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**BRUTAL CRACKDOWN ON
PROTESTORS AND JOURNALISTS
IN GEORGIA: “THEY MAY HAVE
BROKEN OUR BONES, BUT THEY
WON’T BREAK OUR SPIRITS”**

**TESTIMONIES OF SURVIVORS OF HUMAN RIGHTS
VIOLATIONS AMIDST PROTESTS IN NOVEMBER-
DECEMBER 2024 IN GEORGIA**



“Protest dispersal [in Georgia] has never been so brutal in the 21st century in terms of scope and intentionality,”

Lela Tsiskarishvili, the Executive Director of The Georgian Centre For Psychosocial And Medical Rehabilitation Of Torture Victims (GCRT).

On 28 November 2024, the ruling Georgian Dream party, which recently claimed parliamentary election victory, announced its decision to put on hold all negotiations related to joining the European Union, until 2028. This decision sparked mass protests, with hundreds of thousands of people taking to the streets of Tbilisi and other cities across Georgia, seeing the decision as reorienting the country away from Europe and towards Russia. According to polls conducted by the International Republican Institute in 2023, 85% of Georgians favoured joining the European Union, a 10% increase since the beginning of Russia’s 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Since 29 November, mass protests have taken place in the capital, with several thousands protesting peacefully in front of parliament and several central streets; other protests have taken place across the country. The police have responded by deploying water cannons, tear gas, and rubber bullets, leading to escalation. The ensuing violence and clashes have left many injured, with video footage capturing the brutal beatings of peaceful demonstrators and journalists covering the protests. Police have also pursued protestors outside of demonstrations, conducting searches and arrests in their homes and offices. At the time of writing more than 460 have been detained, of these, 430 face administrative charges and more than 30 are facing criminal prosecution.¹

Reports indicate that more than 300 protesters, i.e., the majority of those detained, have been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment by special police forces – with many cases amounting to torture. More than 80 persons have been reported hospitalized with severe injuries including fractured facial and other bones, and head injuries including concussions.² The scale of the unlawful force and torture and other ill-treatment used by police suggests that these are operating under government sanctioned directives, and emboldened by impunity.

The courts have largely ignored mounting evidence of torture and violations of fair trial rights. More than 160 people have been fined and held in administrative detention.³ The police and entire criminal justice system appear weaponized to intimidate, harass and crackdown on protestors and silence peaceful dissent, reflecting institutionalized repression.

“Police terror”⁴ described by rights groups has recently escalated with the outsourcing the street terror to groups of unidentified masked individuals who threaten and assault protestors and media personnel with police consent.

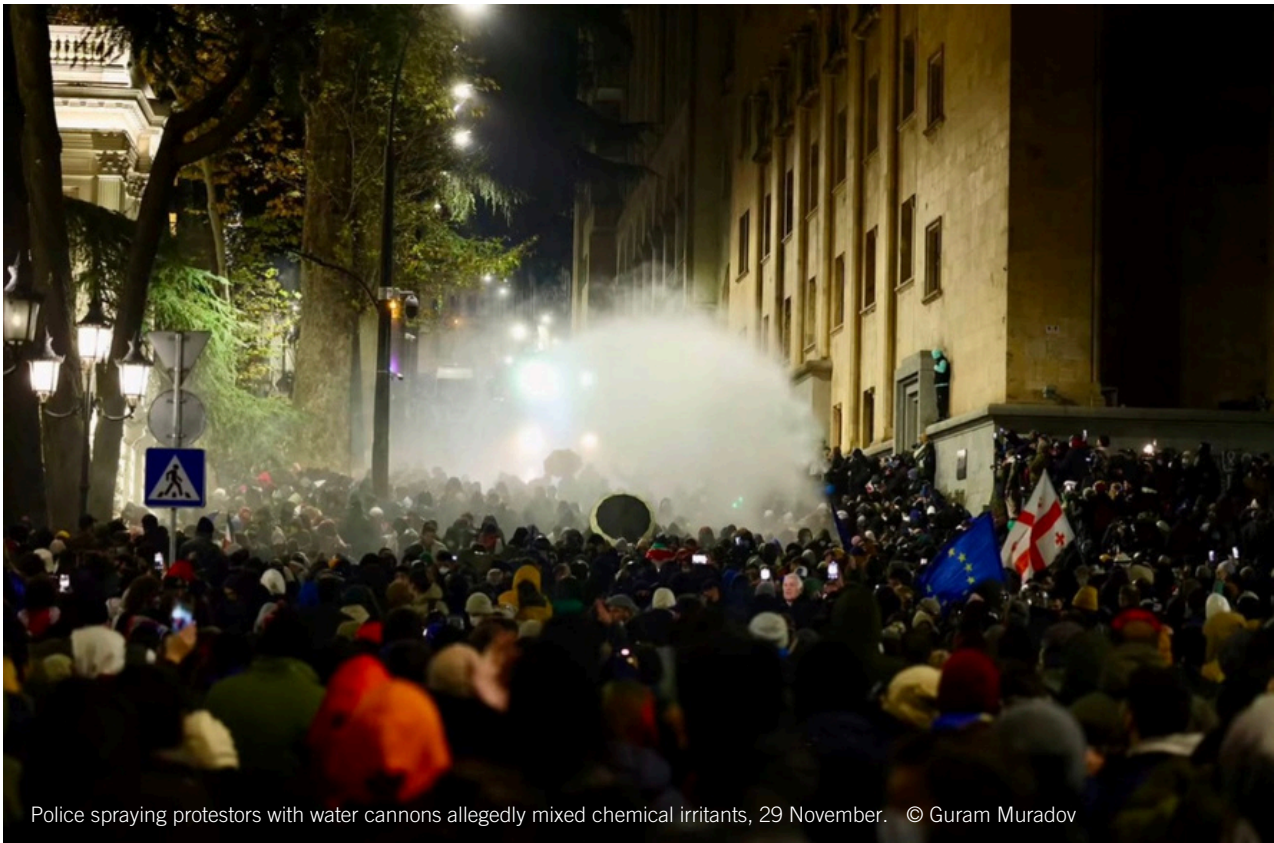
This briefing documents human rights violations through case studies and analysis, based on testimonies of injured protestors and journalists, analysis of reports and interviews with Georgian human rights defenders, and video and photo documentation of the protests. The analysis points to systemic, state-sanctioned human rights violations aimed at suppressing protests, coupled with the cycle of injustice at every stage.

1. "Civil Georgia." CSOs Joint Statement Condemning Arrests, Torture, and Repression in Georgia. Civil Georgia, 10 Dec. 2024, <https://civil.ge/archives/643477> Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia. "Briefing at the Ministry of Internal Affairs." Ministry of Internal Affairs, accessed December 10, 2024. <https://www.police.ge/en/brifingi-shinagan-saqmeta-saministroshi/16515>.

2. ibid

3. ibid

4. Georgian Young Lawyers' Association. News. 10 Days of Terror Against the Peaceful Protest, 08 Dec. 2024, 10:44, available at <https://gyla.ge/en/post/terroris10dge>.



Police spraying protestors with water cannons allegedly mixed chemical irritants, 29 November. © Guram Muradov

Amnesty International is deeply concerned by the escalating repression of protest in Georgia and calls for the Georgian government to uphold and ensure the human rights of everyone in the country including the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. We also call on the international community to act in solidarity with people peacefully exercising their human rights in Georgia.

The protests, which began on 29 November with thousands demonstrating peacefully in front of the Georgian Parliament, have been repeatedly dispersed with excessive force by special police forces deployed often on a daily basis.

According to the Georgian Ombudsperson and human rights groups monitoring the protests, in most instances, the demonstrations have been peaceful at the time of their dispersal.⁵ While there were initial sporadic instances of some protesters throwing water bottles and fireworks, these were largely a response to the police's unlawful and excessive use of force. Moreover, these isolated incidents were used by the police as a pretext for the additional use of excessive force, and arrests, detention, torture and other ill-treatment of demonstrators.⁶

Amnesty International has documented cases of the use of excessive force against protesters and journalists. Rights groups have described police brutality during the protests against the government's halt of the European Union accession steps as "systemic and violent repressions."⁷

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5. Georgian Ombudsperson, Statement on the Dispersal of the November 29–30 Protests, available at: <https://www.ombudsman.ge/eng/akhali-ambebi/sakhalkho-damtsvelis-gantskhadeba-29-30-noembris-aktsiis-dashlis-shesakheb>; Georgian Ombudsperson, Statement Urging the Ministry of Internal Affairs to Refrain from Using Special Means Against Peaceful Protesters, available at: <https://www.ombudsman.ge/eng/akhali-ambebi/sakhalkho-damtsveli-moutsodebs-shss-s-ar-gamoiqenos-spetsialuri-sashualebebi-mshvidobiani-shekrebis-monatsileta-mimart>;
 6. Georgian Ombudsperson, Statement on the Dispersal of the Protest on Rustaveli Avenue, available at: <https://www.ombudsman.ge/eng/akhali-ambebi/sakhalkho-damtsvelis-gantskhadeba-rustavelis-gamzirze-mimdinare-aktsiis-dashlastan-dakavshirebit>.
 7. Civil.ge. GYLA Speaks of "Systematic and Violent Repression" Against Citizens: 4 December 2024: <https://civil.ge/archives/642497>

In recent days, reports and testimonies collected by Amnesty International point to ongoing and increasing instances of protesters apprehended, interrogated and detained by police while merely walking on the street, or after searches carried out in their homes or offices.

On 12 December Vato Bzhalava, a researcher from the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (Rondeli Foundation) was reported detained in the street by the police, while walking in the street.⁸ According to the Georgian Young Lawyers' association, a local rights group, since 7 December 2024, individuals have been arbitrarily taken from their houses by unknown persons; it .some of these persons not in uniform have claimed to be law enforcement, although it remains unclear whether they are such. For hours, neither lawyers nor family members⁹ informed about the individuals' location, condition and legal status. The rights groups also raised alarm that such practices may constitute enforced disappearance, which occurs when private individuals, acting with the authority, support, or consent of the state, secretly abduct, arrest, or otherwise deprive individuals of their liberty in ways that deliberately conceal their fate or whereabouts, leaving them outside the protection of the law.¹⁰

INSTANCES OF USE OF UNNECESSARY AND EXCESSIVE FORCE BY POLICE

Special force police have repeatedly used water cannons allegedly mixed with chemical irritants against peaceful demonstrators, causing burns and immobilization. Eyewitnesses and rights groups have reported serious injuries from these substances.¹¹

Additionally, police have deployed excessive amounts of tear gas, pepper spray, gas canisters and rubber bullets directly into the crowd from close range and targeted to the face, leading to panic and injuries. At least one individual was reported struck in the face by a grenade and had to be hospitalized with life-threatening injuries.¹² Amnesty International verified at least a dozen instances where protestors and journalists suffered burns, temporary vision loss and other injuries from these tactics.

8. Civil.ge. The Daily beat 12 December: <https://civil.ge/archives/644251>

9. Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, News. 10 Days of Terror Against the Peaceful Protest 8 December, 2024: <https://gyla.ge/en/post/terroris10dge>

10. Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, News. 10 Days of Terror Against the Peaceful Protest 8 December, 2024: <https://gyla.ge/en/post/terroris10dge>

11. Civil.ge. Georgian Protesters Denounce Police Brutality. 11 December 2024, <https://civil.ge/archives/639067>.

12. Publika.ge. Doctor: 22-year-old man brought from protest has fractured frontal bone and orbital wall: <https://publika.ge/eqimi-aqciidan-moyvanil-22-wlis-kacs-shublis-dzvlis-tvalbudis-kidis-kedlis-motekhiloba-aqvs/>

MARIAM NIKURADZE

On November 29, while filming from an elevated position, Mariam Nikuradze was hit by a water cannon, causing her to fall and damage her camera.

Despite this, she continued working with her phone. Later, she was hit again by a water cannon containing an irritating substance, which left her needing medical assistance.



“The water had some substance mixed in, similar to pepper spray, very powerful - it left me immobilised, so some people had to assist me to the ambulance... to recover from this substance.”

Over a thousand Georgian medical professionals issued an open appeal to the authorities to cease the use of these irritating substances on protesters and disclose which chemical agents have been used.¹³

POLICE USING VIOLENCE AGAINST PROTESTERS

In parallel to using water cannons and tear gas, police have also targeted peaceful demonstrators by encircling, attacking and beating them in groups and dragging individual protesters behind police lines and subjecting them to beatings with fists, feet, and batons.¹⁴ Instances of protesters being beaten are widely documented, including cases where protesters are not resisting, or lying unconscious on the ground. The beatings were carried out by special force police officers, fully equipped, masked, and without visible identification.

13. JAMnews. Medical Professionals in Georgia Demand a Halt to the Use of Chemical Agents on Protesters. 12 Dec. 2024, <https://jam-news.net/medical-professionals-in-georgia-demand-a-halt-to-the-use-of-chemical-agents-on-protesters/>.

14. Civil Georgia. Georgian Police Detain Opposition Politician, Hundreds of Protesters. 8 Dec. 2024, <https://civil.ge/archives/640390>.

ZVIAD MAISASHVILI

“We were encircled by police officers, within moments, they surrounded me, threw me on the ground, kicking my face and head. I screamed do not hit me and I blacked out... The next thing I remember I woke up in the hospital I could not believe it was a policeman going it.”



Zviad Maisashvili, a 23-year-old, was brutally assaulted by multiple police officers in an incident broadcast live on television. He was encircled and beaten by police after attempting to flee from water cannons and pepper spray. Video footage of the assault shows him lying on the asphalt, dazed from being beaten, when two fully geared officers approach him and take turns delivering powerful kicks to his face one after another, causing him to collapse and lose conscience.¹⁵ He was hospitalized with concussion and a broken nose and broken teeth.

GELA MEGRELIDZE

On the night of 1 December, Gela Megrelidze, a photographer, was among the last 30 protesters standing in front of the Georgian Parliament. Suddenly, special force officers in black with no identifying signs emerged from behind the iron fence and attacked a group of young demonstrators, who were holding flags.

Gela saw two officers grabbing a young boy and begin to drag him away. Before he could react, two officers seized him from behind. They threw him to the ground, kicking him repeatedly. They then dragged Gela by his neck and legs, pulling him roughly for about 60 meters into a police cordon.

“Every single officer, there must have been about 50 of them, took turns kicking and hitting me as laid on the ground trying to cover my head... Insults and swear words were hurled nonstop.”

15. Video of the Zviad Maisashvili being beaten by the police:
https://www.instagram.com/reel/DC-rySbBEFG/?utm_source=ig_embed&ig_rid=caf0e1e6-9d09-4bdb-836d-f8b4bcd74f4c

TARGETING OF JOURNALISTS

Police have also targeted journalists covering the crackdown against the protesters. Over 50 journalists have been reported injured, have had their equipment destroyed by the police and otherwise prevented from carrying out their professional activities, despite clearly identifying themselves as journalists with jackets, press badges, and equipment. Journalists have been subjected to degrading and humiliating treatment.

DAVIT TSAGARELI

On 29 November, while conducting a live broadcast of a rally dispersal for the Georgian service of "Radio Liberty", journalist Davit Tsagareli was attacked by special force police. They punched him in the stomach, stomped and kicked him, shouting obscenities. The pain was so sharp that he momentarily fainted.

“It was clear they attacked me for being a journalist. Recently this whole thing has become a hunt for journalists. I have covered wars and the revolution but never felt more endangered. I fear for myself and my family, looking over my shoulder, feeling I’m being watched...”

OC Media’s Mariam Nikuradze confirms that the police targeted people who documented the protests. "OC Media has decided not to use high visibility press jackets when covering the ongoing protests in Tbilisi due to the clear targeting of media workers by riot police," she reported.

ARBITRARY ARREST AND TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT IN DETENTION

The vast majority of detained persons reported being tortured and otherwise ill-treated, with police causing physical injury during and after arrest. According to the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, as of 6 December, more than 400 people have been detained since the protests began on 29 November, and over 300 of those have reported experiencing ill-treatment with more than 80 requiring hospitalization.¹⁶

Protesters were beaten and verbally abused as they were taken to police lines ("cordons") and police vans, as well as during transportation to pre-trial detention centres.

Human rights groups have reported a coordinated approach to beatings and other forms of ill-treatment, where police officers take turns to inflict ill-treatment, openly giving orders and supervising instances to inflict maximum harm specifically targeting sensitive areas such as the liver and head.¹⁷ Almost all detained persons also reported being subjected to insults and sexually abusive language.¹⁸

Amnesty International documented several cases of detainees subjected to brutal beatings, degrading treatment and sexual threats that appeared to be punishment to intimidate and stop people from participating in protests. Police reportedly used small, confined spaces as makeshift detention facilities to maximize suffering, while deliberately denying medical aid to those in need. Such treatment amounts to torture and other ill-treatment.

16. As of 6 December, up to 400 people have been detained during the 8 nights of protests (More than 350 on the basis of administrative offences code; while 26 on the basis of criminal grounds). Detainees on the basis of administrative offences code face charges of petty hooliganism and disobeying lawful police orders ranging from 5 to 15 days of imprisonment. (Written communication with GYLA on file)

See as well: International transparency, statistics, accessible here: <https://cutt.ly/ueX0gRmF>

17. "The detainees were subjected to coordinated violence, with officers discussing how to harm them and a supervisor directing targeted blows to sensitive areas. They faced verbal abuse, spitting, and derogatory slurs, while an overseer ensured they were not fatally injured. Upon exiting the van, they were forced through a gauntlet of officers who kicked them on their way to patrol cars". Georgia's Young Lawyers' Association. Statement on the Unjust Detention of Protesters. 2 Dec. 2024, <https://gyla.ge/en/post/dakavebulebi-sastikad-nacemia>.

18. Georgian Young Lawyers Association. News. Detained citizens are subjected to inhumane and degrading treatment. 2 December, 2024: <https://gyla.ge/en/post/dakavebulebi-sastikad-nacemia>

DAVIT ABULADZE

On 3 December Davit Abuladze, a 23-year-old deaf protester, was brutally attacked by police when returning home alone from a protest. Five masked police officers ambushed him between apartment buildings.

Despite being far from the protest location, he was beaten on the street and then in a police car, and detained for several hours without interpretation. Davit was hospitalised with severe injuries, including head trauma, a brain concussion, and eye and multiple body injuries.



“It is especially cruel to attack a deaf person, who didn’t have a chance to hear the impending attack [by the police] and flee to a safe space. The fact that he was attacked on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities is particularly harrowing.”

Tamuna Gabodze, Davit’s lawyer, Partnership for Human Rights

LAZARE MAGLAKELIDZE

“These are not isolated, spontaneous incidents by few policemen abusing their authority; it is a well-directed, organized punishment of protesters by hundreds of policemen.

I could hear them shout “the fun is going to start now” getting us to the van.”



Lazare Maglakelidze, a 20-year-old protester detained on 2 December in Tbilisi, told Amnesty International that riot police waited until journalists were not present before attacking him. Initially restrained by two officers, others soon joined in, covering his head with a raincoat and repeatedly punching him in the face. He lost consciousness during the assault, and the beating continued after he regained consciousness.

He was then placed in a minibus with three other detainees, where five special forces officers continued to beat them in the dark. The officers openly discussed their actions, even making jokes about how they were going to beat the detainees with batons. He suffered a broken nose, concussion and serious head injuries and had to be hospitalized for several days.

GIORGI CHUTKERASHVILI

“The officers outside the van were shouting insults, mocking and making insulting comments. I couldn’t breathe from the beating, and pleading them to stop hitting me in the liver... One of the officers pointed a gun and said ‘I will shoot you if you don’t give me the password on your phone.’”



Giorgi Chutkerashvili's experience was equally harrowing. Detained near the Rustaveli Theatre in Tbilisi around 4 a.m. on 2 December, Giorgi was thrown and kicked on the ground before being taken into a police van where about ten officers took turns to violently assault him as others shouted insults.

Giorgi was beaten so severely that he had spasms from liver pain. He was repeatedly hit in the nose every time he took a breath. He was forced to walk barefoot on wet ground while being beaten by every officer he passed. In the same van, with him, he said he witnessed police beating another protestor so hard in the face that he lost his teeth. Another police officer threatened the detained protestor with rape by a truncheon if he did not give his phone password. At the police station, Giorgi was given a false confession to sign, which he refused.

GIA JVARSHVILI

Human rights activist Gia Jvarsheishvili recalls the brutal assault he endured after his arrest. Forced through a 'corridor' beating him and hurling insults, he suffered broken ribs and a concussion.

Police threw him on the ground and took turns beating him before shoving him and other detainees into a police van.

"Officers stood on our bodies, stomping and kicking with their shoes. I was in unbearable pain. It became difficult to breathe. I survived by accident."



NATIA DZIDZIGURI

Natia Dzidziguri who was detained during an earlier protest in front of the Georgia State University on 19 November, reported being subjected to sexual harassment during her arrest, with police officers verbally insulting her and forcing her to kneel in the police van full of policeman and other men, instead of allowing her to sit.

At the police station, the arrest record falsely recorded the name of a female patrol inspector instead of the male officer who actually arrested her.

"I had to stay on my knees the whole time while being transported in the van with other detained protestors. When I asked them to let me sit, they pointed at me with very humiliating gestures while I was on my knees in the car."

DENIAL OF MEDICAL AID IN DETENTION

Human rights groups and lawyers representing detained protestors have reported numerous instances where police denied or delayed detainees' access to family members, lawyers and medical care, depriving them of important safeguards against torture and other ill-treatment.

“The widespread denial of timely access to medical care, which deviates from the normal practice of referring injured detainees for medical aid, raises legitimate concerns that such denial may be organized and punitive in nature, to inflict additional suffering on people detained for protesting.”

Nestan Londaridze, lawyer, Human Rights Centre

Lawyers from the Legal Aid Network interviewed by Amnesty International noted that in most cases detained protestors with significant injuries were not referred to hospitals or clinics unless there was an immediate danger of death. Many were denied first aid. This treatment, prevalent among detained protestors, raises concerns about the punitive nature of the deprivation of medical aid. In many instances severely beaten protestors were kept in police vans for more than 24 hours before being transferred to temporary detention facilities, allegedly to hide traces of beatings and other ill-treatment.

Denial of access to medical care was also reported during administrative hearings in courts, where severely beaten protestors were often transferred without having received medical aid during their previous 48-hour pre-trial detention. As a result, several detained persons have reportedly fainted during court hearings, requiring urgent hospitalization by ambulance.

Denying or unreasonably delaying prompt and adequate medical care to a seriously ill or injured person is a clear violation of a person's right to health. In some cases, this denial may amount to torture and other ill-treatment.



AVTANDIL TITVINIDZE

Avtandil Titvinidze was brutally assaulted by riot police on 30 November. He was peacefully demonstrating when several police officers attacked him and beat him on the ground, breaking his nose with a baton. Avtandil was taken into pre-trial detention, without provision of medical aid.

With an open wound, a broken nose, profuse bleeding and severe pain that made it hard to breathe, he was kept in detention and denied medical care. The detention facility's medical staff ignored his pleas, leaving him to suffer for 48 hours. His condition worsened until he became so unwell he had fainted to be hospitalized during his administrative hearing at the city court. He remained in the hospital several days, requiring urgent surgery.

"Despite profuse bleeding and repeated requests for medical assistance, police handed him a used sock to stem the bleeding. After enduring severe pain, a broken nose, and 48 hours without medical attention, Avtandil fainted in court."

Mariam Magradze, Avtandil Titvinidze's lawyer, Rights Georgia

Defense lawyers reported that in several cases detention centre personnel denied detainees timely medical care to coerce them into signing self-incriminating testimonies.

Everyone in the police department was covered in blood. About 7-8 people were in dire condition, one person with a fractured arm and his face so swollen he could not open his eyes.. .The police handed us pre-written protocols and told us things would get 'complicated' if we did not sign. Those who refused were taken directly to a pre-trial detention facility. ”

Gela Megrelidze, photographer

Gela Megrelidze, a detained protester, told Amnesty International he witnessed detainees being forced to sign pre-written testimonies where they had to falsely admit that they acted violently towards the police, before being able to receive the medical care they required.

DENIAL OF THE RIGHT TO FAIR TRIAL

At the time of writing, out of more than 400 people who have been administratively detained, 62 have been sentenced to administrative imprisonment^[KO1] of fourteen days, and more than 100 fined.¹⁹

"Arbitrarily detained individuals are deprived of their right to a fair trial. Every day, judges presiding over cases of arbitrarily detained protesters impose the harshest sanctions allowed for administrative offenses, including imprisonment—a vivid demonstration of a travesty of justice."

Nona Kurdovanidze, Chairperson, GYLA

Amnesty International has received numerous reports highlighting systematic violations of detainees' rights in protest-related arrests in Georgia. The courts appear to be routinely ignoring the mounting evidence of torture while issuing administrative sanctions against detained protesters.

Other reported violations include delays or outright denials of access to legal counsel, often for up to 48 hours, until detainees are transferred to court. Lawyers described spending hours trying to locate detainees and secure access, with police often withholding information. These delays prevent lawyers from meeting with detainees before their trials, gathering evidence, and providing an informed defence. Hearings are often scheduled at unreasonable hours, including late at night, further hindering the right to adequate time and facilities to prepare a defence. Cases involving detained activists are frequently grouped together, forcing human rights lawyers to spend entire days in courtrooms, straining their resources.

Defence lawyers reported that judges routinely deny requests for trial postponements, even for severely beaten detainees. Visible and serious injuries are ignored by the courts, even when detainees faint or become unwell during hearings and require urgent hospitalization.

Courts often impose administrative fines or sentences of up to 14 days in detention without substantive evidence, relying solely on police testimony, even when this is demonstrably false or inconsistent. For example, officers have been unable to specify where or how an alleged misdemeanour occurred or have provided accounts that contradict arrest protocols or available video evidence.

Evidence presented by defence attorneys, including video footage and testimonies exonerating detainees or exposing police misconduct, is routinely dismissed by courts. Meanwhile, prosecution cases, often based on inconsistent and unsubstantiated police accounts, are accepted as grounds for administrative and criminal liability. "Some judges even urge people arbitrarily detained for exercising their right to protest to "confess to the act committed," promising to consider the confession when determining the applicable sanction." said Nona Kurdovanidze, Chairperson, Georgian Young Lawyers' Association.

19. Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia. "Briefing at the Ministry of Internal Affairs." Ministry of Internal Affairs, accessed December 10, 2024. <https://www.police.ge/en/briefingi-shinagan-saqmeta-saministroshi/16515>.

Local human rights organizations have long raised concerns about the misuse of administrative imprisonment in Georgia, particularly against protesters. Despite being a severe restriction on individual freedom for non-criminal violations, administrative detention operates with a lower burden of proof, allowing judges to base decisions almost exclusively on police testimony.

Amnesty International is concerned that these widespread violations illustrate the denial of the rights of protesters including the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and fair trial rights, as part of the government's efforts to crush peaceful dissent.

ZVIAD RATIANI

"The court didn't accept the video evidence, only the medical report. They didn't even watch the video showing Zviad's arrest. Instead, they only listened to one police officer, even though the video showed riot police arresting Zviad, not the patrol officer who testified."

Nestan Londaridze, lawyer of Zviad Ratiani, Human Rights Center



On 29 November Zviad Ratiani, a poet and activist, was severely beaten while in detention following his participation in a protest in Tbilisi. His lawyer, Nestan Londaridze from the Human Rights Center, initially had difficulty locating Ratiani but eventually found her severely injured client at the Zahesi temporary detention centre. Despite his injuries, Ratiani was held in pre-trial custody for 48 hours instead of the standard 24 hours.

Ratiani had to be transported by ambulance from the detention centre to the hospital, where he was diagnosed with multiple fractures to his nose and chest bone, requiring surgical intervention. When the trial resumed, the court dismissed video evidence of his mistreatment presented by his lawyer. Ratiani was sentenced to eight days of administrative detention for hooliganism and police disobedience—charges based solely on the testimony of a single police officer.

WIDESPREAD HARASSMENT AND INTIMIDATION BY STATE-AFFILIATED GROUPS

Since early December, cases of harassment, intimidation and violence against protesters have escalated beyond those by law enforcement agents, involving unidentified individuals, masked and armed with guns who intimidate and attack protesters and journalists. These men, ostensibly affiliated with the authorities, have appeared to act with police complicity in several instances.²⁰

Video evidence and eyewitness accounts of the incidents of attacks and gun threats, occurring in the presence of police without them taking action to prevent it, show that the police failed to intervene and demonstrated complicity in these incidents.



MAKA CHIKHLADZE

On 7 December, a group of 30 men dressed in black, some wearing masks, violently attacked TV Pirveli journalist Maka Chikhladze and cameraman Giorgi Shetsiruli. One masked man grabbed her neck from behind, pushing her to the ground and beating both her and Shetsiruli.

Both were hospitalized with concussion and other injuries. The attack followed a TV Pirveli investigation implicating senior government figures including those in the Ministry of Internal Affairs' Special Tasks Department, in organizing violent crackdown on demonstrators.

“They were well-trained and coordinated, possibly members of the security forces. The police witnessed the incident and simply left. There is no longer any law enforcement you can ask for help when you are attacked.”

20. [OC Media | Footage circulating online shows a man pulling a gun on protesters in Tbilisi. Another video shows unidentified men attacking protesters... | Instagram](#)

MINDIA GABADZE

A day earlier, on 6 December, Mindia Gabadze, a reporter for Publika, was attacked by plainclothes men while covering a protest by artists.

Despite repeated calls from Gabadze's colleagues urging nearby police officers to intervene, the officers ignored the pleas and allowed the attackers to leave the scene unhindered. Gabadze was hospitalized with mild concussion, suffering severe headaches and bruising on his head.



"A masked man looked at my press badge and punched me in the face. After I fell, he kicked me in the head. Two other men joined in, beating me relentlessly. Nearby police did not intervene or pursue the attackers; they simply returned to their car and closed the door when confronted about their inaction."

JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Despite mounting evidence, including video footage and testimonies documented by rights groups and lawyers, the Ministry of Internal Affairs has not yet identified any police officers involved in the violent crackdown on protests. The Special Investigation Service, responsible for investigating police-related human rights violations, has reportedly opened investigations into several cases but has not provided substantive updates on their progress.

“The (government) has effectively taken control of the country's major institutions, including the judiciary, investigative agencies and regulatory bodies. Police officers committing brutalities against protesters and journalists lack visible identification, such as badges or name tags, fostering their impunity. The consistent longstanding inability of the Special Investigation Service in addressing police crimes is suggestive of the violence supported violence by the state.”

Nona Kurdovanidze, Chairperson, Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA)

The Georgian authorities have also failed to conduct prompt, thorough, impartial, independent, transparent and effective investigations or identify anyone suspected to be responsible in previous instances of violent attacks against civil society and political activists between April and June, despite them occurring in public spaces, with witnesses and CCTV cameras present.²²

Local rights groups highlight that the lack of identifiable markings on police officers exacerbates impunity. This absence of any visible identification prevents victims and the public from identifying those suspected to be responsible, fostering a culture of lawlessness within the police force. The repeated failure of the Special Investigative Service to address or hold officers accountable for prior violence adds to this impunity.

The pervasive nature of this violence, coupled with the authorities' failure to investigate or bring suspected perpetrators to justice and provide victims with access to justice and effective remedies, reveals the deep-seated impunity in Georgia's law enforcement and criminal justice systems, resulting in widespread human rights violations.

22. Human Rights Watch. “Georgia: Violent Attacks on Government Critics.” Human Rights Watch, August 20, 2024. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/08/20/georgia-violent-attacks-government-critics>.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S RECOMMENDATIONS

WE CALL FOR THE GEORGIAN AUTHORITIES TO:

- **End violence:** Immediately stop violence by police and unidentified groups acting with police complicity.
- **Uphold and ensure respect for human rights:** Uphold and ensure respect for the human rights of everyone in the country including the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association.
- **Investigate unlawful use of force:** Conduct prompt, thorough, independent, impartial, transparent and effective investigations into allegations of unlawful force, including misuse of tear gas, water cannons, and batons.
- **Investigate torture and other ill-treatment:** Conduct prompt, thorough, independent, impartial, transparent and effective investigations into allegations of torture and other ill-treatment and provide access to justice and effective remedies including reparations to victims and their families.
- **Ensure accountability:** those suspected to be responsible including those in full chain of command should be brought to justice in fair trial.
- **End impunity:** ensure that police officers wear visible and clearly displayed personal identification numbers.
- **Ensure compliance:** Ensure police comply with international standards on the use of force, and thoroughly, independently, impartially, transparently and effectively investigate past abuses, and bring to justice those suspected to be responsible.
- **Release peaceful protesters:** Immediately and unconditionally release all detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights.
- **Fair trials:** Ensure those charged with internationally recognizable offenses receive fair trials and due process protections.
- **Transparency:** Provide a public breakdown of complaints related to the use of unnecessary and excessive force during protests to ensure accountability and effective remedies for victims.
- **Uphold and comply with Georgia's international human rights obligations and commitments:** such as the provisions of article 10 and 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which guarantee the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, and articles 19 and 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which protect the rights to freedom of expression (including journalists' right to report on protests) and peaceful assembly. Georgia is a state party to both human rights treaties.

WE CALL ON THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY INCLUDING THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE UNITED NATIONS TO:

- **Publicly condemn excessive use of force:** Publicly, consistently and firmly speak out against the use of unnecessary and excessive force by the Georgian authorities to disperse peaceful protests and undermine the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Call on the Georgian authorities to promptly, thoroughly, impartially, independently, transparently and effectively investigate all allegations of excessive use of force to disperse protests, torture and other ill-treatment of protesters and bring to justice in fair trial those suspected to be responsible as well as ensure access to justice and effective remedies for victims and their families.
- **Press Georgian authorities to release detained protesters:** Urge the Georgian authorities to immediately release all those detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights including those who participated in protests leading up to the October 2024 Parliamentary elections or following the government's announcement to halt the EU accession process.
- **Request UN visits:** Request the visits of the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, as well as the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, to undertake fact-finding missions to assess the human rights situation in Georgia.
- **Press Georgian authorities to investigate harassment:** Urge the Georgian authorities to promptly, thoroughly, independently, impartially, transparently and effectively investigate allegations of harassment, intimidation, threats, and attacks against Georgian civil society and journalists and to bring those suspected to be responsible to justice as well as ensure access to justice and effective remedies for victims and their families.

JOIN IN SOLIDARITY!

Share on social media stories of the affected protesters with a hashtag #ProtectTheProtest

Tweet one of the below:

@PM_Kobakhidze, @MIAofGeorgia, the world is watching. @amnesty documented human rights violations against protesters in Georgia. End the police brutality and #ProtectTheProtest now!

Under [this post](#) by the Prosecutor General of Georgia celebrating the EU accession milestone, tweet the following:

@OfficialPOG, many citizens of Georgia were brutalized by the police for protesting against the halting of the #EU accession process. I call you to initiate investigations against police violence and #ProtectTheProtest!

@OfficialPOG, many citizens of Georgia were brutalized by the police for protesting against the halting of the #EU accession process. I call you to initiate investigations against police violence and #ProtectTheProtest!

Dear @ginitastar, @amnesty documented multiple violations of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association in Georgia. Please visit Georgia and investigate these violations to #ProtectTheProtest.

Dear @DrAliceJEdwards, @amnesty documented multiple violations against protesters in Georgia which may amount to torture. Please visit Georgia and investigate these violations to #ProtectTheProtest