

Briefing Note on **Prohibition of Torture** in Georgia: Key Developments Since Spring 2024 Submitted to the OSCE Human Dimension Mechanism (February, 2026)





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I. Introduction

This document has been prepared by Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) to provide information to the OSCE Moscow Mechanism on the state of prohibition of torture and other forms of ill-treatment in Georgia since 2024.

Since spring 2024, the human rights situation in Georgia has rapidly deteriorated across multiple areas, including freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and association, the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment, and the misuse of criminal and administrative justice mechanisms. While this document primarily addresses developments related to torture and ill-treatment, the accompanying submissions examine other areas of concern. Accordingly, this document must be read against the backdrop of this overall deterioration of the human rights environment.

This document draws on broader research, monitoring reports, and source materials, which are referenced throughout the text. Relevant GYLA reports are also submitted to the OSCE Moscow Mechanism alongside this submission.

II. Developments Since Spring 2024 up to November 2024

During Spring 2024 Protests, Multiple instances of physical violence and verbal abuse by law enforcement officers and third parties against opponents of the law on the transparency of foreign influence have been identified. Law enforcement officers have been particularly aggressive during detentions, with several cases of ill-treatment reported. The use of force by the police often appeared to be retaliatory rather than aimed at preventing illegal resistance or law violations. In some instances, law enforcement officers used such severe and excessive force that several detainees required medical treatment and emergency surgery due to the severity of their injuries.¹ The latest report of the Public Defender of Georgia confirms that in some instances, the violence inflicted on individuals for participating in protests, considering its intensity, nature, and duration, amounted to torture due to its severity.²

III. Developments Since November 2024

Since November 2024 the practice of ill-treatment and torture on demonstrations became more widespread and systemic. In the framework of the CSO documentation, interviews have been conducted with 117 respondents. 77.7% of the respondents (91 out of 117) have indicated that they had been subjected to violence and ill-treatment by the police during the period from 19 November to 28 January.³ The scale of the violence, the coordinated involvement of the various MIA units, the matching of the statements of the torture victims, identical actions taken on different dates, the lack of response to the violence by the state, and in some cases its encouragement, indicate the systematic nature of torture and the organized character of this crime.⁴

Typically, in parallel with the dispersal of the demonstrations, the special forces would groundlessly arrest the protestors, beat them on the spot, often in groups, and then take them behind the police cordon,

¹ GYLA, Georgia: Human Rights Amidst the Russian Law, Human Rights 60 Days Following the Revival of the Foreign Influence Transparency Bill, 2024, pp. 7-8, https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/rusuli%20kanoni.pdf, [05.02.2026].

² Public Defender of Georgia, Report on the Status of Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia for 2024, p. 64, <https://www.ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2025091211433999093.pdf>, [05.02.2026].

³ GYLA, Human Rights Crisis in Georgia Following the 2024 Parliamentary Elections, 28 November 2024 - 28 February 2025, p. 41, https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/HUMAN%20RIGHTS%20CRISIS%20IN%20GEORGIA%20-%20final.pdf, [05.02.2026].

⁴ Ibid.

away from the media cameras, where the violence would become even more intense. The violence would continue in police minibuses, which had no seats or windows, where the members of the special forces, using special gloves and feet, and in some cases, batons or other tools, beat the victims in groups. Physical violence, both after the arrest and in the minibus, would be accompanied by the seizure of belongings, insults, humiliation, and threats, including the threats of rape. Typically, the special forces deliberately hit the victims in the head and face.⁵

After being beaten in the minibus, which often occurred in several episodes, the victims would be handed over to the patrol or the criminal police officers, who would take them to the police stations and draw up forged arrest report. Often the psychological abuse and, in some cases, physical abuse would continue both during the transportation and at the police station. It is noteworthy that the physical and the psychological abuse would be accompanied by the anti-European and homophobic rhetoric characteristic of the government narrative.⁶

Cases of torture and ill-treatment were particularly intense in the dates where dispersals of mass demonstrations took place:⁷

- Night of 28-29 November 2024
- Night of 29-30 November 2024
- Night of 30 November-1 December 2024
- Night of 1-2 December 2024
- Night of 2-3 December 2024
- Night of 3-4 December 2024
- Night of 6-7 December 2024
- 2 February 2025

According to the Report of the Public Defender, in these dates almost all arrestees were allegedly subjected to torture, inhuman and degrading treatment by the members of the Special Tasks Department: out of 343 people visited by the Public Defender's Office, 242 (70.5%) were victims of alleged ill-treatment.⁸

Throughout 2025, There were reports of persons detained under administrative or criminal law being forcibly and fully undressed after detention under the guise of a personal search or examination.⁹ This practice lacks any legitimate justification, violates CPT standards,¹⁰ and exposes individuals to humiliating and degrading treatment.

13 individuals (19%) of demonstrators detained under criminal in relation to the protests also reported instances of ill-treatment during their trials.¹¹

⁵ Ibid, p.43

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid, p. 41.

⁸ Public Defender of Georgia, Report on the Status of Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia for 2024, p. 70, <https://www.ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2025091211433999093.pdf>, [05.02.2026].

⁹ Amnesty International, From Insults to Assaults: Weaponizing Gender-Based Violence Against Women Protesters in Georgia, 2025, <https://eurasia.amnesty.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/from-insults-to-assaults-police-violence-towards-women-protesters-in-georgia.pdf>, [05.02.2026]; GYLA responds to the unacceptable practice of stripping detainees, 29.03.2025, <https://www.gyla.ge/post/saia-exmianebe-dakavebulta-gashishvleblis-dausjvebel%20praqtikas>, [05.02.2026]; GYLA responds to the developments in the Gela Khasaias case on October 1, <https://gyla.ge/post/gela-khasaias-saqme-GYLA>, [05.02.2026].

¹⁰ CPT/Inf (2025) 11, <https://rm.coe.int/1680b4e6af>

¹¹ GYLA, HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN GEORGIA 2025 Assessment of the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association December 10 2025, p. 20, https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/HUMAN%20RIGHTS%20SITUATION%20IN%20GEORGIA%202025.pdf, [05.02.2026].

IV. Ineffective Investigation and Impunity

The investigation into the ill-treatment of protest participants in 2024-2025 remains ineffective, resulting in a lack of accountability and the reinforcement of impunity. Some of the key issues include the incomplete qualification of offenses, difficulties in obtaining video recordings from security cameras, loss or destruction of potential evidence, delayed collection of evidence essential to the cases, inaction at crime scenes, and insufficient public accountability.¹²

The Public Defender's recent report assesses the investigation as ineffective and fragmented, raises serious concerns about the misclassification of cases, the failure of the investigation to secure key video and communication evidence, and the persistence of impunity for law-enforcement officers and other individuals who physically assaulted protest participants.¹³

Investigations into cases of ill-treatment continue to be conducted under inadequate legal qualifications that minimize the nature and scale of the alleged crimes, relying on provisions related to abuse of power and obstruction of journalistic activities (Articles 333 and 154 of the Criminal Code). However, victim testimonies, civil society documentation, and the Public Defender report indicate credible signs of more serious crimes, including torture, threats of torture, and inhuman or degrading treatment. In addition, numerous instances of unlawful confiscation of personal belongings by police remain unaddressed, despite evidence suggesting that stolen phones were located in police stations or private residences of officers.¹⁴ Victim status was granted only in cases when individuals applied for it. Those who did not submit such requests were not granted victim status *ex officio*, demonstrating a failure by the authorities to identify and recognize victims independently.¹⁵

From the beginning, the investigation failed to secure crucial audiovisual evidence, as multiple state bodies stated they were unable to provide recordings, citing renovations or technical malfunctions. These failures affected obtaining recordings from the State Security Service, Parliament Administration, Special State Protection Service, Tbilisi City Hall, and police units, raising serious concerns of deliberate withholding of evidence.¹⁶ Concerns persist about the lack of measures to identify responsible law-enforcement officers and to carry out timely investigations at the scene of the incidents.¹⁷

Even where perpetrators were clearly identifiable and video evidence was publicly available, no criminal proceedings were initiated and no sanctions followed. These cases remain unresolved to this day, giving rise to serious concerns about deliberate investigative inaction. The pattern indicates that the persistence of impunity for ill-treatment is not the result of difficulties in identifying the perpetrators but rather stems from the authorities' reluctance to hold offenders accountable.¹⁸

¹² GYLA et al., Human Rights Crisis in Georgia Following the 2024 Parliamentary Elections, 2025, pp. 137-141. https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/HUMAN%20RIGHTS%20CRISIS%20IN%20GEORGIA%20-%20final.pdf, [05.02.2026].

¹³ Public Defender of Georgia, Report on the Status of Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia for 2024, p. 78; <https://www.ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2025091211433999093.pdf>, [05.02.2026].

¹⁴ GYLA, IDFI, Rights Georgia, Follow up on Civil Society Organization Submission to the OSCE Vienna (Human Dimension) Mechanism, 2025. [https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/phpMmEW3l%20\(4\).pdf](https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/phpMmEW3l%20(4).pdf), [05.02.2026].

¹⁵ GYLA et al., Human Rights Crisis in Georgia Following the 2024 Parliamentary Elections, 2025, p. 119. https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/HUMAN%20RIGHTS%20CRISIS%20IN%20GEORGIA%20-%20final.pdf, [05.02.2026].

¹⁶ GYLA, IDFI, Rights Georgia, Follow up on Civil Society Organization Submission to the OSCE Vienna (Human Dimension) Mechanism, 2025. [https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/phpMmEW3l%20\(4\).pdf](https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/phpMmEW3l%20(4).pdf), [05.02.2026].

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ GYLA, Human Rights Situation in Georgia 2025 Assessment of the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association December 10 2025, p. 33,

In June 2025, the State abolished the Special Investigation Service (SIS), transferring its functions to the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia. The SIS was established to investigate crimes and ill-treatment committed by law-enforcement officers, pursuant to Georgia's obligations under the EU-Georgia Association Agenda (2017–2020)¹⁹ and the execution of the ECtHR's *Tsintsabadze* group of cases.²⁰ Prior to its abolition, the SIS faced sustained criticism for its insufficient institutional independence from the Prosecutor's Office, with the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (CM)²¹, the European Commission²², and the Venice Commission²³ repeatedly calling for safeguards to strengthen its autonomy. In June 2025, the CM explicitly called on Georgia not to proceed with the abolition of the Service.²⁴ The abolition of the Service underscores the State's continued refusal to meaningfully investigate police violence. It represents a serious institutional regression, further reinforcing impunity for law-enforcement abuses.

V. Use of Chemical Irritants Mixed with Water Cannons

On 1 December 2025, the BBC published a documentary²⁵ and an article²⁶ suggesting that Georgian authorities used WWI era chemical irritant bromobenzyl cyanide (“camite”) mixed into water cannons during the dispersal of the November-December 2024 protests. Following the publication, the State Security Service (SSS) launched an investigation for exceeding official powers and assisting a foreign organization in hostile activities, and summoned doctors, protesters, and human rights defenders who appeared in the documentary, including GYLA staff.²⁷ The questioning of those featured in the documentary raises serious concerns that the investigation is aimed at intimidation rather than fact-finding, particularly given the SSS’s framing of the case as involving “*damage to state interests.*” Subsequent official statements acknowledged the use of chemical irritants in water cannons²⁸ but denied the use of camite.²⁹

https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/HUMAN%20RIGHTS%20SITUATION%20IN%20GEORGIA%202025.pdf, [05.02.2026].

¹⁹ Association Agenda Between the European Union and Georgia 2017-2020, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1525315497163&uri=CELEX:22017D2445>, [05.02.2026].

20 The Tsintsabadze Group brings together 18 judgments of the European Court of Human Rights concerning violations of the right to life and the prohibition of torture, which were caused by the actions of police and prison officials and their ineffective investigations, [https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/#/%7B%22fulltext%22:\[%22tsintsabadze%22\],%22execdokumenttyp%22:\[%22CEC%22\],%22excid%22:\[%22004-5830%22\]%7D](https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/#/%7B%22fulltext%22:[%22tsintsabadze%22],%22execdokumenttyp%22:[%22CEC%22],%22excid%22:[%22004-5830%22]%7D), [05.02.2026].

²¹ 1492nd meeting (12-14 March 2024) (DH) - H46-14 Tsintsabze group v. Georgia (Application No. 35403/06), [https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/#{%22execidentfier%22:%22CM/Del/Dec\(2024\)1492/H46-14E%22%22}](https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/#{%22execidentfier%22:%22CM/Del/Dec(2024)1492/H46-14E%22%22}, [05.02.2026]), [05.02.2026].

²² Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, 2023 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy (extract about Georgia), see https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/2023-communication-eu-enlargement-policy-extract-about-georgia_en, [05.02.2026].

23	Venice	Commission,	Opinion	No.	1158/2023,	par.	146,
	https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2023)044-e , [05.02.2026].						

²⁴ Decision of the Committee of Ministers on the Tsintsabazde Group of Cases, 1531st meeting, 10-12 June 2025 (DH) see <https://rm.coe.int/0900001680b64842>, [05.02.2026].

²⁵ BBC, Did Georgian police use a chemical weapon against protesters? - BBC World Service Documentaries, 01.11.2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4-koO916Gk&t=133s>, [05.02.2026].

²⁶ BBC, WW1 toxic compound sprayed on Georgian protesters, BBC evidence suggests, 01.12.2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/czrk7g50e1po>, [05.02.2026].

²⁷ GYLA, State Security Service Summons GYLA Employees for Questioning in Connection with the BBC Investigative Film, 02.12.2025, <https://gyla.ge/en/post/GYLA-BBCsagamodziebopilmi-gamokitxvazedabareba>, [05.02.2026]; See also Civil Georgia, Georgian State Security Service Summons Those Featured in BBC Report, 03.12.2025, <https://civil.ge/archives/713372>, [05.02.2026].

²⁸ Civil Georgia, Kobakhidze Admits Substance Used in Water Cannons, Denies Camite, 03.12.2025, <https://civil.ge/archives/713482>, [05.02.2026].

²⁹ Briefing at the State Security Service, 06.12.2025, <https://ssg.gov.ge/news/1060/brifingi-saxelmtsifo-usaftrxoebis-samsaxurshi>, [05.02.2026].

Regardless of the specific substance, the mixing of chemical irritants with water cannons is a dangerous crowd-control method discouraged by OHCHR and UNODC 2017 Resource Book on the Use of Force and Firearms in Law Enforcement,³⁰ failing to meet necessity and proportionality criteria, posing unforeseeable health risks.³¹ These allegations therefore require a prompt, effective, and independent investigation, without retaliation against alleged victims, medical professionals, or human rights defenders who raise legitimate concerns.

³⁰ OHCHR, UNODC, Resource book on the use of force and firearms in law enforcement, 2017, p. 90, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/UseOfForceAndFirearms.pdf>, , [05.02.2026].

³¹ Amnesty International, Chemical Irritants in Law Enforcement an Amnesty International Position Paper, 2021, p. 20, <https://www.amnesty.nl/content/uploads/2021/07/Amnesty-position-paper-chemical-irritants.pdf>, [05.02.2026].

List of Relevant Publications Prepared by GYLA

- Georgia: Human Rights Amidst the Russian Law, Human Rights 60 Days Following the Revival of the Foreign Influence Transparency Bill, Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA), 2024, https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/rusuli%20kanoni.pdf;
- Information from Civil Society Organization Submitted to the OSCE Vienna Mechanism Prepared by Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA), January 21, 2025, https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/Alternative%20Information%20from%20GYLA%20to%20Vienna%20Mechanism.pdf;
- Follow up on Civil Society Organization Submission to the OSCE Vienna Mechanism Prepared by Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA), Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) and Rights Georgia, April, 2025, [https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/phpMmEW31%20\(4\).pdf](https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/phpMmEW31%20(4).pdf);
- Human Rights Crisis in Georgia Following the 2024 Parliamentary Elections, 28 November 2024 - 28 February 2025, Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA) et al, https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/HUMAN%20RIGHTS%20CRISIS%20IN%20GEORGIA%20-%20final.pdf;
- Briefing Note: Torture and Ill-Treatment During Protests and Suppression of Political Dissent in Georgia in November-December 2024, World Organization Against Torture (OMCT), Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA), the Georgian Centre for Psychosocial and Medical Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (GCRT), and the Partnership for Human Rights (PHR), 2025, <https://www.omct.org/site-resources/files/OMCT-Briefing-Note-Georgia.pdf>;
- Human Rights Situation in Georgia 2025 Assessment of the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association December 10 2025, https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/HUMAN%20RIGHTS%20SITUATION%20IN%20GEORGIA%202025.pdf.