



**Doc. 16420**

03 June 2026

## The functioning of democratic institutions in Georgia

### Report<sup>1</sup>

Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee)

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1. Reference to committee: [Resolution 1115 \(1997\)](#).



## A. Draft resolution<sup>2</sup>

1. The Parliamentary Assembly fully reiterates its [Resolution 2585 \(2025\)](#) “Challenge, on substantive grounds, of the still unratified credentials of the parliamentary delegation of Georgia”, [Resolution 2600 \(2025\)](#) “The situation in Georgia and follow-up to Resolution 2585 (2025) ‘Challenge, on substantive grounds, of the still unratified credentials of the parliamentary delegation of Georgia’” and [Resolution 2624 \(2025\)](#) “Uphold democracy and the rule of law in Georgia” in which it expressed serious concerns about the democratic breakdown and deep political and social crisis in Georgia.
2. Regrettably, since the adoption of [Resolution 2624 \(2025\)](#), democratic backsliding has continued unabated, as has the crackdown on civil society, political opposition and dissent. None of the urgent recommendations of the Assembly have been addressed. The continuing breakdown of democracy in Georgia and the lack of any response to the recommendations of the Assembly to address this raise serious doubts about the authorities' willingness to abide by Georgia's membership obligations and accession commitments to the Council of Europe.
3. Nevertheless, the Assembly remains committed to an open and results-oriented dialogue with the Georgian authorities as well as all other political and social forces in the country. It emphasises that such a dialogue should be based on the shared understanding that membership of the Council of Europe is a privilege that comes with rights and obligations. The principles and standards of the Organisation, as well as the obligations stemming from its membership and the imperative need to fully honour these obligations, cannot be put into question or negotiated.
4. The initiative to ban practically all democratic opposition parties in Georgia and the criminal prosecution of their leadership on politically motivated and trumped-up charges is unacceptable. The Assembly reiterates that, if pursued, this course of action would effectively establish a one-party dictatorship in Georgia, which violates essential democratic principles and is incompatible with Council of Europe membership. It insists that the Georgian authorities repeal without delay their appeal to the Constitutional Court to ban the democratic opposition parties and to end the unjustified and politically motivated prosecution of their leadership.
5. As a result of the relentless crackdown on the democratic opposition, civil society and the independent media, as well as the extreme social and political polarisation in the country, the conditions for holding genuinely democratic elections currently do not exist in Georgia. The Assembly therefore reiterates its call on the Georgian authorities to initiate as a priority an open and inclusive political process involving all political forces and civil stakeholders, to re-establish a genuinely free and democratic political environment in the country, in line with the clear expectations and ambitions of Georgian society.
6. The continued relentless crackdown on freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, including through repressive legislation and the abuse of politically motivated legal proceedings against civil society, independent media, opposition forces and individual protesters, should end at once. Politically motivated prosecutions with no other objective than to silence dissenting voices raise the spectre of the existence of political prisoners and are incompatible with a democratic society and Georgia's membership obligations to the Council of Europe. The Assembly recalls in this respect as a guideline its [Resolution 1900 \(2012\)](#) “The definition of political prisoner”. In this context, it deeply deplores the politically motivated and disproportional sentences of opposition leaders and others, including Nika Melia and Elene Khoshtaria on clearly trumped-up charges.
7. The Assembly calls upon the Georgian authorities to fully repeal the recently adopted repressive legislation, in particular the controversial amendments to the Criminal Code, the Law on Political Unions of Citizens as well as the Code of Administrative Offences. It reiterates its recommendation that the Code of Administrative Offences be replaced by an entirely new law to be developed in close consultation with the Council of Europe to ensure its compliance with European norms and standards, including the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5).
8. The Assembly reiterates that a dynamic and pluralistic civil society is essential for a well-functioning democracy. Civil society plays a pivotal role in a country's democratic development and is a vital source of democratic expertise. The Assembly deplores the increasingly shrinking space in which civil society can operate, which threatens its very existence. This trend must be reversed. The Assembly also condemns the continued assault on civil society organisations and their leadership, as well as independent media, including through the abuse of controversial legislation. As a first step, the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence

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2. Draft resolution adopted unanimously by the committee on 18 May 2026.

and the Law on the Registration of Foreign Agents (GEOFARA), along with the recent amendments to the Law on Grants should be repealed, in line with the recommendations of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission).

9. The Assembly is concerned about the impact of the recent education reforms on academic freedom in Georgia. The independence of the academia should be ensured. In addition, in order to dispel understandable corruption concerns, the Assembly calls on the authorities to establish a transparent and independent mechanism to govern the privatisation of any university assets that now may have become surplus as a result of the new “One City – One Faculty” reform.

10. The Assembly deplores that, despite its many calls to the contrary, no credible investigations have been conducted into police brutality and other human rights abuses committed during demonstrations, nor into the many reports of torture and ill-treatment of demonstrators during their arrest and detention. It takes note of the recent report of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) on its periodic visits to Georgia from 18 to 29 November 2024 and from 21 to 22 January 2025. It shares the serious concerns expressed in it. It is particularly concerned about the reports that prohibited chemical agents have been used for the dispersal of the protest in Tbilisi. A credible, independent and effective investigation into these allegations needs to be urgently established.

11. The Assembly calls upon the Georgian authorities to fully implement the general measures demanded by the European Court on Human Rights in its judgments in the *Tsaava and Others v. Georgia*, *Mekvabishvili v. Georgia* and *Makharashvili and others v. Georgia* cases as well as in all other 77 judgments by the Court that are pending satisfactory execution.

12. The Assembly takes note of the report of the expert appointed under the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Moscow Mechanism that was invoked by 24 OSCE participating States. It fully shares its findings and conclusions, which coincide with this and previous resolutions on the democratic backsliding in Georgia. It urges the Georgian authorities to fully implement the recommendations made in this report.

13. In this context, the Assembly reiterates its call to the relevant bodies of the Council of Europe to use all available means, including those under Article 52 of the European Convention on Human Rights, and its invitation to all Council of Europe member States to consider the use of interstate applications to the European Court on Human Rights under Article 33 of the Convention, to ensure that Georgia fully honour all the standards and obligations stemming from Council of Europe membership. It regrets that to date no use has been made of these mechanisms provided for by the European Convention on Human Rights.

## B. Explanatory memorandum by Ms Edite Estrela and Ms Sabina Čudić, co-rapporteurs<sup>3</sup>

### 1. Introduction

1. Over the past year, the Assembly has closely followed the rapid and dramatic democratic backsliding in Georgia. In addition to its [Resolution 2585 \(2025\)](#) “Challenge, on substantive grounds, of the still unratified credentials of the parliamentary delegation of Georgia” adopted during the January 2025 part-session, the Assembly adopted in a debate under urgent procedure [Resolution 2600 \(2025\)](#) on “The situation in Georgia and follow up to [Resolution 2585 \(2025\)](#) ‘Challenge, on substantive grounds, of the still unratified credentials of the parliamentary delegation of Georgia’” during the April 2025 part-session. Subsequently, again in a debate under urgent procedure, during its October 2025 part-session, the Assembly adopted [Resolution 2624 \(2025\)](#) on “Uphold democracy and the rule of law in Georgia”.

2. In [Resolution 2624 \(2025\)](#), the Assembly expressed its serious concerns about the rapid democratic backsliding and deep political and social crisis in Georgia, concluding that the very existence of democracy in Georgia was in question. The Assembly therefore deplored the fact that the Georgian authorities had systematically ignored its concerns and recommendations about the democratic crisis in the country, which were shared by the international community at large.

3. The Assembly urged the Georgian authorities to immediately reverse the breakdown of democracy in the country and reiterated its readiness to engage in open and constructive dialogue with the authorities as well as all political and social forces in Georgia, with the aim of reversing the democratic backsliding and ensuring that the country honours its membership obligations and accession commitments to the Council of Europe. However, at the same time, the Assembly emphasised that such a dialogue can only be based on acceptance of the Council of Europe's fundamental norms and principles.

4. Crucially, in [Resolution 2624 \(2025\)](#), the Assembly noted that reversing the breakdown of democracy in Georgia is an issue for all Council of Europe bodies. It therefore urged the bodies of the Council of Europe to use all available means, including those under Article 52 of the European Convention on Human Rights ([ETS No. 5](#), the Convention), and invites member States to use interstate applications to the European Court of Human Rights under Article 33 of the Convention to ensure that Georgia fully honours all the standards and obligations stemming from Council of Europe membership.

5. This report outlines the developments that have taken place since the adoption of [Resolution 2624 \(2025\)](#). Regrettably, over the recent period, the breakdown of the democratic system has continued unabated as have the crackdown on civil society, political opposition and dissent. In addition, the authorities' policies have become increasingly isolationist and antagonistic towards European organisations and their member States, as evidenced by the frequent and baseless attacks against members of the international community inside and outside Georgia. The Georgian authorities' rejection of practically all forms of dialogue and their refusal until now to co-operate with, *inter alia*, the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), are deeply concerning in that context.

6. However, in a welcome development, we were able to make a fact-finding visit to Tbilisi from 10 to 13 November 2025. This allowed us to familiarise ourselves with ongoing developments and views within Georgian society, as well as to assess the willingness of the authorities to engage in open dialogue with the Assembly, to address the Assembly's and the international community's key concerns and recommendations.

7. During our visit, we met with the Speaker of the Georgian Parliament, the Chairpersons of the Legal Affairs and Foreign Relations Committees, representatives of the ruling majority, representatives of all parliamentary and extra parliamentary opposition parties, as well as civil society and members of the international community. To our regret, the representatives from the government, including the nominally independent Prosecutor General and Head of the Anti-Corruption Bureau, refused to meet with us, in what we were informed was a clear political message. However, we welcome that we were able to meet with three imprisoned opposition leaders although our request to meet with detained journalist Mzia Amaglobeli was regrettably refused.<sup>4</sup>

8. As we were asked by the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee), during our visit we directly asked the Speaker of the Parliament, the Chairman of the Legal Affairs Committee as well as the members of the Georgian Dream (GD) faction, if they were willing to co-operate with the Council of Europe and in particular with the Venice

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3. The explanatory memorandum is drawn up under the responsibility of the co-rapporteurs.

4. See also [AS/Mon \(2026\) 02 REV](#).

Commission in addressing the concerns on problematic legislation including transparency legislation and the Code of administrative offences. In all cases, their response was negative stating that Georgia was a sovereign nation that would only implement changes if ordered by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) (unless its judgments were considered political). We deeply regret this unwillingness to engage in dialogue and co-operate, which essentially reduces co-operation between Georgia and the Council of Europe to litigation before the ECtHR. Unfortunately, this seems to be part of a wider pattern that defines Georgia's relations with the international community which has become increasingly isolationist and antagonistic, especially towards the European organisations and their member States.

9. That notwithstanding, the fact that our visit took place should be seen in a positive light, as it allowed an opportunity to maintain some – albeit limited – form of dialogue in the framework of the monitoring procedure. We therefore intend to make a next visit in the second part of this year.

## 2. Democratic environment

10. In all its resolutions on its democratic backsliding in Georgia, the Assembly has called for the establishment of an inclusive political process – involving all stakeholders and social actors – with a view to creating a political environment that would be conducive to the conduct of new genuinely democratic elections. However, as a combined result of the crackdown on the democratic opposition, civil society and independent media, as well as the extreme social and political polarisation in the country, a political environment conducive to the conduct of genuinely democratic elections currently does not exist in Georgia. The reestablishment of such a democratic civic and political environment is a key priority for the Georgian society.

11. On 4 October 2025, local elections took place in Georgia. The EU enlargement report, published on 4 November 2025, noted that the run up to these elections “was marked by intense political polarisation, violence, as well as intimidation targeting civil society and independent media” while “the amendments to the electoral legislation favouring the ruling party, coupled with the extensive crackdown on dissent, drastically reduced the possibility of holding competitive elections”. The local elections were boycotted by most of the opposition – with the exception of Gakharia's for Georgia and Lelo-Strong Georgia – because of the absence of the necessary conditions for their democratic conduct. As mentioned in the last resolution, these elections were neither observed by the international community<sup>5</sup> nor by the credible domestic observer organisations due to the crackdown on civil society. Georgian Dream won 81.7% of the vote with a (for Georgia low) turnout of 40.9%, Strong Georgia won 6.7%, and For Georgia won 3.7% of the vote. The democratic opposition parties, including those that had participated in the elections, denounced these elections as undemocratic, rigged and manipulated in favour of the ruling majority. Despite their misgivings about the electoral process both Strong Georgia and For Georgia announced that they would take up the mandates they won in the local councils.

12. The differences over the participation in the local elections, often accompanied by acrimonious exchanges, underscore the different strategies existing among the democratic opposition parties who have until now not succeeded in establishing a united political front to achieve the political change they are striving to effectuate. This apparent fragmentation has been criticised by some social activists and protesters. Nevertheless, all democratic opposition parties have stated they will participate in any national elections when organised.

13. The differences within the opposition were also evident when, on 20 October 2025, “For Georgia” broke with the rest of the opposition and announced that it would end its boycott of the parliament. This decision was strongly criticised by all other opposition parties. On 28 October 2025, For Georgia's 12 members<sup>6</sup> took up their mandates. However, their role and manoeuvring possibilities are very limited in what is, in effect, a practically single-party parliament.

14. Efforts have continued, albeit far from the media and public eye, to overcome the apparent differences between the opposition forces, and agree on a joint strategy and platform to achieve their common aims. In that respect, on 2 March 2026, nine opposition parties<sup>7</sup> formed the “Opposition Alliance<sup>8</sup>” to present a united

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5. The Georgian authorities did not invite the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe to observe these local elections. At the same time, the invitation to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR) to observe these elections was purposely issued so late as to render their observation impossible. The OSCE/ODIHR therefore declined the invitation.

6. This was the second tier of members on the For Georgia list as the mandates of the first 12 members on the list had been cancelled and a number of them had left the party over its decision to return to the parliament.

front towards the ruling majority. Lelo and For Georgia did not join this coalition, emphasising the importance of plurality, but have stated that they would collaborate with this new alliance to change the current government and combat the ongoing democratic backsliding.

15. As mentioned in previous reports, the ruling majority had established a parliamentary investigative commission into the activities of the “United National Movement (UNM) regime” and its political representatives between 2003 and 2012, better known as the Tsulukiani Commission. Its mandate was later extended to also cover the period from 2012 until the present day. On 2 September 2025, this Commission presented its report, in which it concluded that the United National Movement and “its affiliated parties” – in effect practically the entire democratic opposition in Georgia, hindered the establishment of a “healthy political system” in Georgia and should therefore be banned. As underscored in [Resolution 2624 \(2025\)](#), such a ban on the democratic opposition would effectively establish a one-party dictatorship in Georgia, which would be incompatible with Council of Europe membership.

16. Nevertheless, in a major escalation in the crackdown on the democratic opposition, the ruling majority, on 28 October 2025, announced that it had appealed to the Constitutional Court to ban three key democratic opposition movements: the United National Movement, Ahali/Coalition for Change and Strong Georgia/Lelo. The ruling party stated that it had not appealed for a ban on the For Georgia party, as it had now entered parliament, nor – at that time – for the ban of smaller opposition parties as, in the majority’s view they “do not have significant influence due to their size and organisational structure, including the real prospect of overcoming the electoral threshold”. Following the establishment of the Opposition Alliance on 9 March 2026, Prime Minister Kobakhidze announced that the ruling party was contemplating amending its appeal to the Constitutional Court to include all the parties that had joined the alliance and that were not included in the original appeal.<sup>9</sup> On 20 April 2026, the ruling majority subsequently withdrew its original appeal to the Constitutional Court, replacing it with a new appeal asking the Constitutional Court to ban the Federalist Party, as well as the three parties included in the original appeal. This is widely believed to have been driven by a desire to reset the nine-month legal deadline for the Constitutional Court to deliver a decision on such appeals.<sup>10</sup>

17. On 16 October 2025, the Georgian Parliament passed a legislative package that allows individuals 'associated' with parties deemed unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court of Georgia to be stripped of their fundamental political rights, including the right to found or join political parties or hold public office. On 9 December 2025, the Monitoring Committee agreed to request an opinion of the Venice Commission on this legislative package. This opinion is foreseen to be adopted by the Venice Commission during its June 2026 plenary session.

18. The ruling majority, at the time of writing, has not appealed to the Constitutional Court to have the provisions in the amendments adopted on 16 October 2025 being applied to individuals associated by those parties it requested to be banned. However, on 6 November 2025, the Prosecutor General announced that he had started criminal proceedings against several leading politicians<sup>11</sup> from practically all democratic opposition parties for “crimes against the State”, in particular sabotage; assistance in hostile activities to a foreign country; financing activities directed against the constitutional order of Georgia and the foundations of national security; and calling for the violent change of the constitutional order of Georgia or the overthrow of the State government. These charges, which are commonly referred to as the sabotage case, carry prison sentences between 7 and 15 years. Initially, the For Georgia party, of former Prime Minister Gakharia, was the only major opposition party whose leader had not been charged by the Prosecutor General. However, this changed when, on 10 November 2025, the Prosecutor General charged Mr Gakharia, who lives in exile in Berlin, for abuse of power and endangering lives when being Minister of the Interior of Georgia.<sup>12</sup> These charges similarly carry heavy prison sentences of up to 13 years.

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7. Ahali, Girchi-More Freedom, Droa, United National Movement (UNM), Strategy Aghmashenebeli, European Georgia, National Democratic Federalists and Freedom Square.

8. [Opposition Alliance \(Georgia\) - Wikipedia](#).

9. [Georgian Dream Considers Banning More Parties Through Constitutional Appeal After Opposition Forms Alliance – Civil Georgia](#).

10. [GD to Refile Constitutional Court Appeal to Add Federalists to Opposition Parties It Seeks to Ban – Civil Georgia](#).

11. Mikheil Saakashvili (UNM), Giorgi Vashadze (Strategy Builder), Nika Gvaramia, Nika Melia (Ahali), Zurab Japaridze (Girchi), Elene Khoshtaria (Droa), Mamuka Khazaradze and Badri Japaridze (Lelo-For Georgia).

12. Mr Gakharia faces charges under two separate criminal cases. He is charged for “*Organization of intentional grievous bodily harm against two or more persons*” (Article 25-117, Paragraph 3, Subparagraph “m” of the Criminal Code of Georgia) in relation to the dispersal of protests on 20 July 2019, and for “*Abuse of official powers by a state-political officeholder*” (Article 333, Paragraph 2 of the Criminal Code of Georgia) in relation to the setting up of a police checkpoint in Chorchana.”

19. Given the lack of independence of the judiciary including the Constitutional Court, the chance that most of all opposition parties will be banned, and their leadership imprisoned, is considerable. This is a clear example of the abuse of politically motivated legal proceedings to silence opposition and dissenting voices. As emphasised in [Resolution 2624 \(2025\)](#), the banning of the democratic opposition and imprisonment of its leadership would effectively establish a one-party dictatorship in Georgia.

20. On 19 December 2025, Zurab Japaridze (Girchi – More Freedom) was released from prison after serving his sentence for refusing to appear before the above mentioned Tsulukiani Commission. On 22 December 2025, the Tbilisi City Court set a 30 000 GEL bail bond and ordered him to surrender his passport in connection with the aforementioned 'sabotage' case. On 23 January 2026, Giorgi Vashadze (Strategy Aghmashenebeli) was released from prison after serving his sentence for refusing to appear before the Tsulukiani Commission, as was Nika Gvaramia on 12 February 2026. Both men have also been charged in the so-called “sabotage” case. The Tbilisi City Court has also set a 30,000 GEL bail bond for both men and ordered the surrender of their passports. In a separate development, Nika Maleia (Ahali) was sentenced to an additional 18 months in prison for throwing water at a judge during a heated hearing about his controversial arrest. He is also charged in the so-called “sabotage case.”

21. The crackdown is not limited to the opposition leadership. There has been a series of arrests and criminal proceedings levied against current and former high-level GD officials for corruption, money laundering, and abuse of office. These individuals include former Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili. On 12 January 2026, Mr Garibashvili entered into a plea bargain with the Prosecutor General's Office, whereby he will serve five years in prison for serious money laundering offences. These arrests are widely perceived as being part of an internal power struggle within the ruling elite. However, irrespective of this power struggle, these arrests highlight the ongoing prevalence of widespread corruption at the highest levels of Georgian society. It is therefore important that the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) and the Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (Moneyval) closely monitor the developments in Georgia in respect to the fight against corruption and money laundering.

22. Despite insisting that the next elections will only take place in 2028, the parliament has recently adopted several amendments to the election legislation that are considered to be particularly advantageous for the ruling majority. On 17 December 2025, the Georgian Parliament abolished the right of the sizeable Georgian diaspora to vote abroad. Voting in elections, referendums and plebiscites can now only take place within Georgia's State borders. On 2 March 2026, the parliament adopted in first reading a number of limitations on international observers while granting the right to the Central Election Commission (CEC) to decide by decree on the rules for photo, video, and audio recordings during election commission sessions.

### **3. Civil society, media and academia**

23. As highlighted by the Assembly on numerous occasions, a dynamic and pluralistic civil society is essential for a well-functioning democracy. This is especially the case in Georgia where civil society has historically played a pivotal role in the country's democratic development and has been a crucial partner and reservoir of democratic expertise. The Assembly has therefore on several occasions expressed its deepest concern about the increasingly shrinking space for civil society to operate. It condemned the continued crackdown on civil society organisations (CSOs) and their leadership through the abuse of controversial legislation ostensibly aimed at regulating the transparency of foreign influence, such as the Foreign Agent Registration Act, the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence, and the Law on Grants.

24. Regrettably the crackdown has continued unabated, and the continuing existence of a viable and diverse civil society is now very much in doubt.

25. The Georgian Parliament, on 16 April and 2 June 2025, adopted the Law on Grants. This law requires international donors, including the Council of Europe and its member States, to obtain the Georgian Government's approval before providing funds or assistance to Georgian CSOs. Receiving an unauthorised grant will result in the local organisation being fined twice the amount received. Numerous CSOs have been informed that they will be subjected to inspections to ensure compliance with the transparency legislation and the Law on Grants. These inspections were originally to be carried out by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) However the ACB was abolished and its tasks taken over by the State Audit Service (see below), which is directly responsible to the Prime Minister. Civil society representatives have underscored that the cumulative effect of these laws is impeding their proper functioning and that their continued existence is at risk. Numerous CSOs have ceased their operations. Several of the larger organisations are still continuing their operations, albeit often in reduced format, but with considerable risks for their staff and volunteers.

26. On 10 April 2025, the Monitoring Committee requested an opinion on the Law on the Registration of Foreign Agents, the amendments to the law on grants and other laws relating to “foreign influence”. In its opinion<sup>13</sup> adopted on 9 and 10 October 2025, the Venice Commission concluded that “the legal regime established by GEOFARA risks undermining the rule of law, civic space, and democratic freedoms” and recommended this law to be repealed. With regard to the Law on Grants, the Venice Commission considered that the amendments “provide no clear and objective criteria for refusal and contain insufficient safeguards, thereby leaving wide scope for arbitrary or discriminatory application. The extensive investigatory and enforcement powers of the Bureau, including the power to order immediate seizure, combined with constrained procedural timelines and disproportionate sanctions, further undermine fairness and due process”. It therefore recommended that these amendments be repealed. Moreover, the Venice Commission also considered the amendments to the Law on Broadcasting, that introduced a blanket ban on foreign funding for broadcasters. In the view of the Venice Commission, these amendments “undermine media pluralism and fail the standards of necessity and proportionality.” It therefore recommended that these amendments be repealed. Only with regard to amendments to the Law on Political Association of Citizens, which prohibit political parties from receiving in-kind support<sup>14</sup> from legal entities or associations in Georgia or abroad, the Venice Commission concluded that they “fall within the permissible national margin of discretion of a country.”

27. It is regrettable that the authorities, who had declined to meet and co-operate with the Venice Commission during the preparation and adoption of this, as well as other recent opinions, completely dismissed this opinion and its recommendations. Prime Minister Kobakhidze reportedly told journalists following the adoption of the opinion by the Venice Commission that “The Venice Commission is one of the most frivolous European structures [...] It has turned from a legal expertise centre into an ordinary body serving the interest of the global war party [...] We cannot take their conclusions seriously.”

28. On 17 December 2025, the Georgian Parliament abolished the Anti-Corruption Bureau and the Personal Data Protection Service, transferring their functions to the State Audit Service. This is another sign that power is increasingly concentrated in the hands of Prime Minister Kobakhidze, as he consolidates his power within the Georgian Dream party.

29. The assault on civil society and independent media<sup>15</sup> has been continuing in 2026. On 28 January 2026, the Georgian Dream majority announced its intention to introduce further changes to the Law on Grants and the Law on Political Unions of Citizens.<sup>16</sup> On 2 February 2026, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights urged the Georgian Parliament to reject these amendments which are “stifling civil society” and are “inconsistent with Georgia’s obligations under international law to guarantee the right to freedom of association”.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, these amendments were subsequently adopted by the Georgian Parliament in final reading already on 4 March 2026. The amendments to the Law on Grants will extend its provisions to local branches of foreign organisations, as well as to foreign organisations registered in Georgia. Additionally, the definition of a grant was widened to include technical assistance, donations in kind and salaries paid to Georgian experts by international organisations. Breaching the Law on Grants will now result in criminal liability, with prison sentences of up to six years. The amendments to the Law on Political Unions of Citizens bar any individual working for a ‘foreign agent’ from joining a political party or an “organisation with declared party-political objectives” for eight years. Additionally, the leader of a political party that receives foreign funding in violation of the amended Law on Political Unions of Citizens will be subject to criminal liability, with punishments ranging from fines and community service to up to six years’ imprisonment.<sup>18</sup> On 17 March 2026, the Monitoring Committee requested an opinion of the Venice Commission on amendments to the Law on Grants, the Law on the Political Union of Citizens and the Criminal Code, as well as related legislation, as adopted by the Georgian Parliament on 4 March 2026. If adopted before the June session we will cover these two opinions in an addendum to this report.

30. On 15 April 2026, the parliament adopted, under an accelerated procedure, amendments to the Law on Grants that introduced some exemptions for diplomatic missions and international organisations, as well as banks. According to these amendments, funds of diplomatic missions and international organisations that are used for “activities arising from the political or public interests, approaches, or relations of a foreign

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13. [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” - Venice Commission of the Council of Europe.](#)

14. Including such things as free lectures or seminars.

15. [Georgia moves to tighten restrictive media funding laws, add lengthy jail terms - Committee to Protect Journalists.](#)

16. Commonly known as the Law on Political Parties.

17. [Georgian Parliament should reject amendments stifling civil society - Commissioner for Human Rights.](#)

18. [GD Announces New Restrictions on Receiving Grants, Party Membership, ‘External Lobbying’ – Civil Georgia.](#)

government or a foreign political party” will not be considered grants requiring government approval.”<sup>19</sup> However, the Chairperson of the Legal Affairs Committee of the Georgian Parliament has stressed that “if an embassy provides funds to any natural or legal person, aimed at shaping policy in Georgia and influencing the public, this will be considered a grant and will require agreement with the government”.<sup>20</sup>

31. In the 2026 Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Georgia’s ranking decreased from 114th place out of 180 countries in 2025 to a 131st place in 2026, continuing the decline from 2024 when Georgia ranked 103<sup>rd</sup>. According to the RSF report: “Official interference undermines efforts to improve press freedom. The environment remains hostile for independent and opposition media, with a growing number of verbal and physical attacks against journalists. The adoption and tightening of laws on “foreign influence” and “family values” further marginalise journalists, expose them to censorship and significantly reduce space for free speech”.<sup>21</sup>

32. Academia in Georgia have been a source of dissent and protest against the recent developments in Georgia. There are increasing indications that, as a result, the authorities wish to crackdown on the academic freedom of universities and educational institutions with a view to bringing them under political control<sup>22</sup> of the authorities.<sup>23</sup> Several interlocutors, including from the international community, have expressed their concern about the rapidly shrinking space for academic freedom in Georgia. On 4 February 2026, in an accelerated procedure, the Georgian Parliament adopted a proposal of the authorities for a far-reaching education reform, that, inter alia, increases the power of the government to reorganise universities and appoint university administrators, and which dramatically reduces the number of university faculties<sup>24</sup>. Under the policy of “One City, One Faculty”, many universities are forced to close numerous faculties. These closures seem to disproportionately affect those universities where the student bodies have been most critical of the authorities. Several interlocutors have expressed concern about corruption risks with regard to the privatisation of the now surplus university properties.

#### **4. Freedom of assembly, police brutality, impunity, lack of effective investigations, and abuse of legal proceedings**

33. Since the adoption of [Resolution 2624 \(2025\)](#), the authorities have, regrettably, continued their relentless crackdown on freedom of expression and assembly. This has included the use of repressive legislation and politically motivated legal proceedings against civil society, the independent media, opposition forces, and individual protesters. These seemingly politically motivated prosecutions, which appear to have no other objective than to silence dissenting voices, raise the spectre of political prisoners and are incompatible with a democratic society and membership obligations.

34. On 4 October 2025, the day of the local elections in Georgia, a large-scale protest rally against the country’s democratic backsliding was organised. Regrettably, while overall peaceful, a small number of protesters reportedly tried to storm the presidential palace which resulted in skirmishes between these protesters and the police guarding the presidential palace. Several interlocutors have raised questions about the small number of police guarding the presidential palace during the demonstration and the possible presence of agents provocateurs. The authorities have tried to paint these actions as a foreign instigated attempt of a violent coup d’état and have used the unrest on 4 October 2025 as a pretext for a crackdown on the daily peaceful demonstrations that have taken place on Rustaveli Avenue and around the country since December 2024.

35. Subsequently, on 16 October 2025, under an accelerated procedure, the Georgian Parliament adopted a series of amendments to the Law on Administrative Offences and the Criminal Code that substantially increased the administrative and criminal penalties for actions such as covering faces, blocking roads and participating in assemblies that officials have ordered to be terminated.<sup>25</sup>

36. On 24 October 2025, the Georgian Public Defender (Ombudsperson) requested an urgent legal opinion of the OSCE/ODIHR on these amendments as adopted on 16 October 2025. This urgent opinion was issued by the OSCE/ODIHR on 12 November 2025. In this opinion, the OSCE/ODIHR concluded that the

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19. [Disputed Parliament Adopts New Exemptions to Controversial Grants Law – Civil Georgia.](#)

20. Ibid.

21. [Georgia | RSF.](#)

22. [Georgian Technical University Rector Seeks Seizure of University of Georgia Property – Civil Georgia.](#)

23. [Opinion | Georgia’s University Reform Is Not a Neutral Initiative. It’s a Political Act – Civil Georgia.](#)

24. [Georgia overhauls higher education as it shifts away from the West | Reuters.](#)

25. [Georgian Dream Adopts Harsher Penalties For Protest Offenses – Civil Georgia.](#)

amendments raised “serious concerns about Georgia’s lack of compliance with international human rights obligations, especially Articles 9, 19 and 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Article 5, 10, 11 and 18 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and should be repealed.”<sup>26</sup> Despite these recommendations, on 10 December 2025, the Georgian Parliament further tightened protest rules by extending them fully to pedestrian areas, among other measures. Subsequently, On 20 January 2026, the Georgian Public Defender filed an appeal to the Constitutional Court regarding the restrictions introduced in the Law on Demonstrations and the Law on Administrative Offences. In his appeal, the Public Defender cited proportionality concerns including with regard to the blanket ban on covering faces and introduction of criminal liability for blocking roads.<sup>27</sup> However, to our knowledge, at the moment of writing, the Constitutional Court has not started its consideration of this appeal.

37. As we mentioned, on 26 November 2025, Nika Melia, co-chairperson of Akhali, was sentenced to an additional 18-month prison term for contempt of the Court, in relation to a courtroom incident on 30 May 2025, when he threw water from his drinking bottle at the presiding court judge during a heated hearing about his controversial arrest. In a case that was widely condemned domestically and internationally, on 24 March 2026, Elene Khoshtaria, leader of the Droa party, which is part of the “Opposition Alliance” received a one-and-a-half-year prison sentence for “damaging or destroying property resulting in substantial damage”<sup>28</sup> as a result of writing “Russian Dream” on a Georgian Dream campaign banner of Tbilisi Mayor and Georgian Dream Secretary General Kakha Kaladze. These disproportionate sentences give credence to the allegations of their political motivated nature.<sup>29</sup> Ms Khoshtaria and several other female detainees have alleged to be subjected to degrading treatment and human rights abuses while in detention and have written to the Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner to investigate.<sup>30</sup>

38. Regrettably, and despite the Assembly’s clear calls to the contrary, including in [Resolution 2624 \(2025\)](#), no effective investigations have been conducted into police brutality and other human rights abuses committed during demonstrations, nor into the many reports of torture and ill-treatment of demonstrators during their arrest and detention. As it noted in [Resolution 2624 \(2025\)](#): this is in stark contrast to the lengthy prison sentences handed down to protesters on questionable and fabricated charges.

39. On 18 February 2026, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), published its report on its periodic visits to Georgia of 18 to 29 November 2024 and from 21 to 22 January 2025.<sup>31</sup> The CPT reported that it had been “inundated with allegations of ill-treatment” by persons detained in connection to the 29 November 2024 demonstrations who “bore visible injuries, some of them severe and having required urgent medical attention”. The CPT noted that there appeared to be “a clear pattern of police behaviour during the demonstration: masked and hooded, unidentifiable police officers reportedly made arrests in groups, punching and kicking detained persons indiscriminately all over their bodies, threatening them. Further, the beatings were allegedly carried out repeatedly, by several officers at a time, including whilst the persons had their hands cuffed behind their backs. In nearly all cases, the violence stopped once persons were handed over to non-masked police officers.”<sup>32</sup> The CPT expressed its concern about these allegations of police brutality and the lack of effective investigation into them. It reiterated its call to the Georgian authorities to address impunity and expressed its concern about the abolition of the Special Investigation Service (SIS) and the transfer of its functions to the Prosecutor’s Office, which it considered to be “a move in precisely the opposite direction”.<sup>33</sup>

40. Since the start of the protests in December 2024, there have been reports of participants in the demonstrations, and journalists who covered them having long lasting health problems and other side effects after been sprayed by the water cannons that were being used to disperse the protests. For more than a year, CSOs and others have been asking the authorities to provide information about the any chemicals mixed into the water. The authorities denied initially that any chemicals were mixed into the water that was sprayed by the water cannons. This issue was brought to the foreground on 1 December 2025, when the BBC published the results of an investigation which concluded that there was evidence to suggest that a First World War chemical compound named “camite” may have been used in the water cannons.

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26. <https://www.osce.org/sites/default/files/f/documents/4/1/601503.pdf>.

27. [Public Defender Challenges Protest-Related Restrictions, Penalties in Constitutional Court – Civil Georgia](#).

28. It should be noted that according to the charges brought by the Prosecutor, the damage amounted only to a mere GEL 570 (approximately 182 Euro).

29. [Georgia: Opposition politician Elene Khoshtaria given politically motivated prison sentence for graffiti - Amnesty International](#).

30. [Georgian opposition leader, detainees appeal to CoE over alleged abuses in detention facilities - Georgia Today](#).

31. [Council of Europe anti-torture Committee \(CPT\) publishes report on its 2024/2025 visit to Georgia - CPT](#).

32. *Ibid.*

33. *Ibid.*

41. This report has sparked a storm of reactions both inside and outside Georgia. Although the authorities decried it as fake news distributed by deep State actors, a former Georgian Minister of the Interior confirmed that his ministry had previously purchased camite but ceased using it in 2012. The Prime Minister later admitted that chemicals indeed had been mixed into the water that was used by the water cannons to disperse protesters, but he denied that this had been camite or a similar agent. Although police forces are permitted to use chemicals for crowd control under international law, provided they are considered proportionate and have only short-term effects, the use of chemical warfare agents such as camite raises serious human rights concerns. Therefore, the Monitoring Committee has asked the Human Rights Commissioner of the Council of Europe to investigate the alleged use of prohibited chemical agents and their human rights implications during the police dispersal of the protest in Georgia.

42. On 10 December 2025, the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, Michael O'Flaherty, wrote to the General Prosecutor of Georgia to express his concern about the lack of tangible progress in the investigations into the disproportionate use of force by law enforcement against protesters and journalists during the demonstrations in Tbilisi. These investigations were transferred to the Prosecutor General's office following the abolishment of the Special Investigative Service. He noted the numerous allegations of ill-treatment, including torture and threats of sexual violence against women, which had been documented by Georgia's Public Defender (Ombudsperson) and for which there had been no accountability. In addition, in relation to the alleged use of camite, the Commissioner raised concerns about the "legality, necessity and proportionality" of the use of force, "especially considering official acknowledgements that chemicals were mixed into water cannons during protests."<sup>34</sup> However, on 21 April 2026, Prime Minister Kobakhidze announced the appointment of Sulkhan Tamazashvili as the new Minister of the Interior. Mr Tamazashvili is the former head of the Tbilisi Police Department and has been sanctioned by several countries for his role in suppressing the demonstrations in 2024 and 2025. This raises questions about the Georgian authorities' willingness to genuinely investigate the allegations of police brutality and other human rights abuses committed by law enforcement personnel during the 2024 and 2025 demonstrations.

43. The Commissioner visited Georgia on 14 and 15 April 2026. While welcoming the long overdue decision by the Ministry of the Interior that all law enforcement personnel should wear visible identification numbers, he expressed again his concern that, until now, no law enforcement personnel has been brought to justice for the violent dispersal of the protest in 2024 and 2025. He also repeated his call for an "independent and thorough" investigation into the use of chemicals to disperse demonstrations. He also expressed his concerns about the cumulative effect of the increasingly restrictive legislation that limits freedom of Assembly and Expression. In that context he urged the Georgian authorities to repeal the Transparency of Foreign Influence Law and the Foreign Agents Registration Law (GEOFARA) as well as any other "oppressive" legislation.<sup>35</sup>

44. On 11 December 2025, the ECtHR delivered its grand chamber judgment in the case *Tsaava and Others v. Georgia*.<sup>36</sup> It held that Georgia had violated Articles 3 (prohibition of torture), 10 (freedom of expression) and 11 (freedom of assembly and association) of the ECHR during the violent dispersal of protests in Tbilisi on 20 and 21 June 2019. This case is under enhanced supervision. Unfortunately, the Georgian authorities construed this judgment as a justification for their decision to charge former Prime Minister Gakharia, who was Minister of the Interior at the time. This case should be seen in connection with the case *Makarashvili and others v. Georgia* where the Court found violations of Article 6 (right to a fair trial) and Article 11 (freedom of assembly and association) in the context of a demonstration that took place in November 2019. The execution of this case is also still under supervision of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.<sup>37</sup> The pattern of Court judgments against Georgia finding violations of the Convention in relation to freedom of assembly continued on 20 January 2026, when, in the case of *Mekvabishvili v. Georgia*,<sup>38</sup> the ECtHR ruled that Georgia had violated articles 6 (right to a fair trial) and 11 (freedom of assembly and association) of the ECHR when it convicted a protester during the March 2023 demonstrations against the so-called foreign agent's law for disobeying lawful police orders, basing its decision solely on police testimonies. The European Court found that nothing in the case file suggested that the demonstration as a whole was intended to obstruct parliamentary work, and that the authorities had failed to demonstrate that they had "relevant and sufficient grounds to disperse the demonstration" or that this action had been "necessary and proportionate". The Georgian authorities, who often emphasise their willingness to abide with

34. [Letter to the Prosecutor General of Georgia.](#)

35. [Georgia: Commissioner O'Flaherty calls for law enforcement accountability, repeal of restrictive 'foreign influence' laws and sustained support for the human rights of internally displaced persons - Commissioner for Human Rights.](#)

36. [Tsaava and Others v. Georgia.](#)

37. [Makarashvili and others vs Georgia - Status of execution.](#)

38. [Mekvabishvili v. Georgia.](#)

the Convention, are urged to fully implement these judgments, as well as the other 77 cases pending execution that are being supervised by the Committee of Ministers, including the cases *Kezerashvili v. Georgia*<sup>39</sup> and *Tsintsabadze group v. Georgia*<sup>40</sup>, which concern issues of direct relevance to the finding in this report.<sup>41</sup>

## 5. Miscellaneous observations

45. On 4 November 2025, the European Commission adopted its 2025 annual Enlargement Package. Its report on Georgia stated that it witnessed “serious democratic backsliding, with a rapid erosion of the rule of law and fundamental rights being severely restricted” and restrictive laws targeting activists, civil society and independent media, threaten the survival of democratic foundations”. It therefore concluded that “The basic foundations of democracy were significantly undermined during the reporting period. The Georgian authorities’ attack on democratic institutions and fundamental freedoms through hostile rhetoric, constant spreading of disinformation, intimidation, repressive actions and legislative measures is a drastic setback for the country’s democracy. Civil liberties, the principle of checks and balances, and democratic decision-making have been eroded” as a result of which “Georgia does not have a viable path to the European Union unless conditions change dramatically. It is now a candidate country in name only.”<sup>42</sup>

46. On 29 January 2026, 24 countries<sup>43</sup> invoked the so-called OSCE Moscow Mechanism in response to the “deteriorating human rights situation in Georgia”.<sup>44</sup> The report of the expert appointed in the framework of the Moscow mechanism was published on 12 March 2026.<sup>45</sup> Unfortunately the Georgian authorities have dismissed the report and the State Security Service subsequently summoned former Public Defender (Ombudsperson) Ucha Nanuashvili, and reportedly also others, over their communications with the expert appointed under the Moscow Mechanism.<sup>46</sup> It should be emphasised that the findings and conclusions of the report prepared under the Moscow Mechanism largely coincide with those of the Assembly. We therefore fully support the OSCE Participating States in their call for the full implementation of the recommendations made in this report.

47. We reiterate our readiness for dialogue. However, this should be based on the shared understanding that membership of the Council of Europe is a privilege that comes with membership rights as well as obligations. The principles of our organisation, as well as the obligations stemming from membership and the need incumbent on all member States to honour these obligations cannot be put into question or negotiated.

48. It is clear that any initiative to ban democratic opposition parties and to criminally prosecute their leadership on politically motivated and trumped-up charges is unacceptable in a democracy. The Assembly should therefore insist that the authorities repeal their appeal to the Constitutional Court to ban the democratic opposition parties and to end the unjustified and politically motivated prosecution of its leadership.

49. The continued relentless crackdown on freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, including through repressive legislation and the abuse of politically motivated legal proceedings against civil society, independent media, opposition forces and individual protesters should end. The seemingly politically motivated prosecutions with no other objective than to silence dissenting voices, raises the spectre of political prisoners and is incompatible with a democratic society and membership obligations. The Assembly, in [Resolution 1900 \(2012\)](#) has elaborated a clear definition of political prisoner that could guide the discussions on this topic. The repressive legislation that was adopted in 2024 and 2025 should be fully repealed, followed by the adoption of a completely new Code of Administrative Offences that should be drafted in close consultation with the Council of Europe to ensure its compliance with European norms and standards including the ECHR.

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39. Violations of Article 6 § 1 (right to a fair trial) on account of a lack of objective impartiality of the Supreme Court.

40. Lack of effective investigation leading to a violation of Article 2 (right to Life) of the Convention.

41. [Georgia - Department for the Execution of Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights](#).

42. [Georgia Report 2025 - Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood](#).

43. Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Iceland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

44. [24 Countries Invoke OSCE Moscow Mechanism on Georgia – Civil Georgia](#).

45. [Moscow Mechanism Report Georgia](#).

46. [Ex-Ombudsman Summoned to SSSG Over ‘Communication’ With Moscow Mechanism Expert – Civil Georgia](#).

50. Civil society in Georgia plays a pivotal role in the country's democratic development and is a crucial reservoir of democratic expertise. The increasingly shrinking space in which civil society can operate should be reversed and the crackdown on CSOs and their leadership through the abuse of controversial legislation should end. The Transparency of Foreign Influence Law and Foreign Agents Registration Law (GEOFARA), as well as the recent amendments to the Law on grants should be fully and unconditionally repealed.

51. The credible allegations of police brutality, ill-treatment and torture by law enforcement representatives as well as all other human rights abuses in the contexts of the demonstrations in Tbilisi – including the alleged use of prohibited chemical agents to disperse protesters -, should be transparently and effectively investigated in line with the requirements of the ECHR for the right to an effective investigation. The climate of impunity for such human rights abuses should end.

52. As a result of the relentless crackdown on the democratic opposition, civil society, the independent media, and dissent against the authorities in general – compounded by the extreme social and political polarisation in the country – it is highly doubtful that a political environment that would allow for the conduct of genuinely democratic elections actually still exists in Georgia. The reestablishment of a democratic civic and political environment is a key priority.

53. We remain fully ready to engage in a constructive, results oriented dialogue on these priorities with a view to ensuring that Georgia will again start honouring its basic membership obligations to the Council of Europe.

54. In [Resolution 2624 \(2025\)](#), the Assembly urged the relevant bodies of the Council of Europe to use all available means, including those under Article 52 of the ECHR. In addition, it invited all member States to use interstate applications to the ECtHR under Article 33 of the Convention, to ensure that Georgia fully honours all the standards and obligations stemming from Council of Europe membership. Regrettably Article 52 has not yet been invoked.