

Briefing note

Torture and Ill-Treatment During Protests and Suppression of Political Dissent in Georgia in November-December 2024



Table of Contents

I. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS.....	3
II. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY	5
III. TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLIES AND DISSENT	7
IV. PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS, LACK OF EFFECTIVE INVESTIGATION AND OTHER TORTURE-RELATED VIOLATIONS ...	11
V. THE IMPACT OF RESTRICTIVE LEGISLATION	14
VI. VICTIMS' ACCESS TO MEDICAL CARE, REHABILITATION AND LEGAL SUPPORT	15

Credits

This briefing note was written and published by the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), with the contribution from the Omega Research Foundation, the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA), the Georgian Centre for Psychosocial and Medical Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (GCRT), and the Partnership for Human Rights (PHR). The OMCT and the Omega Research Foundation are members of the United Against Torture Consortium (UATC).

The briefing note has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union.

Authors: Maryia Kvitsinskaya, Ana Jabauri, Marie Salphati.

Contributors: Eugenia Andreyuk, François Loncke, Helena Solà, Helen Close, Tamar Oniani, Tazo Kirtava.

Cover page image: Licensed from Shutterstock.com

ISBN: 978-2-88894-104-0

This briefing note may be reproduced without permission for educational and advocacy purposes only. Any excerpted or adapted material from this publication must include a full citation of the source. For any other use, please submit a written request to omct@omct.org.

Copyright © OMCT 2025

I. Summary & Recommendations

In late November 2024, a few months after the mass protests against the “Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence”, an even larger wave of protests erupted across Georgia following the “*Georgian Dream*” government’s decision to suspend its EU accession process. These demonstrations were met with an unprecedented level of police violence, including the use of less-lethal weapons in violation of domestic laws and international human rights standards, numerous arbitrary arrests, and politically motivated criminal and administrative prosecutions. These violations, compounded by newly adopted restrictive legislation targeting protesters, reflect a coordinated state policy involving all branches of government, including various departments of the Ministry of the Interior, investigative and prosecutorial bodies, Parliament, and the judiciary.

This conclusion is supported by evidence that police officers engaged in violent crackdowns were acting under direct instructions from senior authorities. Prior to dispersing the protests, authorities took deliberate preparatory measures, such as modifying police vehicles into improvised torture sites. Additionally, police units involved in the dispersal of protests using torture were not wearing insignia, and identification marks had been removed from some police equipment to prevent accountability. Riot police, supported by criminal and patrol police units, subjected protesters to extreme physical abuse, psychological intimidation, and, in some cases, inhumane detention conditions. Abuses documented by the OMCT include prolonged beatings to the face with brass knuckles and feet, the use of so-called “beating corridors,” forced stress positions, denial of medical assistance, and threats of killing and sexual violence. Excessive force was deployed indiscriminately, including against minors and individuals with disabilities.

Hundreds of individuals were arbitrarily arrested, many subjected to short-term incommunicado detention without access to legal counsel. Evidence obtained by the OMCT reveals that detainees were frequently coerced into signing false confessions under duress. Judicial proceedings systematically disregarded evidence of torture and defence motions, imposing harsh fines and administrative detentions based solely on police testimonies, even from police witnesses who had not been present at the time of the arrest. Despite interviewing the victims and registering their complaints, the Special Investigation Service and the Prosecutor General’s Office failed to ensure accountability, even in cases where some officers could have been identified according to victim and/or witness testimonies. The investigative authorities also took no action in response to a publicly available [video recording](#), clearly showing the Head of the MIA’s Special Tasks Department beating a protester. In addition, in some instances, the Ministry of the Interior obstructed justice by withholding evidence and ignoring summonses regarding allegations of torture, thereby reinforcing impunity.

There are no State rehabilitation services available to victims of police abuse, leaving them reliant on civil society or private medical providers. Civil society organisations offering legal and medical assistance are operating in an increasingly hostile environment, facing significant threats to their physical security. The newly initiated Draft Foreign Agents Registration Act, adopted in the first reading on March 4, 2025, imposes even harsher requirements than the preceding “[Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence](#).” If passed, the law will not only seriously threaten the functioning of CSOs and the media, but it will also impose criminal liability for non-compliance with its requirements. This legislation will have devastating consequences for the rule of law in Georgia, further leaving victims of torture and other gross human rights violations unprotected.

Recommendations to the UN Human Rights Council and its Special Procedures, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the OSCE and UN Member States:

- Strongly and unequivocally condemn the systematic practice of torture and ill-treatment, politically motivated administrative and criminal persecution and other unlawful actions against protesters, human rights defenders, journalists, and political activists in Georgia;
- Urge Georgia’s authorities to respect freedom of assembly and the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment; ensure that peaceful protests are adequately facilitated by law enforcement officials and that force is only used as a measure of last resort, when non-violent means to control a situation of violence have proven to be ineffective; ensure that when the use of force is required, it aligns with international and domestic standards and principles, notably legality, proportionality, necessity, precaution, non-discrimination and accountability; investigate cases of torture and other ill-treatment in a timely, independent, impartial and adequate manner; provide comprehensive reparation to survivors, including medical treatment, psychosocial support, and financial compensation, and return their seized or stolen property; ensure the release of all persons unlawfully detained; and abolish recently adopted legislative changes restricting freedom of assembly and association, and freedom of expression.
- Urge Georgia’s authorities to ensure all police officers wear visible identification tags; provide clear marking and labelling on tear gas canisters and other less lethal devices, munition and weapons, indicating a serial number, contents, manufacturer and safe handling instructions to facilitate accountability; publish comprehensive information on the units and battalions deployed in response to the protests and any weapons, ammunition, devices, and special means used to disperse protesters;
- Bring the situation to the attention of regional as well as international human rights mechanisms, including a call on the UN Human Rights Council to closely monitor and

respond to the situation; and promote accountability for perpetrators of crimes and human rights violations, among others, through the establishment of investigative mechanisms such as the Moscow Mechanism of the OSCE;

- Attend court hearings of persons detained in connection with peaceful demonstrations to assess the independence of the judiciary, uphold due process, express solidarity and attract international attention that may deter violations of the detainees' rights;
- Provide support for Georgian CSOs and media involved in documenting and reporting violations, as well as for those providing rehabilitation and legal, psychological, social and other assistance to victims; strongly and unequivocally condemn any attempts to interfere with their work, including physical attacks, and politically motivated criminal and administrative prosecutions, and repressive legislation;
- Consider strengthening or imposing targeted individual sanctions on high-ranking government officials enabling or involved in human rights violations, including economic and financial sanctions, as well as travel bans.

II. Introduction and Methodology

The human rights situation in Georgia began to [seriously deteriorate](#) in April and May 2024, caused, *inter alia*, by the adoption of the [Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence](#) (known as the “foreign agents law”), followed by a violent crackdown on large-scale peaceful protests, attacks on human rights defenders and their family members, civic activists, journalists and politicians. Instances of [police brutality](#) have been widely documented throughout the April and May protest demonstrations. More than 200 people were detained, and the majority reported being subjected to ill-treatment by law enforcement agents at the protest sites and in their neighbourhoods.

According to the Central Election Commission, the ruling party “*Georgian Dream*” obtained [53.93% of votes](#) in the October 26, 2024, parliamentary elections. Widespread breaches of the ballot secrecy, voter intimidation, and other systematic electoral violations were documented by civil society. According to the [OSCE/ODIHR’s Election Observation Mission](#), the elections were held in a “widespread climate of pressure and party-organised intimidation before and during the elections.” The European Parliament [refused](#) to recognise the results qualifying them as “neither free nor fair.” In December 2024, the parliamentary majority elected a new president, Mikheil Kavelashvili, a former MP from the “*Georgian Dream*”. To date, the “*Georgian Dream*” exercises *de facto* control over the executive and legislative branches of government, with significant influence over the judiciary.

On November 28, 2024, the Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Kobakhidze, announced the government's decision to suspend the EU accession process until 2028. The public responded with a large-scale, peaceful, spontaneous protest in front of the Parliament building, which was violently dispersed by the police.

Systematic and indiscriminate violence against protesters persisted from November 28 to December 8, 2024. Typically, victims were subjected to severe beatings and other forms of torture and ill-treatment during the dispersal or encirclement of protesters and/or at the time of arrest—at protest sites, on nearby streets, and in their neighbourhoods—and later in police transport. After spending several hours in police stations, those detained were transferred to detention centres for another 48 hours. Most detainees were released after this period and subsequently subjected to administrative fines under such charges as petty hooliganism, verbal insults against police officers, vandalism, and disobedience to lawful police orders. In some cases, arrest resulted in administrative detention or even criminal prosecution.

However, after December 7, widespread police brutality with mass arrests ceased, allegedly due to the fact that violent dispersal consistently led to even larger protests. Police forces shifted to more sporadic attacks on demonstrators and journalists during street protests, combined with criminal and/or administrative harassment of civic activists, opinion leaders and the most vocal protesters.

One such sporadic attacks occurred on [February 2, 2025](#), when police forces severely beat several protesters and [physically attacked journalists](#). Similarly, on [February 4, 2025](#), during a rally in solidarity with an imprisoned journalist, media representatives were also [subjected to police violence](#). As of the end of February 2025, protests are still ongoing, with its main demands being new, fair and free elections and the release of political prisoners. From November 19, 2024, to February 28, 2025, local CSOs documented 1,082 cases of administrative offences with political motives, including 486 individuals who were subjected to administrative detention. 62 cases of politically motivated criminal proceedings have been documented between April 2024 and February 2025. Protest participants continue receiving calls from police notifying them of administrative charges, most frequently regarding the violation of rules on public assemblies and manifestations. In parallel to this, sweeping legislative changes introduced in recent months impose unprecedented new restrictions on peaceful protests and increase existing sanctions, seriously undermining freedom of assembly, expression, and other fundamental rights.

In response to the crisis, the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), jointly with the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT), both members of the United Against Torture Consortium (UATC), together with the Independent Forensic Expert Group (IFEG), conducted a fact-finding mission to Tbilisi on from 17 to 24 December 2024. The

Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA), the Georgian Centre for Psychosocial and Medical Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (GCRT), the Human Rights Center (HRC) assisted the mission on the ground, and the Omega Research Foundation contributed to the mission through research. The OMCT's part of the mission included 15 in-depth interviews with victims, including two injured journalists; three interviews with lawyers; seven interviews with local CSOs and experts; and a meeting with the Public Defender of Georgia.

This briefing note is based on evidence gathered during the mission: Chapter III is derived from the testimonies of interviewed survivors and witnesses; Chapters IV and VI are based on interviews with both survivors and civil society experts; and Chapter V presents a legal analysis carried out by the authors of this briefing note.

It analyses patterns of torture, ill-treatment, and other human rights violations related to the protests in November-December 2024, including police tactics employed to attack peaceful protesters and means of restraint used; legislative changes introduced during the protests and aimed at restricting freedom of assembly and expression, freedom of the media, and the suppression of political dissent; and survivors' access to legal remedies, medical and psychological rehabilitation. The briefing note's findings have been cross-checked and confirmed by evidence from independent sources, including documentation from local CSOs, media reports, and assessments by international human rights bodies. While the number of conducted interviews is limited, the consistency of testimonies strengthens the credibility of the findings, as multiple victims independently described similar patterns of human rights violations.

III. Torture and Other Ill-treatment in the Context of Peaceful Assemblies and Dissent

Survivors and witnesses of police violence, as well as civil society monitors interviewed by the OMCT, consistently emphasised that the overwhelming majority of protesters remained peaceful at all times. Several victims reported that police officers positioned in a cordon on the street engaged in verbal exchanges with protesters, including the use of obscene language and gestures. In response, some protesters set off fireworks in the direction of the police. However, these incidents did not alter the overall peaceful nature of the protests in the reported cases.

Despite the lack of legitimate grounds, police forces regularly broke up the protests. Police brutality and the excessive, indiscriminate use of crowd-control weapons during the dispersal of peaceful assemblies from November 28 to December 8 were widely documented. Testimonies from both victims and civil society experts indicate that police tactics evolved over time, allegedly

as law enforcement sought the most effective methods to suppress protests and dissent. Several interviewees noted that while police initially appeared disorganised and unprepared to confront protesters on the first night, in the following days, authorities employed a range of tactics.

Evidence denounced the excessive and indiscriminate use of various less-lethal weapons, including pepper spray, tear gas, and water cannons containing chemical irritants, often combined with large, bright lights that heightened protesters' disorientation. Nine victims reported that even a small amount of water splashed on their clothing caused severe itching, strong burning sensation, and skin irritation, with some cases resulting in acne that lasted from a few days to two weeks. Authorities have not made public any information about the substance used in the water, despite repeated requests. Furthermore, water cannons were extensively deployed in frigid temperatures ranging from -1 °C to +8 °C.

According to five witnesses, tear gas canisters lacked labelling or identifiable information. The labels might have been deliberately removed by the police to prevent the detection of the origins and/or characteristics of the tear gas used. In nearly all instances, interviewees reported that the tear gas was significantly more toxic than what had been used during the protests in May 2024. In addition, they noted that respirators and designated masks did not protect them from tear gas. Eight survivors described symptoms such as severe disorientation, difficulty breathing, nausea, headaches, and watery eyes. These effects lasted for about a few hours in some cases and up to one to two weeks in others.

Evidence indicates that police officers carried out physical attacks against protesters in various forms, including:

- Tracking and attacking protesters in nearby streets, including with the help of masked individuals in civilian clothing;
- Isolating protesters from the main crowd under false pretences (e.g., offering assistance to leave the protest safely), then leading them into side streets hidden from journalists and other demonstrators, where they were beaten and detained;
- Encircling and violently assaulting protesters in the early morning hours, when most demonstrators had already left the protest site. Some protesters were assaulted while attempting to leave the assembly site. Others were forced to pass through a “beating corridor”—a formation of 10 to 30 police officers standing in a line, each physically striking those who were made to walk through. At least one documented incident occurred early on November 30, when police officers deliberately surrounded 100–200 protesters, creating a crush and actively using pepper spray against those trapped inside. As a result, many protesters began to fall in the crowd surge. The only way to exit the encirclement was through a “beating corridor” formed by law enforcement officers;

- Beating of non-violent protesters under control inside police vehicles. Three victims testified that seats had been removed from police vans. These removals enabled police to assault detained protesters inside the police vans. The removal of car seats might demonstrate a pre-existing intention to punish protest participants.

Among the documented cases, police officers beat protesters using their feet, fists, elbows, and batons. Six survivors reported that some attackers wore heavy police boots, gloves with hard inserts, and, in some cases, brass knuckles, which intensified the pain and caused more severe injuries, including skull, nose, and bone fractures, concussions, knocked-out teeth, and haematomas—many of which were still lasting at the time of the interviews conducted 2–3 weeks after the incident. In addition to physical injuries, victims experienced insomnia, fear of being in open public spaces, severe anxiety, and intense emotional distress. As these effects reached the threshold of torture and other ill-treatment, some victims continued to struggle with returning to their normal lives.

One victim reported that two police officers held him by the arms to prevent him from covering his face, while a third officer struck him repeatedly in the face. In two other cases, police officers kicked protesters in the face while they were lying on the ground, continuing the assault until one of the individuals lost consciousness. In some instances, intense beatings lasted for 10 to 20 minutes without interruption. One survivor reported that among the beaten detainees was a protester with asthma who was struggling to breathe and repeatedly requested medical assistance, but his requests were denied. Another interviewed survivor suffered a panic attack after a severe beating, when his face and clothes were covered in blood. In one instance, a woman reported being forced into a stress position for 20 to 25 minutes during transport to the police station, causing severe pain in her knees and wrists. Furthermore, many detainees were kept in handcuffs or restrained with plastic ties on their wrists, causing significant discomfort.

According to the Georgian CSO “Partnership for Human Rights”, among the survivors were minors and persons with disabilities¹. In at least five cases, detained minors were subjected to physical and psychological violence during their arrest. In four out of five cases, violence continued in police vehicles, where children were hit in the face and various parts of the body; in one instance, a sick minor was forced to vomit into their own bag. In at least three cases documented in Tbilisi, persons with disabilities were subjected to beating with hands, feet, and batons, as well as mockery and intimidation. As a result of the torture, they suffered concussions, superficial head trauma, nasal fractures, facial bruising, superficial chest trauma, and bruising on the abdomen, back, pelvis, joints, and thighs. The documented cases also highlighted restrictions on access to medical care, toilets, and the fulfilment of other basic needs, further worsening their

¹ The information in this paragraph is provided by Georgian CSO “Partnership for Human Rights.”

condition. In all three cases, law enforcement agents were aware that the victims were persons with disabilities and were more violent towards them precisely due to their limitations.

Two victims reported that in response to verbal complaints about the violence and egregious violations of their rights, police officers either mocked them or intensified the beatings. The majority of survivors stated that police insulted them and their family members and threatened them with violence, including sexual violence or even death. Male survivors were also subjected to homophobic slurs, specifically in reference to their pro-European views.²

In almost all cases, physical attacks amounting to torture and other ill-treatment were carried out by police officers wearing face masks and black uniforms without insignia — attire typically associated with riot police. One testimony further supports this, as the perpetrators forced detained protesters to shout praise for Zviad Kharazishvili, the Head of the Special Tasks Department of the Ministry of the Interior (alias ‘*Khareba*’), and claimed that they sent Kharazishvili photos of the detainees’ beaten faces. Some of the officers had their body cameras switched off. In one instance, a journalist was attacked by an organised group of masked individuals in plainclothes—so-called “*titushkies*”—in front of patrol police officers who did not intervene. Other instances of attacks on journalists and protesters by organised groups of thugs have been [reported](#) by media and human rights groups. Allegedly, the Georgian authorities employ such tactics to intimidate dissenters and foster an environment of uncontrolled use of force against those who oppose them.

Four survivors reported that they believed commanders were present during the arrest and beatings of protesters, actively instructing other police officers. They stood a short distance away from the attacks and did not participate in the beatings, in some cases wearing costly civilian clothes and carrying walkie-talkies. One witness reported that police officers expressed frustration with their superiors’ orders to bring bloodied detainees to the station, as they did not want to deal with beaten people. Another detainee claimed that before being taken to the police station, he overheard conversations between the officers who had arrested him. From these discussions, he learned that detention facilities in Tbilisi had been intentionally cleared a few hours before the protests began to accommodate detained protesters. This suggests that mass arrests may have been pre-planned as part of a broader policy to suppress the protest.

² Note: Russian State propaganda actively promotes the narrative that integration with the EU leads to the popularisation of homosexuality among the population. As a result, government officials in Georgia and some other countries influenced by Russian propaganda often use homophobic slurs against individuals advocating for European democratic values.

After their arrest and beating, the perpetrators handed the detainees over to patrol police, who transported them to the stations without intervening or stopping the violence. At police stations, patrol and criminal police registered detainees and issued arrest reports.

According to those interviewed by the OMCT, instances of physical violence at police stations and detention centres were minimal or nearly absent. Nevertheless, despite the police stations being filled with severely beaten protesters covered in blood, officers ignored their condition and denied them medical care. Three survivors testified that they were forced to wash the blood from their faces before their photos were taken. The interviewed survivors spent an average of two to four hours in police stations before being transferred to detention centres, where they were held for another 48 hours before trial. In two cases, severely beaten victims were forced to wait in a police vehicle for six to nine hours before being admitted to the detention centre.

In the detention centres, four of the interviewed individuals were visited by representatives from the Public Defender's Office. After 48 hours, the survivors were mostly issued fines, while two individuals were sentenced to seven days of administrative detention. In one case, a survivor described harsh conditions at Kutaisi Detention Centre, where bright lights remained on round-the-clock, temperatures were uncomfortably cold, and the cell had an exposed toilet with no privacy. The interviewee also reported that detained protesters were subjected to constant psychological pressure, and the food provided was so poor that he was unable to eat until the fifth day of detention, when a lawyer brought him a meal. Similarly, another survivor who was detained for 48 hours at Dighomi Detention Centre reported that the cell lacked a mattress, pillows, and blankets, while bright lights remained on continuously for 24 hours. The temperature inside was maintained at 15–20 degrees Celsius, adding to the discomfort. The survivor was not provided with any food or water, except for what was brought by their lawyer.

The general context, the perpetrators' language at various stages of interactions with victims, their demonstrative impunity, and other evidence indicate that the purpose of the torture and other ill-treatment was to punish and intimidate protesters, as well as broader groups dissenting against the policies of "*Georgian Dream*". Accordingly, these violations are rooted in discrimination based on political grounds.

IV. Procedural Safeguards, Lack of Effective Investigation and Other Torture-Related Violations

The [Code of Administrative Offences of Georgia](#) stipulates that individuals suspected of committing an administrative offence may be detained for up to 24 hours, after which they must

either be brought before a court or released. In exceptional cases, the detention period may be extended to 48 hours if necessary to obtain evidence. However, in the case of detained protest participants, this period was prolonged to 48 hours en masse without any grounds or justifications for such a necessity.

Protest participants were denied due process guarantees both in police stations and, in some instances, in detention centres. For example, interviewed victims were prevented from contacting their family members or lawyers. When inquired about the location of detainees, authorities frequently claimed ignorance, leaving families without information on the whereabouts of the arrested protesters for hours.

Lawyers were generally forced to wait for several hours outside temporary detention facilities before being allowed to visit their clients, preventing detainees from receiving timely legal assistance.

Among those interviewed who were arrested and taken to police stations, all testified that they were forced to sign police reports without reading them or were made to sign reports containing false information about the context of their arrest, including inaccurate details about the officers involved and fabricated charges. Additionally, there are documented cases where police officers pressured detainees to reject independent lawyers, promising a lighter penalty in return. Officers also exerted psychological pressure to coerce detainees into pleading guilty. Some detainees also reported that personal belongings were stolen during their arrest and were never returned despite official statements to the contrary.

One victim stated that police officers at the station possessed detailed dossiers on his background, employment, and personal life, despite him having no prior involvement in civic activism or previous encounters with law enforcement. This indicates that law enforcement agents may be collecting information on individuals participating in protest demonstrations, with the intention of targeting them further.

Relevant state institutions have failed to ensure an effective investigation into victims' legal complaints regarding physical attacks and other human rights violations committed by law enforcement agents and unidentified plainclothes groups. While criminal offences such as physical attacks are to be investigated by the Prosecutor's Office, cases of torture and other ill-treatment committed by public officials fall directly within the scope of the Special Investigation Service (SIS), which was established as an "independent body" in March 2020. Some survivors reported being interviewed by the SIS, and proceedings related to their complaints were initiated. However, no progress has been made in holding law enforcement agents accountable for human rights violations, even in cases where perpetrators were clearly identified by victims and their lawyers.

According to a credible source interviewed by the OMCT, in some cases, the MIA has refused to provide CCTV footage, and its officers have shown reluctance to appear for interrogation. Combined with other obstacles, this has significantly hampered the effective functioning of the SIS. Meanwhile, the SIS claims to have interrogated 77 law enforcement officers and gathered over 2,000 hours of footage from open sources, CCTV cameras, and other sources as of February 10, 2025³.

Two human rights lawyers working on torture cases reported that the forensic medical service suffers from a lack of resources, leading to significant delays in forensic reports. Sometimes reports completed only after court hearings on administrative proceedings, where victims reported torture and ill-treatment during arrest and detention. Additionally, forensic examinations are often superficial, frequently omitting psychological assessments and failing to examine internal organ damage, documenting only visible injuries.

The lack of independence and impartiality within the judiciary branch has also been evident in the light of administrative and criminal proceedings related to protest participants, as seen in the April and May 2024 protests. As per practice, such cases are usually dealt with by a select group of judges, including Mr. Koba Chagunava, Ms. Lela Mildenberger, Ms. Lela Tsagareishvili, Ms. Nino Enukidze and Mr. Manuchar Tsatsua.

In all documented cases, judges disregarded the evidence presented by victims, including allegations of torture supported by visible injuries, forensic medical reports, and photographic and video documentation. Instead, administrative sanctions—most commonly fines—were systematically imposed based solely on the testimony of police officers who, according to detainees, were not present at the time of their arrest. Lawyers representing victims reported that judges systematically dismissed their motions and demonstrated a clear lack of impartiality. In some instances, court hearings were scheduled late at night or early in the morning. For example, in one case, a hearing lasted from 5 to 10 AM. Additionally, the MIA relied on footage from protests where the defendants were not even present, or undated footage. However, such videos were deemed admissible by the common courts and generally served as grounds for convicting protest participants. Appellate courts generally refuse to overrule decisions made by first-instance courts, leaving protest participants without any viable means of seeking justice at the domestic level.

According to lawyers, prior to the November-December 2024 mass arrests during protests, judges were sometimes willing to postpone hearings and allow the defence to gather additional evidence;

³ On February 10, 2025, the SIS provided this information to GYLA in response to an official request.

defence motions were also considered in some instances. However, since November, any actions by the defence have been entirely rejected or ignored by the judges.

Many of the interviewed victims expressed reluctance to file complaints due to a lack of trust in the justice system. This is because none of the responsible law enforcement officers or higher-ranking public officials have been held accountable for human rights violations committed against protest participants in the past.

All of the aforementioned indicates that all relevant public institutions seem to be engaged in coordinated efforts to commit or enable torture and related gross human rights violations against protest participants and affiliated persons.

V. The Impact of Restrictive Legislation

After violent crackdowns on protests failed to stop demonstrations, in December 2024-February 2025, Parliament passed [new legislation](#) that aims to impose stricter sanctions on participants of public assemblies and other dissenters raising their voices. According to the [European Commission for Democracy through Law](#), the new penalties appear to be excessive, fail to comply with the principles of lawfulness, necessity, and proportionality, and are likely to have a chilling effect on freedoms of assembly and expression.

In December 2024, amendments were made to the [Code of Administrative Offences of Georgia](#), including the possibility of keeping an individual in preventive detention based merely on the suspicion that they may recommit an offence, which clearly contradicts the guarantees of the right to liberty and security of a person. The legislation does not provide clear criteria for establishing such a suspicion and therefore leaves it at the discretion of police officers. In this case, the maximum time for detention is 48 hours.

Administrative sanctions were significantly [increased](#) for violation of rules applicable to public assemblies and manifestations. For instance, while fines for holding assemblies in prohibited places, including blocking traffic roadways and building entrances, amounted to GEL 500 (approximately EUR 166) or GEL 5,000 (approximately EUR 1,667) for organisers of an assembly, these sanctions have now increased to GEL 5,000 and GEL 15,000 (approximately EUR 4,995), respectively. In the case of recommitting the offence, the sanctions include a fine of up to GEL 10,000 or administrative detention for 20 days; and in the case of an organiser, a fine of up to GEL 20,000 or administrative detention for up to 60 days. The placement of protest-related posters and other materials without authorisation can also result in a fine of up to GEL 1,000 (approximately EUR 333), compared to GEL 50 (approximately EUR 17) before the amendments.

During the November-December protests, many participants started using face masks to protect themselves from tear gas and pepper spray and prevent law enforcement agents from taking their photos to identify and target them further. On 13 December, the Parliament introduced a new provision to the [Law of Georgia on Assemblies and Demonstrations](#) (Article 11 (2) (a²)), whereby it [banned](#) face masks during protests to make it easier for the police to target participants. An administrative sanction envisaged by the new provision is a fine amounting to GEL2,000 (approximately EUR 666) or administrative detention up to 7 days.

In December 2024, following [public statements](#) by civil servants from various state institutions condemning the suspension of EU integration, [amendments](#) were introduced to the Law of Georgia on Public Service. The new provisions allow for the unconditional dismissal of public officials without the option of reassignment to another civil service position. Additionally, court rulings on unlawful dismissals will no longer guarantee reinstatement.

In January 2025, the “*Georgian Dream*” [amended Governmental Decree №361](#) in order to include traffic roadways of international or domestic importance in the list of “objects of strategic and/or significant importance.” This, in turn, implies the application of criminal, rather than administrative, charges for blocking such roads. According to the [Criminal Code of Georgia](#), the highest penalty for this action is up to 4 years of imprisonment.

In early February 2025, the “*Georgian Dream*” [introduced](#) amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences, the Criminal Code, and the Law on Assemblies and Demonstrations, increasing administrative sanctions for offences commonly used to target protesters (e.g., petty hooliganism, verbal insults against police officers, vandalism and disobedience to the lawful order of the police). Penalties for petty hooliganism have been increased to a fine of GEL 500–3,000 (EUR 166–666) or up to 20 days of detention, while disobedience to the police now carries a fine of GEL 2,000–5,000 (EUR 666–1,667) or up to 60 days of detention. The maximum period of administrative detention was extended from 15 to 60 days.

VI. Victims’ access to medical care, rehabilitation and legal support

Most persons interviewed by the OMCT reported that the number of medical personnel and ambulances present near protest sites was insufficient. As a result, access to medical assistance was largely limited to those who were physically close to the ambulances. According to survivors’ testimonies, the treatment by ambulance medical staff varied—while some provided proper care, others ignored the injured or treated them inappropriately. One of the survivors also reported that ambulances could not reach the injured protesters because police officers blocked their way.

After individuals were detained, police officers sought to prevent them from being sent to hospitals at all stages—even in cases of obvious injuries, unless this was made possible through significant efforts by human rights lawyers. Only in one instance, a detained victim was sent to a hospital directly from the police station because the station’s doctor was unable to stop severe bleeding.

In other instances, some detainees were only able to obtain a referral to a hospital upon admission to the detention centre, as the medical personnel conducting intake assessments were unwilling to take responsibility for clear, serious injuries. Generally, victims were able to receive medical care, have their injuries documented, and remain safe in a hospital if they or their lawyers managed to secure a referral. However, in one of the documented cases, a police officer took a survivor into custody from the hospital before he could receive medical treatment. On another occasion, a police officer entered, without consent, into a room where a survivor was being examined and treated.

Additionally, some documented cases reveal that judges refused to send protesters to the hospital during court hearings, despite their severe injuries and clear inability to fully participate in the legal proceedings.

Torture survivors have no access to state-funded long-term treatment or rehabilitation programs. Instead, they rely on support from non-governmental organisations to receive necessary care, including psychological support.

Legal support is provided by a Legal Aid Network formed by Georgian CSOs which have launched a hotline for victims of torture, arbitrary and incommunicado detention, and other human rights violations in the context of protests. As of February 28, 2025, the Network had ensured legal assistance for at least 881 victims. In addition, GYLA, HRC, GCRT, and other organisations are currently coordinating their efforts to document cases of torture and ill-treatment through interviewing victims and witnesses. As of March 3, 2025, 116 victims had been interviewed.

Like other civil society actors in Georgia, organisations assisting victims and documenting human rights violations operate in an extremely hostile environment. They continue to face a major threat [due to the “Law on the Transparency of the Foreign Influence.”](#) According to the law, CSOs receiving more than 20% of their funding from abroad will be subjected to strict administrative fines if they fail to register as an “agent of foreign influence”. While the law has not yet been applied in practice, Parliament is currently considering a new [Draft Foreign Agents Registration Act](#), which establishes even harsher requirements than its predecessor. Namely, non-compliance with its requirements will result not only in administrative, but criminal charges. This could lead to intimidation, retaliation, and punishment of those engaged in the process of documentation of human rights violations, while at the same time violating the confidentiality of information regarding interviewees.

Beyond legislative restrictions, human rights defenders continue to face real risks of physical attacks against themselves and their property. During the April-May 2024 protest demonstrations, several [NGOs' offices, as well as the homes of human rights defenders, were vandalised. Several cases of physical attacks against HRDs and civic activists by groups of men in plain clothes were documented.](#) This was accompanied by a smear campaign led by high-ranking government officials, an “internal enemy” discourse and constant efforts to pressure, intimidate, or discredit HRDs and CSOs.