



**Institute for Development
of Freedom of Information**

FACT SHEET PART 3 [2025]

Sharp Democratic Backsliding and Continuous Systemic Repression in Georgia

The document includes major developments from February 15 to March 9, 2025

Introduction	3
1. Ongoing protests across the country continue despite systemic repression	3
1.1. Physical attacks on activists and protest participants	3
1.2. Attack at Tbilisi Airport on opposition leader Giorgi Gakharia and Georgia's fifth President Salome Zurbashvili	4
1.3. The continuous practice of detaining protest participants	5
1.4. Administrative fines imposed on journalists performing their duties	6
1.5. Search of Aleksandre (Sandro) Tsnobiladze's residence	6
1.6. Attempt to intimidate protest participants and their family members while delivering administrative fines	7
1.7. Application of repressive amendments against the students of Theatre and Film University	8
1.8. The Venice Commission's opinion on the repressive amendments regulating assemblies and demonstrations and GD's Response	8
2. Adoption and/or initiation of other repressive measures	9
2.1. Initiative on the Criminalization of Treason	9
2.2. Abolishment of the Civil Service Bureau and continuation of dismissal of civil servants for their pro-European stance	10
2.3. Initiation of "Exact Copy" of FARA	10
2.4. Initiative to ban foreign funding of media and set coverage rules	11
2.5. Abolition of the mandatory participation of NGOs in the public decision-making process	13
2.6. Amendments to remove 'Gender' from the legislation	13
2.7. Changes to the law "On Professional Theaters"	14
2.8. Restrictions on receiving remuneration/benefits by public servants and judges	15
2.9. Amendment to the appointment procedure for heads and deputies of Legal Entities of Public Law (LEPLs)	16
3. Updated information on the criminal cases initiated against the demonstrators of the ongoing protests	16
3.1. Criminal Cases of Anastasia Zinovkina and Artem Gribul	17
3.2. Hunger strike as a form of protest by several prisoners	17
3.3. Court hearings on criminal cases initiated from November 2024	18

Introduction

The pro-European protests continue with daily rallies in Tbilisi and other cities of Georgia. The protesters have two main demands: 1. release of all regime prisoners; 2. holding of new elections.

In response, the “Georgian Dream” party continues systemic repression against demonstrators, civil servants, civil society organizations, media, and other critical voices.

Considering the situation's complexity in Georgia, the number of facts worthy of attention is increasing daily. This document presents the most alarming developments, structured to reveal the sequence of events and their interrelations, **covering the period from February 15 to March 9, 2025.**

The information provided below is based on publicly available sources. Where sources are not originally available in English, IDFI provides an unofficial translation.

1. Ongoing protests across the country continue despite systemic repression

This chapter focuses on major incidents during the recent phase of the protests and the forms of repression used against the demonstrators and media. The list of issues covered in this part is not exhaustive since many things happen during the day. More detailed day-by-day information on protests and repression can be found in English on Civil Georgia’s Live Blogs - [Chronicle of Repression](#) and [Resistance 2025](#).

1.1. Physical attacks on activists and protest participants

On February 15, three unknown individuals [attacked](#) and physically assaulted activist Davit Puturidze near his residence. He sustained injuries to his head and face area. According to Puturidze, while he doesn't know the attackers, he can identify them. Puturidze linked the violence to his political activism, [recalling](#) that two weeks earlier, the police attempted to intimidate and threaten him. He [believes](#) that since he refused to remain silent, he was targeted in this manner. On February 18, four individuals [attacked](#) activist Nika Latsabidze. Notably, on January 31, activist Davit Puturidze [was taken](#) by police on Vazha-Pshavela Avenue, and no contact could be established with him for several hours. The police forces searched his home, allegedly in connection with spray-painting activities. On the same day, Nikoloz Latsabidze was [also taken](#) on under similar circumstances while alone on the street and police officers searched his home.

On February 21, two individuals [attacked](#) participants of a pro-European protest march. [Footage](#) shows that one of the attackers was holding a machete-like weapon, while the other had a baseball bat. They were [detained](#) administratively and [released](#) from the detention facility after 48 hours. The court hearing has not yet taken place.

On March 3, civil activist and musician Davit Gabunia was [physically assaulted](#) and verbally abused in the street for singing an anti-Georgian Dream protest song.

On March 5, near their residence, the founders of Krab Coffee, who had been offering free refreshments to pro-European demonstrators on Rustaveli Avenue, were [attacked](#) and physically assaulted. According to one of the victims, [Kristi Pirveli](#), she suffered a broken tooth as a result of the attack, while Barbare Rokita, the other co-owner of Krab Coffee, required surgery due to a broken nose. The Ministry of Internal Affairs [stated](#) that one man had been arrested in connection with the attack and that an investigation was underway for an act of violence. The attacker was [granted](#) bail (3,000 GEL) as a measure of restraint. The decision was [made](#) by Judge Lela Maridashvili. Notably, on the day of the attack, Kristi Pirveli [claimed](#) that the police "advised" them to withdraw their complaint, as footage allegedly shows her also striking the attacker in response.

1.2. Attack at Tbilisi Airport on opposition leader Giorgi Gakharia and Georgia's fifth President Salome Zurbashvili

On February 17, upon returning to Georgia from the Munich Security Conference, Giorgi Gakharia, the leader of the party "For Georgia," former Prime Minister and party member Elguja Khokrishvili [were hit](#) with eggs at Tbilisi International Airport. [According to the party](#), law enforcement was present but failed to intervene. The [footage](#) shows GD-linked individuals confronting Gakharia and Khokrishvili at the airport, hurling insults and throwing eggs. The attackers shouted "Are you no longer funded by USAID?", "Are you no longer a sellout, an unprincipled agent?"

On February 18, alleged government-paid thugs [threw eggs](#) at Georgia's fifth President Salome Zurbashvili at Tbilisi Airport upon her return from the Munich Security Conference. A [video](#) shows a woman calling her a traitor, followed by several others throwing eggs at her. Zurbashvili [filed](#) a complaint and demanded an investigation into the attack. At a press briefing, she [called](#) it a "pre-organized" act of violence and dismissed it as "the little spite of little men," noting that GD representatives later justified the incident. According to [TV Pirveli](#), citizens were able to identify the attackers who turned out to be experienced "Titushki" of "Georgian Dream", who had previously participated in multiple violent attacks.

1.3. The continuous practice of detaining protest participants

In the late evening of February 18, TV Pirveli cameraman Lasha Jioshvili [was abducted](#) by masked individuals who were later identified as police officers. At the time of his detention, he was not performing his professional duties. In a [video](#), Lasha Jioshvili can be heard saying, “They are putting something in my pocket.” According to [Jioshvili's lawyer](#), no violence occurred at the moment of his detention; however, police officers tried to unlock his phone and access its contents. Jioshvili has been administratively detained and was accused of disobeying a police order. On February 20, Judge Lela Tsagareishvili [fined](#) Lasha Jioshvili 2,500 GEL.

On the same day, police [arrested](#) protest participant, Sergo Mariamidze. Mariamidze was accused of disobeying a police order and violating the rules for organizing and holding assemblies or demonstrations. His detention was [allegedly prompted](#) by the fact that he put his arm around a masked individual who was setting off fireworks. On February 27, Judge Nino Enukidze [declared](#) Sergo Mariamidze an offender for using pyrotechnics and disobeying police orders. **He was sentenced to 15 days of detention.** According to [Mariamidze's lawyer](#), there was no evidence in the case proving that Mariamidze set off fireworks during the protest. Additionally, the witness police officer initially [stated](#) that Mariamidze and an unidentified individual launched four fireworks. However, the officer later [changed](#) his testimony, claiming that Mariamidze and the unidentified individual together launched a single firework.

On March 6, Professor Zaal Chkheidze was arrested on Rustaveli Avenue. He [wrote](#) about it on social media. According to him, he was standing at a bus stop near the Opera on Rustaveli Avenue, reading a book, when 3 strangers, one of whom was masked, approached him and asked him to follow them. He was not told where or why he was being taken, nor was he allowed to make or answer phone calls, his scarf was confiscated and he was released after about two hours with a fine of 7,000 GEL (5,000 GEL for allegedly blocking the road and 2,000 for allegedly covering his face with a scarf).

On March 7 (**the 100th day of protest**) Irakli Kupradze, Secretary General of the Strong Georgia Coalition, and another three members of the political party “Lelo” were [arrested](#). About an hour and a half after the arrest, they were [released](#). According to Kupradze, the police forces confiscated the laser device with which the lines of various contents appeared on the Parliament building during the protests. One of them was [fined](#) for possession of the laser device. Proceedings have also been [initiated](#) against the other individuals, but they have not been informed of the details.

1.4. Administrative fines imposed on journalists performing their duties

As a result of repressive legislative changes, the Ministry of Internal Affairs imposes 5,000 GEL (approximately 1,665 EUR) administrative fines for alleged “artificial” blocking of the road not only on protest participants but also on journalists covering the demonstrations while performing their professional duties. On February 21, the Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics issued a [statement](#) calling on MIA to stop fining journalists who are visibly identified with press badges and are reporting from the protests. The statement [mentions](#) the initiation of administrative proceedings against 16 journalists.

According to the Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics, all journalists [reported](#) to the Ministry of Internal Affairs that they were performing their professional duties during the disputed period, for which they have supporting evidence. They [wore](#) press identification cards and some worked using large professional equipment. The police should have had [no difficulty](#) identifying them as journalists from the outset. In each case of receiving information about the fine, the following processes [developed](#) differently.

For instance, one of the Georgian CSOs “Mediaombudsman” disseminated on its Facebook page the following information: a. Studio Monitor (online media carrying out investigative journalism) journalist [Nino Tsverava](#) was contacted by the police on February 21 and informed that an administrative case had been opened against her for artificially blocking a road, with a fine of 5,000 GEL. She submitted a certificate to the Ministry of Internal Affairs stating that she was performing professional duties. The Ministry of Internal Affairs discontinued the administrative case based on the official document; b. On February 25, the Tbilisi City Court considered the administrative case of [Nikoloz Tchirakadze](#), a journalist for Tabula (online media). The documents confirming that Nikoloz has been working as a journalist covering the protest were presented to the Court. Judge Lela Tsagareishvili will announce the decision on March 12, 2025.

The Media Advocacy Coalition [assessed](#) the “practice of imposing fines as deliberate pressure on the media,” further indicating that “these cases are not isolated incidents but part of the “Georgian Dream” policy aimed at intimidating independent journalists and restricting their professional activities.” The Coalition emphasized that, from November 28 [more than 100 incidents](#) have occurred where media representatives were attacked, threatened, had their equipment damaged, or were illegally obstructed while performing their professional duties while “none of the individuals who committed violence against journalists have been identified or held accountable”.

1.5. Search of Aleksandre (Sandro) Tsnobiladze's residence

On February 24, the Special Investigation Service (SIS) [searched](#) the home of sports commentator and active protest participant Aleksandre (Sandro) Tsnobiladze, seizing his mobile

phone, laptop, computer, and other electronic devices. [According to SIS](#), the search was conducted as part of an investigation into the alleged illegal acquisition of intimate photos of a woman identified as a victim.

Following the search, the Special Investigation Service [released](#) the “victim’s” interview record, in which she claims that in 2021-2023, Tsnobiladze, using a fake social media account, persuaded her to send intimate photos and later proposed a meeting and sexual relations in exchange for deleting them. The victim’s [interview report](#) is dated June 2024, however, it is unknown when the “victim” filed a complaint to the Special Investigation Service. According to the investigator's [statement](#), she reported the incident to the authorities upon discovering Tsnobiladze's identity.

Tsnobiladze [links](#) the search to his civic activism and participation in pro-European protests. He argues that the authorities aim to intimidate him and damage his reputation, but he remains committed to attending protests daily.

1.6. Attempt to intimidate protest participants and their family members while delivering administrative fines

As reported in the previous Fact Sheet, on February 6, 2025, the “Georgian Dream” party [adopted](#) a new repressive legislative package targeting the demonstrators of the ongoing protest. Among other things, stemming from these amendments, the police became authorized to directly impose fines against demonstrators on alleged “artificial” blocking of the road (previously, the police had to submit case materials to the court and the decision on the imposition of the fine was made by the judge). The repressive amendments were [promulgated](#) on the same day and [published](#) in the Legislative Herald of Georgia.

In the early morning of February 9, police forces [started](#) the enforcement of the repressive legislation and directly imposed administrative fines [5,000 GEL] on the participants of the ongoing protests. The developments in the following days and the manner of delivery of the fine protocols, in addition to the repression of demonstrators created reasonable doubt that the police forces aimed to further intimidate the family members, and neighbors of the demonstrators and the general public. In some cases, police officers [visit](#) the homes of protest participants, [sometimes late at night](#), to personally deliver fines for alleged road blockades in the presence of their family members, including minors and elderly parents. Protesters [claim](#) that this method of delivering fines is intended to intimidate them and exert psychological pressure on their families.

In the document [published](#) by the Social Justice Center on February 23, the organization indicates that several trends have been revealed based on citizens’ accounts: a. Police forces are

unannouncedly going to citizens' homes and handing over fines, which is more likely to serve as a means of intimidation and instilling panic; b. MIA officers are calling citizens from various police departments and informing them that they have been fined. They are offering to pick up the fines at the department or have them sent to them; c. Citizens were not notified of the fines either verbally or in writing, although some information about the protocol issued against them appeared in MIA databases.

In addition to the above-mentioned forms of imposition fines, instances of delivery of the fines by police stopping drivers/cars have been [reported](#).

1.7. Application of repressive amendments against the students of Theatre and Film University

On March 9, the police forces [entered](#) the Theatre and Film University on Rustaveli Avenue in Tbilisi several times. After the second appearance of the police forces, they [fined](#) students 5,000-5,000 GEL, under the repressive amendments recently passed by the "Georgian Dream" party, which prohibits holding unauthorized protests in closed spaces. (The repressive amendments [prohibited](#) holding a gathering or demonstration in a closed space/building without the prior written consent of its owner.)

The protest in the University building has been going on for [more than 80 days](#). According to the students, the police were called on March 9 after the administration [requested](#) them to leave the premises under the pretext of carrying out disinfection work. The students demanded an alternative space in return, but a room offered as an alternative space was too small, and they [refused](#) to enter.

On the same day, the police [arrived](#) at the Theatre University for the third time, during which the students were [requested](#) to leave the building.

According to the lawyer, the students [decided](#) to leave the building because there was a threat of their arrest, and they plan to support the ongoing protest in another form.

1.8. The Venice Commission's opinion on the repressive amendments regulating assemblies and demonstrations and GD's Response

On March 3, the Venice Commission [issued](#) an Urgent Opinion on amendments to the Code of Administrative Offenses and the Law on Assemblies and Demonstrations. The [opinion](#) concerns the repressive legislative amendments adopted by "Georgian Dream" in [December 2024](#) and [February 2025](#), which imposed various restrictions on holding demonstrations. These

amendments significantly increased fines for administrative offenses, extended the duration of administrative detention from 15 to 60 days, allowed for preventive detentions, and banned covering one's face with a mask or any other means, as well as the use of pyrotechnics at protests, among other restrictions.

In its urgent opinion, the Venice Commission [concluded](#) that the amendments "introduce numerous restrictions on freedom of assembly and other fundamental rights, which appear to be incompatible with the principles of lawfulness, necessity, and proportionality."

On March 4, Irakli Kobakhidze [responded](#) to the Venice Commission's Opinion, calling it "one of the most unserious European institutions." According to [Kobakhidze](#), "Against the backdrop of the general unseriousness that has taken root in European institutions, even in this context, the Venice Commission stands out with its exceptional unseriousness. This institution has transformed from a center of legal expertise into an ordinary political body serving the interests of the Global War Party".

2. Adoption and/or initiation of other repressive measures

The "Georgian Dream" party and institutions under its effective control continue to announce and/or adopt further repressive measures targeting critical voices.

The following chapter aims to provide information about the recent decisions/initiatives aimed at further targeting demonstrators, media, civil servants, CSOs, and other critical voices.

2.1. Initiative on the Criminalization of Treason

"Georgian Dream" plans to criminalize treason. Mamuka Mdinaradze [claimed](#) that they are reinstating provisions that were removed by the United National Movement just before the August war in April 2007. Mdinaradze [announced](#) this initiative following a party council meeting on February 17. The initiated amendment [stipulates](#) the following: "1. Committing one of the crimes provided for in Articles 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 318, or 319 of this Code by a citizen of Georgia or a person having a stateless status in Georgia shall be considered treason. 2. Criminal liability for treason shall be determined by the corresponding article of this Code with reference to this Article."

It is clear from the text of the proposed amendment that all acts included in the list of "treason" are already punishable under other articles of the Criminal Code. Returning the article "treason" to the Criminal Code ["makes no legal sense"](#) and is assumed that the decision [is related](#) to the political goals of the "Georgian Dream" - to further label its opponents as traitors.

On March 3, the Legal Issues Committee of the GD parliament [approved](#) the draft law in its first reading. The following day the GD parliament [approved](#) the bill in the first reading.

2.2. Abolishment of the Civil Service Bureau and continuation of dismissal of civil servants for their pro-European stance

On February 20, the “Georgian Dream” party [approved](#) final amendments that will abolish the Civil Service Bureau and transfer its functions to the GD government administration. The Bureau’s function was to develop strategies and reforms necessary for establishing a qualified and ethical civil service and coordinate measures needed for its implementation. The amendments were passed expeditiously, supported by 81 GD MPs, and will come into force on April 1, 2025.

The employee of the Bureau, Nino Tsukhishvili, [argued](#) that the move aimed to silence dissent within the civil service. Tsukhishvili recalled a [joint petition](#) of civil servants from November 2024, where Bureau employees opposed repressive amendments to the Law on Public Service, which she claimed had led to the dismissal of civil servants who had spoken out against GD’s policies.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the dismissal of the civil servants linked to their pro-European stance, continues. For instance, on February 24, teacher Sopho Roinishvili was [dismissed](#) from Kutaisi Public School No. 6. As an active participant in protests, she suspects that her termination was linked to her involvement in the demonstrations. However, the school's official statement cites "repeated gross violations of internal regulations" as the basis for her dismissal. On February 25, at least 9 individuals were also [dismissed](#) from the Ministry of Defense. The former employees attribute their termination to their support for the protests. On February 28, Gvantsa Gabekhadze, a journalist at the web agency Agenda.ge of the Strategic Communications Department of the GD Government Administration, [stated](#) that she was also dismissed from her position during her pregnancy on the grounds of "reorganization." She explains her dismissal as being politically motivated. According to Transparency International Georgia, as of February 27, approximately 400 people have already been [dismissed](#) from public service.

2.3. Initiation of “Exact Copy” of FARA

On February 24, a new legislative initiative, the “Foreign Agents Registration Act” was [registered](#) by the Bureau of the Georgian Dream Parliament. GD majority leader Mamuka Mdinardze claims the bill is an “exact copy” of the U.S. Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), with the party’s press release calling it a direct Georgian translation of the American law. The draft law [includes](#) criminal penalties of up to five years for failure to comply with its provisions.

The bill's [explanatory note](#) outlines the motivations behind its initiation, stating that the “Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence fails to adequately ensure transparency and its intended preventive function.” It argues that “the majority of NGOs receiving substantial foreign funding refuse to register in the designated registry and instead opt to accept the legal sanctions. As a result, the current law is deemed ineffective in enforcing the legislator's intent.”

GD Speaker Shalva Papuashvili [argued](#) that, by introducing the draft law, “any speculation that the Georgian Parliament will adopt a law that does not comply with international standards will come to an end.” Notably, in the initiated version the translation appeared verbatim, retaining U.S.-specific terms like “Congress”, “the Library of Congress”, “the State Department”, “the President of the United States”, etc. Interestingly, in 2023, Irakli Kobakhidze [criticized](#) FARA as a “complete disaster,” insisting such a law would be unacceptable in Georgia.

On February 26, the Legal Department of GD Parliament [reviewed](#) the draft law and determined that it contains “a number of substantive and legal” inaccuracies and does not comply with Georgia's legal system.

On March 3, the Legal Issues Committee of the GD parliament [approved](#) the draft law in its first reading. Committee Chair Archil Gorduladze [stated](#) that the executive legal entity of the law will be the **Anti-Corruption Bureau**. The following day the GD parliament [approved](#) the bill in the first reading (The version supported in the first reading does not include U.S.-specific terms like “Congress”, “the Library of Congress”, “the State Department”, “the President of the United States”, etc.).

2.4. Initiative to ban foreign funding of media and set coverage rules

On February 24, “Georgian Dream” [introduced](#) two legislative amendments to the Law on Broadcasting. The first one aims to ban foreign funding for audio-visual broadcasters, while the second gives broad regulatory powers to the Communications Commission (ComCom) over media content. According to Mamuka Mdinardze, the amendments are based “on the British model.”

One of the key amendments [prohibits](#) broadcasters from receiving direct or indirect funding from foreign entities, except for commercial advertisements, sponsorships, or product placements. The explanatory note [argues](#) that this restriction is necessary to limit foreign influence over public opinion. The law [defines](#) “foreign entities” as foreign governments, non-Georgian citizens, foreign-registered legal entities, and organizational entities or any other form of associations that are established under the laws of a foreign state and/or international law. Additionally, broadcasters will be barred from accepting foreign payments for producing or airing social advertisements.

Another major change targets media self-regulation by significantly expanding ComCom's authority over broadcasting content. Under the proposed [amendments](#), ComCom will gain the power to arbitrate disputes over media ethics, accuracy, and libel, effectively dismantling the previous self-regulatory system. Journalists and media organizations have previously [criticized](#) ComCom for making politically motivated decisions favoring the Georgian Dream party, raising concerns that these new powers could be used to suppress independent reporting.

The amendments [introduce](#) strict rules for content accuracy, requiring broadcasters to ensure factual reporting, correct mistakes publicly, and identify all sources of information. If an individual or organization believes their reputation has been harmed by inaccurate reporting, they can appeal to ComCom, which can demand corrections within ten days. The proposed law also [imposes](#) requirements, such as banning political figures from hosting news programs and mandating balanced coverage of political disputes. Additionally, new provisions limit media access to private spaces, prohibit unauthorized recordings, and restrict the identification of victims of tragic events.

The amendments also [grant](#) ComCom the authority to enforce content violations through fines or even suspension of broadcasting licenses. The complaints regarding the accuracy of facts, intrusion of privacy, and other issues can be submitted by an interested person either through the broadcaster's self-regulation mechanism or directly to the Communications Commission. According to the [assessment](#) of Transparency International Georgia "This means that, de jure, the self-regulation mechanism remains in place, but de facto, its function is transferred to the Communications Commission. If the goal is to penalize a broadcaster, there is almost no chance that a complaint will be filed through the self-regulation mechanism instead of the Commission."

Transparency International Georgia [criticized](#) the introduced amendments stating that their main objectives are: (a) to weaken and eliminate independent media by imposing financial restrictions; (b) to introduce censorship or self-censorship and establish content control over media products; (c) to create favorable conditions for Russian and anti-Western propaganda.

On February 28, the Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics also [responded](#) to the draft law, stating that the Charter serves as an effectively functioning self-regulatory mechanism that protects the rights of media consumers. According to it, the proposed changes pose a threat of self-censorship and censorship, with their real aim being to restrict critical media to prevent discomfort for representatives of the "Georgian Dream" and their supporters. Therefore, the Charter [called](#) on the "Georgian Dream" to withdraw the proposed amendments.

On March 3, the Legal Issues Committee of the GD parliament [approved](#) the legislative amendments in the first reading. During the session, the chair of the committee, Archil

Gorduladze, [stated](#) that the proposed amendments do not apply to online media, which presents an additional challenge and requires further work on their regulation. At the March 4 plenary session, where the amendments were [adopted](#) in the first reading by the GD parliament, Sozar Subari, a representative of the pseudo-opposition People's Power, [proposed](#) an initiative to regulate social networks as well.

2.5. Abolition of the mandatory participation of NGOs in the public decision-making process

“Georgian Dream” and the pseudo-opposition party “People's Power” have [introduced](#) another legislative package that would eliminate the mandatory participation of NGOs in public decision-making processes. The amendments affect 14 different laws.

[According to the explanatory note](#), “The mandatory involvement of NGOs, as required by Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Georgia, has failed to serve its intended purpose. Recent developments, including global events surrounding USAID, have demonstrated that NGO participation hinders effective governance.” According to it, “most NGOs are funded from abroad and serve external political and economic agendas rather than public interests ... their mandatory involvement in policymaking and public decision-making could threaten the country's sovereignty and the transparency of democratic processes.”

It is noteworthy that within the framework of this [legislative package](#), the rule for electing non-judge members of the High Council of Justice by Parliament (5 positions) [is being changed](#). Beyond removing the right of NGOs to nominate candidates for the HCoJ, the candidates will no longer be selected through a competitive procedure. Instead, they will be appointed from candidates nominated by a parliamentary faction or a group of at least seven independent MPs.

The same [legislative package](#) modifies the procedure for electing members of the Central Election Commission (CEC). Under the [amendments](#), instead of requiring the support of two-thirds of the total number of GD MPs, a simple majority of the full composition will now be sufficient to elect a CEC member.

On March 4, the GD parliament [approved](#) the legislative package in the first reading.

2.6. Amendments to remove ‘Gender’ from the legislation

On February 24, members of the “Georgian Dream” with the pseudo-opposition party “People's Power”, [introduced](#) a bill aimed at removing the terms “gender” and “gender identity” from all Georgian legislation. The proposal also seeks to rename the “Law on Gender Equality” to the “Law on Equality between Women and Men.” According to the bill's [explanatory note](#), gender is described as an “artificially created term” introduced into Georgian law under “foreign influence” and “lobbying efforts”.

The bill also [proposes](#) dissolving the Parliament's Gender Equality Council and similar councils at the municipal and autonomous republic levels, citing cost-saving measures. The 50,000 GEL previously allocated for gender-related initiatives will be redirected to other parliamentary structures "to address equality between men and women."

The Coalition for Equality [believes](#), that the "disappearance of the term "gender" from the legislative space is part of the state's inequality policy, which is an undemocratic, illegal action directed against the development of society and will bring serious negative consequences in terms of eliminating discrimination and guaranteeing the right to equality in Georgia."

According to the Social Justice Center's [assessment](#), "It is clear that the removal of the legal concept of gender weakens the policy for the protection of women's rights and equality in Georgia, as it inherently destroys the foundation of gender equality-based policies, which aim to recognize and challenge structural inequalities, socially constructed patriarchal roles, and hierarchies. As a result, it denies broader groups of women the legal protections they had previously gained."

On March 4, the GD parliament [approved](#) the amendments in the first reading.

2.7. Changes to the law "On Professional Theaters"

On February 26, several MPs from "Georgian Dream" (GD) and the pseudo-opposition "People's Power" [introduced](#) a bill that seeks to overhaul the theater management system by eliminating the two-tier leadership model. Currently, artistic and administrative responsibilities are divided between an artistic director and a theater director. The amendments would merge these roles, giving sole leadership to the theater director, who would oversee both creative and operational matters. Supporters of the bill [argue](#) that the existing system is outdated and inflexible, preventing theaters from effectively addressing modern challenges.

The bill also [introduces](#) major changes to the appointment and dismissal process for theater directors. It establishes a competitive selection process "to attract talented young people" but also grants the Minister of Culture and municipal mayors broad discretionary powers in appointing theater directors. One of the most controversial aspects is the immediate dismissal of all current state and municipal theater directors upon the law's enactment. Dismissed directors will have ten days to apply for reappointment, but if no position is available, they will receive compensation equal to three months' salary.

Critics [see](#) these measures as an attempt to consolidate political control over theaters and limit artistic independence. Notably, Vaso Abashidze Theatre [went on strike](#) after actor Andro Chichinadze was [arrested](#) on criminal charges during a pro-EU rally. In response, Georgian artists [staged](#) a performance on January 23, where they issued a manifesto and announced a

nationwide tour to advocate for freedom and engage with citizens. They have already [traveled](#) to several cities, including Batumi, Kutaisi, and Gori, to hold discussions and raise awareness.

On March 4, the GD parliament [approved](#) the amendments in the first reading.

2.8. Restrictions on receiving remuneration/benefits by public servants and judges

The “Georgian Dream” party has [initiated](#) amendments introducing stricter regulations on receiving remuneration/benefits for public servants and judges. Under the proposed changes, public servants (excluding political officials) would need written approval from their institution's head or a designated authority to engage in scientific, teaching, or creative work. Those employed under labor contracts in public institutions or legal entities of public law (LEPLs) would also require written approval from their immediate supervisor to undertake any paid work or receive additional benefits. The [explanatory note](#) of the bill states that any form of remuneration could create potential conflicts of interest, necessitating stricter oversight to prevent undue influence on public service.

The legislative package also [includes](#) amendments to the laws governing the judiciary. The proposed changes grant the High Council of Justice the authority to approve judges' engagement in scientific or teaching activities, as well as the receipt of additional (non-prohibited) benefits. Similarly, amendments would require the Plenum of the Constitutional Court to authorize judges' participation in these activities.

On March 3, the Legal Issues Committee of the GD parliament [approved](#) the draft law in the first reading. During the committee session, Sozar Subari, a representative of the pseudo-opposition “People’s Power”, [explained](#) that the purpose of the bill is to prevent foreign interference in state institutions. According to him: "When a foreign organization or an embassy decides which judge to invite somewhere, pays them three times the usual fee for lectures, funds their trips, and influences their decisions, this is unacceptable." The committee chair, Archil Gorduladze, [added](#) during the session: "Public officials must bear full responsibility toward state institutions and society, rather than toward organizations that provide them with a new source of benefits or income, making them dependent on it."

On March 4, the GD parliament [approved](#) the amendments in the first reading.

2.9. Amendment to the appointment procedure for heads and deputies of Legal Entities of Public Law (LEPLs)

On March 4, the GD parliament [approved](#) amendments to the Law on Public Service in the first reading, granting heads and deputies of Legal Entities of Public Law (LEPLs) the status of persons equated to public servants.

As a result of the [amendments](#), LEPL heads and their deputies will no longer be appointed through a simplified competition process. Instead, their appointment will fall under the authority of the relevant state supervisory body or the head of the agency under whose jurisdiction the specific LEPL operates.

3. Updated information on the criminal cases initiated against the demonstrators of the ongoing protests

One of the most repressive measures taken by the “Georgian Dream” Party is the opening of criminal cases against more than 50 individuals in connection with the ongoing protests.

Previously, criminal proceedings have also been initiated in connection with the April-May 2024 protests. As reported in the previous Fact Sheet in the first week of February 2025, the first instance court completed a review of criminal cases against those detained in relation to the April-May 2024 protests and [issued](#) judgments of conviction for all persons detained under criminal charges.

As of March 9, 2025, no individual responsible for torture, inhumane treatment, or violence against peaceful demonstrators and media has been held criminally liable, and police forces continue systemic physical violence.

During the period covered by this document, it was revealed that two individuals (Anastasia Zinovkina and Artem Gribul) had been detained under criminal charges in connection with the ongoing protests since November 28, 2024, a fact that had not been publicly known before. The details of their cases will be described below. **Consequently, as of March 9, 2025, according to public information, criminal investigations have been initiated against 54 persons in connection with the ongoing protests from November 2024. Out of the overall number, 40 persons are detained. Furthermore, Temur Katamadze is in custody, while a decision regarding his deportation from the country is pending.**

The following chapter provides major updates from **February 15 to March 9, 2025**, about the criminal cases initiated from November 2024.

3.1. Criminal Cases of Anastasia Zinovkina and Artem Gribul

On February 18, it was [reported](#) that two more Russian citizens, Anastasia Zinovkina and Artem Gribul, had been criminally detained during the ongoing protests - a fact previously unknown to the public. They were [arrested](#) on December 17 for possession of a particularly large quantity of drugs, a charge that carries a sentence of 8 to 20 years or life imprisonment. According to the prosecution, the two were allegedly involved in drug-related crimes together; however, both

defendants deny the charges, [claiming](#) that the police planted the drugs on them and that they are being persecuted for their participation in protests in Tbilisi.

Notably, Anastasia Zinovkina is a Russian civil activist who has been actively opposing Putin's regime since 2012. She has [participated](#) in numerous anti-government protests in Russia and was repeatedly detained under administrative charges. She was also a vocal supporter of Alexei Navalny. During a court hearing, Zinovkina [stated](#) that she was subjected to sexual harassment and threats of a sexual nature by police officers.

On February 24, Artem Gribul [stated](#) during the court hearing that he was transferred to another cell in the penitentiary facility against his will, where other inmates assaulted him. According to his lawyer, the prison administration was aware of the anticipated violence in advance.

3.2. Hunger strike as a form of protest by several prisoners

On February 18 (the 38th day of her hunger strike), Mzia Amaghlobeli [decided](#) to resume food intake with the assistance of doctors. In her letter, she [explained](#): "Against the backdrop of a tragedy that occurred in Batumi's Dream Town, where two minor children fell into a ditch and died, it is incredibly difficult for me to hear society's concerns about my health and life." On February 20, Zurab Chkhaidze, the clinical director of Vivamedi Clinic, [stated](#) that Mzia Amaghlobeli's nutritional recovery was progressing without complications. On February 27, Mzia Amaghlobeli was [returned](#) to the penitentiary facility from the Vivamedi Clinic following her request and doctors' approval.

On February 15, the 30th day of Temur Katamadze's hunger strike, he was [taken](#) to a clinic, but doctors deemed hospitalization unnecessary and returned him to an immigration detention center, after which he refused to undergo medical examinations as a form of protest. On March 5, Temur Katamadze [ended](#) his hunger strike (48th day). Earlier that day, Katamadze was [transferred](#) to a medical facility. He agreed to the transfer, stating that he had lost more than 20 kilograms, felt weak, and had difficulty moving freely. On March 6, Temur Katamadze was [returned](#) to the immigration detention center. On March 18, the consideration of his case concerning the request for granting refugee or humanitarian status [is scheduled](#).

At the court hearing on March 5, Revaz Kiknadze [stated](#) that he resumed his hunger strike six days ago (this being the third episode of his hunger strike since his detention).

3.3. Court hearings on criminal cases initiated from November 2024

Court hearings in the first instance courts continue for individuals charged under criminal law in connection with their participation in pro-European protests. Between February 15 and March

9, 2025, hearings were held for the majority of defendants' cases, including almost all defendants who had been placed in pretrial detention as a measure of restraint. The courts, among other things, considered whether to change their preventive measure, however, **during this period, not a single case resulted in the substitution of pretrial detention with an alternative measure of restraint.**

The hearings revealed significant challenges, and there is [no expectation](#) that this judicial system, which [is an accomplice](#) to systemic repression, will render impartial decisions in these cases.

For instance, On March 4, Batumi City Court [held](#) a preliminary hearing in the case of Mzia Amaghlobeli. In response to the defense's motion to revoke Amaghlobeli's pretrial detention, prosecutors [stated](#) that there remains a risk that Amaghlobeli might commit a new crime or flee, therefore she should not be released. The court upheld the prosecution's position. According to [GYLA](#), the court kept Mzia Amaghlobeli in detention without citing any specific evidence, which constitutes a gross violation of the criminal procedure legislation. As a result, Amaghlobeli [remains](#) in illegal custody. According to a [statement](#) of Amaghlobeli representatives, the court only partially granted one motion from the defense regarding the removal of one witness from the prosecution's evidence list. **On the other hand, the court fully granted the prosecution's motion and removed from the defense's witness list 17 individuals, 18 video evidences, 13 inspection reports, and 14 written evidences.** According to [Netgazeti](#), the court refused to admit as evidence a video submitted by Amaghlobeli's defense: the video shows that 55 seconds after the alleged slap, Batumi Police Chief Irakli Dgebuadze did not exhibit any redness on his cheek, contrary to his claims. GYLA [assessed](#) that the court's decision effectively deprived Amaghlobeli of her right to defense. Furthermore, during the hearing, it was [revealed](#) that according to the prosecution's version, Mzia Amaghlobeli had "planned the attack on the police officer" in advance and was planning this through communication with unidentified persons. Citing the need to identify these individuals, the prosecution requested access to Amaghlobeli's phone. Her lawyers [argued](#) that the prosecution's request may be aimed at accessing sensitive work-related and personal information.