

Briefing Note on **Freedom of Assembly** 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 freedom of assembly 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 freedom of assembly, 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

Since the initiation of the so-called Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence in spring 2024, policing measures at public assemblies have been largely unlawful and disproportionate. The Ministry of Internal Affairs routinely relied on isolated and minor disorderly incidents to characterize entire demonstrations as violent, thereby justifying their dispersal through excessive use of force. During dispersal operations, law enforcement repeatedly employed special means without prior warning, used such means at close range and in a targeted manner, obstructed participants' ability to leave the area, and interfered with the work of media representatives. Moreover, cases of ill-treatment were documented, some of which may amount to torture.¹

Entire assemblies were dispersed in response to alleged isolated disorderly incidents, despite the demonstrations as a whole remaining peaceful, on the following dates²:

- Night of 16 - 17 April 2024
- Night of 30 April - 1 May 2024
- Night of 1 - 2 May 2024
- 14 May 2024

The use of unnecessary and disproportionate force against peaceful assemblies was also documented on 2 May and 9 May 2024, aimed at clearing roadways, as well as on 13 May 2024, purportedly to clear entrances to the Parliament.³

III. Developments Since November 2024

The PM's statement of 28 November 2024 announcing the suspension of EU accession talks sparked peaceful mass protests.⁴ The state's response to these demonstrations was even more violent than during the spring 2024 protests. From December 2025 onwards, the legislative framework began to deteriorate

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

² Ibid, p. 10,

³ Ibid.

⁴ GYLA et al, Human Rights Crisis in Georgia Following the 2024 Parliamentary Elections, 28 November 2024 - 28 February 2025, p. 9, https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/HUMAN%20RIGHTS%20CRISIS%20IN%20GEORGIA%20-%20final.pdf, [05.02.2026].

rapidly, marked by successive waves of amendments, each more repressive than the last. Administrative detention emerged as a key tool for suppressing assemblies, with cases subsequently escalating into criminal prosecution.

Violent Dispersals

Starting on 28 November 2024, within a ten-day period, law enforcement authorities dispersed mass demonstrations on seven occasions, with an additional mass dispersal occurring in February 2025. The dates of the mass dispersals were as follows:⁵

- 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

During these dispersals, torture and ill-treatment of peaceful protesters were widespread and systemic. Water cannons, on some occasions mixed with chemical irritants, as well as tear gas and pepper spray, were used excessively and in a manner posing serious risks to protesters' health and safety. Many protesters who were beaten or subjected to ill-treatment were subsequently administratively detained and sanctioned.⁶

Legislative Changes

Since December 2024, the Administrative Offences Code, the Law on Assemblies, and the Criminal Code have undergone a series of legislative amendments. These changes have significantly increased sanctions for protest-related offences, introduced new offences, and established criminal liability for repeated violations.⁷ In addition, new notification requirements have been adopted that, in practice, amount to a de facto permit system, whereby non-authorized peaceful assemblies, including those held on sidewalks, may result in criminal liability.⁸

Major legislative changes introduced to the Administrative Offences Code, the Law on Assemblies, and the Criminal Code include:

- **Amendments of December 2024 and February 2025:** These amendments significantly increased administrative fines in certain cases by up to tenfold, extended the maximum period of administrative detention to 60 days, introduced new offences, including covering one's face

⁵ Ibid, pp 17-40.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ GYLA, Human Rights Situation in Georgia 2025 Assessment of the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association December 10 2025, pp. 15-16, https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/HUMAN%20RIGHTS%20SITUATION%20IN%20GEORGIA%202025.pdf, [05.02.2026].

⁸ GYLA, Georgian Dream continues unconstitutional attack on freedom of assembly with new legislative initiative, 09.12.2025, <https://www.gyla.ge/post/GYLA-shekrebistavisuplebaze-shetevissheaxe>, [05.02.2026].

during demonstrations and criminalized assemblies held on highways.⁹ These amendments were heavily criticized by both the Venice Commission¹⁰ and the OSCE ODIHR.¹¹

- **Amendments of October 2025:** Sanctions for protest-related offences were further increased, including the introduction of administrative imprisonment as the sole form of punishment for certain offences and the establishment of criminal liability for repeated violations.¹² These amendments were strongly criticized by the OSCE ODIHR, which called on the authorities to repeal them.¹³
- **Amendments of December 2025:** These changes introduced liability for “interrupting” individuals on sidewalks and established new notification requirements amounting to permit procedures. As a result, peaceful assemblies, including those held on sidewalks, were made dependent on prior state authorization, effectively criminalizing such gatherings.¹⁴

Administrative proceedings

Administrative-offence proceedings are used as a punitive and intimidating tool against participants in assemblies and demonstrations. Attempts to obtain official statistics were unsuccessful, data available through the NGO Legal Aid Network and hotline indicate a very high volume of proceedings. Between 19 November 2024 and 10 September 2025, the hotline received over **8 500 calls**; administrative proceedings were initiated against approximately **2 000 individuals**, **544** were administratively detained, lawyers visited **458** detainees, and nearly **1 400** individuals received legal assistance in appealing administrative offence reports.¹⁵

Arbitrary use of administrative detention has become a standard practice including for non-violent conduct. In 2025, police also frequently conducted stops and searches without proper grounds, exceeding the limits of “frisk checks” by opening bags and compelling individuals to unpack belongings.¹⁶

October 2025 amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences were followed with a new wave of arrests. On **26 October 2025**, the Ministry reported **60 administrative arrests** over three days¹⁷; on **24 October alone**, courts heard **37 cases**, most resulting in administrative detention.¹⁸ Media reports

⁹ GYLA, Human Rights Situation in Georgia 2025 Assessment of the Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association December 10 2025, pp. 15-16, https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/HUMAN%20RIGHTS%20SITUATION%20IN%20GEORGIA%202025.pdf, [05.02.2026].

¹⁰ Venice Commission, Opinion No. 1226/2024, [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-PI\(2025\)004-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-PI(2025)004-e), [05.02.2026].

¹¹ OSCE ODIHR, Opinion-Nr.: FOPA-GEO/536/2025 [TN], <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/d/2/587466.pdf>, [05.02.2026].

¹² GYLA, Human Rights Situation in Georgia 2025 Assessment of the Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association December 10 2025, pp. 15-16, https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/HUMAN%20RIGHTS%20SITUATION%20IN%20GEORGIA%202025.pdf, [05.02.2026].

¹³ OSCE ODIHR, Opinion-Nr.: FOPA-GEO/564/2025 [ALC/TN], <https://www.osce.org/sites/default/files/f/documents/4/1/601503.pdf>, [05.02.2026].

¹⁴ GYLA, Georgian Dream continues unconstitutional attack on freedom of assembly with new legislative initiative, 09.12.2025, <https://www.gyla.ge/post/GYLA-shekrebitavisuplebaze-shetevisshesaxe>, [05.02.2026].

¹⁵ GYLA, Human Rights Situation in Georgia 2025 Assessment of the Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association December 10 2025, p. 17, https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/HUMAN%20RIGHTS%20SITUATION%20IN%20GEORGIA%202025.pdf, [05.02.2026].

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Statement of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Internal Affairs, October 26, 2025, <https://police.ge/news/shinagan-sakmeta-saministros-gantskhadeba-30/10078>, [05.02.2026].

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

indicated that within **15 days** after the amendments went in force, up to **130 people** were administratively arrested, at least **57** of whom were sentenced to administrative detention.¹⁹ According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs' statistical data²⁰ on individuals held in temporary detention facilities, 140 persons were placed in such facilities in the fourth quarter of 2025 under Article 174¹ (violation of the rules for organizing or holding assemblies or demonstrations)²¹ of the Code of Administrative Offences.²² By comparison, the cumulative number of people placed in temporary detention facilities under the same article during first three quarters of 2025 was 20.²³

On November 3, 2025, the first case was recorded in which a person was charged under criminal law for the repeated commission of an administrative offense, specifically, for illegally blocking a road.²⁴

On January 23 2026 the first several cases of people being found as administrative offenders and sent to administrative detention for protesting on the sidewalk were recorded.²⁵

Use of facial recognition cameras

Based on information from public sources, in December 2024 LEPL "Public Security Management Center - 112" purchased 30 cameras with facial and emotion recognition capabilities.²⁶ In practice, the mass use of such cameras for purposes detrimental to human rights is typical of autocratic or totalitarian regimes, violating not only the right to privacy but also the freedoms of expression and association.²⁷ According to ODIHR Urgent Opinion of 12 November 2025 regarding Georgia, "states should refrain from the use of facial recognition technologies and other biometric systems, to identify those peacefully participating in an assembly. They should also put in place a robust legal human rights-compliant regulatory framework that effectively protects the right to privacy, including with regards to facial images and the data derived from them."²⁸

https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/HUMAN%20RIGHTS%20SITUATION%20IN%20GEORGIA%202025.pdf, [05.02.2025].

¹⁹ Publika's English-language Instagram page Publikaenglish, 01.11.2025, <https://www.instagram.com/publikaenglish/p/DQe2KVRDtEp/>, [05.02.2026].

²⁰ Ministry of Internal Affairs, Statistics on Persons Placed in Temporary Detention Isolators, <https://police.ge/public-information/droe-bit-motavsebis-izolatorshi-shesakhlebul-pirta-statistika?id=161&year=315&locale=en>, [09.02.2026].

²¹ 16 individuals out of 140 were detained under Article 174¹ of the Code of Administrative Offences in conjunction with other provisions of the same Code.

²² The statistics also include figures indicating that in the 4th quarter of 2025, 444 individuals were placed in temporary detention facilities under Article 173 of the Code of Administrative Offences (insulting a police officer), a provision frequently applied in the context of protests. However, the data do not specify how many of these detentions were related to protests or assemblies.

²³ 17 individuals out of 20 were detained under Article 174¹ of the Code of Administrative Offences in conjunction with other provisions of the same Code

²⁴ GYLA responds to the criminal prosecution of the Rustaveli protest, 04.11.2025, <https://www.gyla.ge/post/Rustavelis-protestis-sisxlissamartelbrivi-devna-GYLA>, [05.02.2026].

²⁵ GYLA assesses the unconstitutional practice of arresting people for standing on the sidewalk, 23.01.2026, <https://www.gyla.ge/post/GYLA-trotuarissaqmeebze>, [05.02.2026]; see also OC Media, Georgian court arrests first protesters for standing on the pavement, 23.01.2026, <https://oc-media.org/georgian-court-arrests-first-protesters-for-standing-on-the-pavement/>, [05.02.2026].

²⁶ GYLA, Human Rights Situation in Georgia 2025 Assessment of the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association December 10 2025, p. 18, https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/HUMAN%20RIGHTS%20SITUATION%20IN%20GEORGIA%202025.pdf, [05.02.2026].

²⁷ Amnesty International, Amnesty International and more than 170 organisations call for a ban on biometric surveillance, 07.06.2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/06/amnesty-international-and-more-than-170-organisations-call-for-a-ban-on-biometric-surveillance/>, [05.02.2026].

²⁸ OSCE ODIHR, Opinion-Nr.: FOPA-GEO/564/2025 [ALC/TN], <https://www.osce.org/sites/default/files/f/documents/4/1/601503.pdf>, [05.02.2026].

The Ministry of Internal Affairs uses facial recognition camera footage against protesters in court proceedings extensively, sometimes as the sole evidence, which, largely ignoring the relevant context, are treated by the court as sufficient to establish criminal liability, particularly in cases involving roadblocks.²⁹ Courts regularly fail to assess whether the identification was carried out lawfully and whether the person conducting the identification had appropriate access to protected databases in accordance with personal data protection legislation.³⁰ Video evidence from one administrative offense proceeding demonstrates that specific individuals are being monitored in such a way that the contents of their personal documents can be read upon close inspection.³¹

GYLA has repeatedly called on the Personal Data Protection Service to examine whether a prior data protection impact assessment was carried out, whether actions taken with the data are properly documented, whether organizational and technical security measures comply with applicable law, whether access to information stored in the special electronic program is legally justified, and whether access levels align with personal data protection standards.³² The Service's final decision on this issue is still unknown. In December 2025, the Parliament adopted amendments providing for the abolition of the Service and the transfer of its functions to the State Audit Office effective March 2026.³³

²⁹ GYLA, Human Rights Situation in Georgia 2025 Assessment of the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association December 10 2025, pp. 18-19, https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/HUMAN%20RIGHTS%20SITUATION%20IN%20GEORGIA%202025.pdf, [05.02.2026].

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ GYLA, Ministry of Internal Affairs uses facial recognition technologies for total control against peaceful demonstrators, 12.03.2025, see <https://www.gyla.ge/post/saxis-amomcnobi-kamerebi-saia>, [05.02.2026].

³² GYLA calls on the Personal Data Protection Service to study the practice of using facial recognition cameras by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 10.02.2025, <https://www.gyla.ge/post/saia-mowodeba-sheswavlil-iqnes-amomcnobi-kamerebis-gamoyenebis-praqtika>, [05.02.2026].

³³ IPN, Parliament approves legislative package abolishing Anti-Corruption Bureau and Personal Data Protection Service, 17.12.2025, <https://www.interpressnews.ge/en/article/144695-parliament-approves-legislative-package-abolishing-anti-corruption-bureau-and-personal-data-protection-service>, [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;
- 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;
- 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.