, intelligence, policy coordination and governmental oversight. • The transfer of coordination functions from a dedicated national-security structure to the Government increases the importance of transparency, parliamentary scrutiny and other accountability mechanisms surrounding national-security decision-making.

Abolition of the Information Centre on NATO and the EU

In late May 2025, as part of the reorganisation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it was decided to liquidate the LEPL Information Center on NATO and the EU.¹⁴⁷ Employees were informed of the planned liquidation in early June, with the institutional change planned for 1 July 2025. The Ministry said the functions of the Center would be absorbed in the Ministry and not discontinued.

WHAT CHANGED	• The Information Centre on NATO and the EU ceased to operate as a separate legal entity of public law under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. • Its public-information and outreach functions concerning European and Euro-Atlantic integration were transferred into the central structure of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the European Integration Department identified as responsible for carrying out the functions previously performed by the Centre.
IMPACT ON CSO SPACE	• The reform removed a dedicated stand-alone public institution responsible for public information and outreach concerning Georgia's EU and NATO integration, although its formal functions were transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs rather than abolished altogether. • The change is relevant to civic space because public information concerning European and Euro-Atlantic integration, including public awareness and responses to disinformation, is an area in which state institutions, independent media and civil-society organisations have historically had overlapping roles. • The European Union publicly expressed concern about the closure, noting that the Centre had served as a tool for informing the public about EU and NATO integration

¹⁴⁷ Civil Georgia, *NATO, EU Information Center to be Abolished, MFA Says It Will Join Ministry*, 4 June 2025, available at <https://civil.ge/archives/685188>

BM.ge, “Abolition of Information Center on NATO and EU are further actions and steps in the wrong direction - Anitta Hipper,” 10 June 2025, available at <https://bm.ge/en/news/abolition-of-information-center-on-nato-and-eu-are-further-actions-and-steps-in-the-wrong-direction-anitta-hipper>

and placing the decision in the context of other measures affecting Georgia's engagement with the EU.

Restructuring of higher education and university autonomy

In October 2025, the Government announced a sweeping reform of higher education,¹⁴⁸ followed by legislative and policy changes that restructured public universities, academic programmes, admissions, funding and degree structures.¹⁴⁹ In parallel reforms that raised concerns about university autonomy, academic freedom and the alignment with European higher-education standards, the standard general-education cycle was reduced from 12 to 11 years, with an optional 12th year.¹⁵⁰

WHAT CHANGED

- The Government introduced a model “One city – one faculty” under which overlapping disciplines at state universities in the same city are consolidated and allocated to particular institutions. The Government justified the measure as a means of eliminating duplication, concentrating scarce academic and infrastructural resources and equalising educational quality. The model does not apply in the same manner to private universities.¹⁵¹
- The reform gives the Government a substantially greater role in determining which educational programmes state-founded universities may operate for new admissions and how many students may be admitted to individual programmes. Programmes not included in the Government-determined allocation may continue temporarily in a phase-out regime for students already enrolled but cannot continue admitting new cohorts.
- Implementation of the “one city – one faculty” model substantially narrowed the range of programmes to which several state universities could admit new students. The most significant reduction concerned Ilia State University, where new admissions were concentrated principally in pedagogy and specified STEM programmes.
- Amendments adopted in December 2025 introduced a model under which most bachelor’s programmes are reduced to three years and master’s programmes to one year,

¹⁴⁸ Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia, *Presentation of the Higher Education Reform Concept*, 16 October 2025; Government Commission on Higher Education Reform, *National Concept for Reforming the Higher Education System*, 2025, available at <https://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=14303&lang=eng>

¹⁴⁹ Parliament of Georgia, “Parliament Supports Legislative Amendments Related to Higher Education Reform,” 10 December 2025, available at <https://parliament.ge/en/media/news/parlamentma-umaghlesi-ganatlebis-reformastan-dakavshirebul-sakanonmdelotsvilebebs-mkhari-dauchira>

¹⁵⁰ Legislative Herald of Georgia (Matsne), Law of Georgia on General Education, as amended by Law of Georgia No. 1353 of 4 February 2026, Article 2(m) provides that full general education comprises not less than 11 and not more than 12 years, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/6779179?publication=1#DOCUMENT:1>

¹⁵¹ Parliament of Georgia, “The Prime Minister Reported on Higher Education Reform to Parliament within the Interpellation,” 26 November 2025, available at <https://parliament.ge/en/media/news/premier-ministri-irakli-kobakhidze-umaghlesi-ganatlebis-reformastan-dakavshirebul-sakikhze-parlamentshi-interpelatsiis-tsedit-tsardga>

with an additional year envisaged for students pursuing further academic study. The credit changes apply to bachelor's students enrolled from 1 September 2025 and to master's students enrolled from 1 September 2026.¹⁵²

- The previous grant-based model was replaced for new cohorts by full state financing of Georgian citizens studying at the first and second cycles in state-founded higher education institutions. Existing students remain covered by transitional funding arrangements through the 2030–2031 academic year. The reform consequently redirects ordinary state higher-education financing towards state-founded universities rather than subsidising students' choice between public and private institutions.¹⁵³

- February 2026 amendments clarified and expanded the legal framework for reorganising state-founded higher education institutions and introduced a new “leading professor” academic position. The amendments also provided the legal framework for programmes excluded from the Government's allocation to operate temporarily in a phase-out regime.¹⁵⁴

- On 29 January 2026, the Government announced that Tbilisi State University and Georgian Technical University would be merged. The proposal envisaged a temporary governing body and acting university leadership during reorganisation. Following opposition from the academic communities and governing bodies of both institutions, the Government abandoned the merger on 9 February 2026. It nevertheless retained the wider “one city – one faculty” policy, including the transformation of Georgian Technical University into a more narrowly specialised technical institution.

- Parallel amendments changed the structure of general education so that the ordinary school programme is completed after 11 years, while a 12th year remains available on an optional basis. The Government maintains that this does not contradict the Bologna Process and that students wishing to continue education abroad will retain access to a 12th year.

IMPACT ON CSO

AND

ACADEMIC SPACE¹⁵⁵

- The reform substantially increases central government influence over the institutional structure of public higher education by allowing the state to determine the distribution of academic disciplines, programme availability and admission quotas among state

¹⁵² Legislative Herald of Georgia, Law of Georgia on Amendments to the Law of Georgia on Higher Education, No. 1198-IV06-XI03 of 10 December 2025, published 16 December 2025, Article 1(13), available at

<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/6697304?publication=2>

¹⁵³ Government Commission on Higher Education Reform, *National Concept for Reforming the Higher Education System*, 2025. The Concept proposed replacing the existing grant model with a state-order model, while the adopted legislation provides for full state financing of Georgian citizens studying at first- and second-cycle level in higher education institutions founded by the Government, available at <https://www.mes.gov.ge/uploads/files/umaglesi-ganatlebis-sistemis-reformis-erovnuli-koncepcia.pdf>

¹⁵⁴ *Legislative Herald of Georgia*, Law of Georgia on Amendments to the Law of Georgia on Higher Education, No. 1354-V06-XI03 of 4 February 2026, published 5 February 2026, Article 1(4), available at

<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/6778756?publication=0>

¹⁵⁵ Scholars at Risk, *Free to Think 2026: Report of the Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project*, 2026, Georgia section, available at <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/resources/free-to-think-2026/?ceid=15057607&emci=97cdbfc4-4bb8-f111-a6a9-000d3a56d2f7&emdi=f335fb30-5ab8-f111-a6a9-000d3a56d2f7>

universities. This reduces the scope of individual universities to determine independently their academic profiles and future development.

- The “one city – one faculty” model reduces institutional competition and student choice within the public system and may weaken multidisciplinary university structures by separating fields that previously coexisted within comprehensive universities.

- The reforms raise concerns regarding academic freedom and institutional autonomy.¹⁵⁶ The reforms also raise concerns about Georgia's alignment with principles and practices of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), particularly in relation to institutional autonomy, quality assurance, recognition and academic mobility. Georgia remains a member of the Bologna Process/EHEA, and a three-year bachelor's degree is not in itself inconsistent with the Bologna framework. Concerns relate instead to the cumulative architecture of the reforms and their compatibility with European standards of university autonomy, recognition and mobility.¹⁵⁷

IN PRACTICE

- Universities became important sites of civic mobilisation from 2024, with students and academics participating in protests against the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence and subsequent anti-government demonstrations.¹⁵⁸ Ilia State University was particularly prominent, including through student strikes and public “street lectures.”¹⁵⁹ Concerns over institutional pressure had already emerged during its 2024 authorisation process.

- The 2026 reform affected Ilia State University particularly severely: government-determined allocations restricted new admissions principally to pedagogy and specified STEM programmes, reducing its undergraduate admission quota from approximately 3,828 to 300 places. The university brought the claim before the Constitutional Court,¹⁶⁰ while students and academics protested against the reform.¹⁶¹

- The Government also announced the merger of Tbilisi State University and Georgian Technical University in January 2026.¹⁶² Following opposition from both academic

¹⁵⁶ Interpressnews, „Irakli Kobakhidze on changes related to universities: They didn't present a single argument in the debates – We understood that they don't like the concept, but we still couldn't understand why they don't like it,“ 16 February 2026, available at <https://www.interpressnews.ge/en/article/145778-irakli-kobakhidze-on-changes-related-to-universities-they-didnt-present-a-single-argument-in-the-debates-we-understood-that-they-dont-like-the-concept-but-we-still-couldnt-understand-why-they-dont-like-it>

¹⁵⁷ Austrian Universities Conference et al., *Safeguarding University Autonomy and Academic Freedom in Georgia*, Joint Statement, available at https://www.hrk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/hrk/02-Dokumente/02-02-PM/2025-12-18_CRASP-FHK-HRK-SRK-Uniko_Statement_Georgia.pdf

¹⁵⁸ Civil Georgia, “More Student Groups Join Academic Boycott over Foreign Agents Law,” 12 May 2024, available at <https://civil.ge/archives/605592>

¹⁵⁹ OC Media, “Georgia's Students Take Their Lectures to the Streets,” 22 November 2024, available at <https://oc-media.org/georgias-students-take-their-lectures-to-the-streets/>

¹⁶⁰ Constitutional Court of Georgia, constitutional claim challenging amendments to the Law on Higher Education and Government Resolution No. 55 of 12 February 2026 (invoking Article 27(3) of the Constitution, which guarantees academic freedom and the autonomy of higher education institutions), available at <https://www.constcourt.ge/constc/public/ka/judicial-acts?legal=19823>

¹⁶¹ Ilia State University, *Statement of the Highest Collegial Governing Boards*, February 2026, available at <https://iliauni.edu.ge/en/siaxleebe-8/axali-ambebi-36/ilia-state-university-highest-collegial-governing-boards-statement1.page>

¹⁶² Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia, “Givi Mikanadze: Decision Made to Merge Tbilisi State University and Georgian Technical University,” 29 January 2026, available at <https://www.mes.gov.ge/content.php/content.php?id=14454&lang=geo>

communities, the proposal was withdrawn in February, although the broader “one city – one faculty” consolidation policy remained.¹⁶³

- The reforms have also raised concerns about European academic integration and mobility. Georgia remains part of the Bologna Process/EHEA, but European academic organisations have warned that elements of the reform threaten university autonomy and diverge from Bologna principles. The shift towards an 11-year standard school cycle may also create additional requirements for Georgian applicants at foreign universities requiring 12 years of prior schooling.¹⁶⁴ The 2026 OSCE Moscow Mechanism report similarly recorded concerns about university autonomy and the possible relationship between faculty redistribution and concentrations of politically active students.¹⁶⁵

VIII. Summary

The developments documented in this report indicate that since 2024 Georgia has undergone a rapid, cumulative reshaping of its legal and institutional framework, with mounting consequences for fundamental rights. The changes span civil society, independent media, peaceful assembly, political participation, privacy safeguards, and institutional accountability. They form not a series of isolated measures, but a broader pattern of shrinking space for independent civic activity and public oversight.

Foreign-funded organisations now face tighter state control, from registration and disclosure rules to prior approval of grants and criminal liability for breaches. Penalties for protest-related conduct have grown harsher, including steep fines, administrative detention, and criminal liability for repeat offences. Protest restrictions now extend to pedestrian areas and sidewalks, while biometric surveillance and the retroactive identification of demonstrators add further risk to exercising the rights to assembly and expression.

New restrictions on foreign funding for broadcasters, altered defamation rules, sanctions for insulting officials, social-media monitoring, limits on court and parliamentary coverage, and curbs on LGBTQ-related expression and assembly have together narrowed the space for free expression and public scrutiny.

¹⁶³ Interpressnews, “Government to reverse its decision to merge TSU and GTU,” 09 February 2026, available at <https://www.interpressnews.ge/en/article/145616-government-to-reverse-its-decision-to-merge-tsu-and-gtu>

¹⁶⁴ University of Bologna, *Enrolling in a First Cycle or Single Cycle Degree Programme – Foreign Qualification* (requiring a foreign secondary-school qualification awarded following at least 12 years of schooling; where the relevant school system lasts 11 years, applicants must additionally provide certification that they have successfully completed the required examinations for the first year of university studies or another qualifying post-secondary credential), available at <https://www.unibo.it/en/study/enrolment-fees-and-other-procedures/degree-programmes/enrolling-in-first-or-single-cycle-degree-programme-foreign-qualification>

¹⁶⁵ OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), *Report on Developments in Georgia in Respect of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms since Spring 2024*, OSCE Moscow Mechanism, report by Prof. Patrycja Grzebyk, Sole Rapporteur, 10 March 2026, ODIHR Note Verbale No. 82/2026, higher-education section, recording concerns communicated to the rapporteur regarding the impact of centrally reallocating faculties and the relationship between university restructuring and student mobilisation, while recommending respect for the autonomy of academic institutions, available at https://odihhr.osce.org/sites/default/files/documents/official_documents/2026/03/odgal0009c1%20ODIHR%20NV%2082-2026%20report_Moscow%20Mechanism%20invoked%20in%20respect%20of%20Georgia_0.pdf

Changes to electoral rules, expanded tools for controlling political parties and affiliated persons, and tighter criminal and financial oversight of political and civic activity have constrained pluralism and participation.

These restrictions have coincided with the weakening or abolition of independent bodies for investigation, anti-corruption oversight, and data protection, alongside changes undermining civil service independence and parliamentary oversight. State power over funding, monitoring, and sanctions has grown, even as key oversight functions have been absorbed or concentrated elsewhere.

The cumulative impact outweighs that of any single amendment. These developments mark a significant deterioration in the conditions needed for the effective exercise of association, assembly, expression, privacy, and political participation, heightening legal and personal risk for civic actors, narrowing space for public accountability, and reshaping Georgia's human rights environment for the worse.