



Irrational spending of the state budget to strengthen partisan interests

After the parliamentary elections of October 26, 2024, Georgian Dream has adopted a number of repressive laws directed against fundamental human rights. In addition, a number of legislative amendments/initiatives developed recently put state agencies and their representatives in an advantageous position.

Recent developments (October 26 parliamentary elections, disproportionate force used during protests, intimidation/physical violence against peaceful citizens, illegal detentions, biased trials and the inaction of the Special Investigation Service) have made it particularly clear that there is no independent agency in the country (including those agencies that should function independently of any influence according to the law). **The initiatives developed recently represent the distribution of resources on the basis of political motives, which further strengthens partisan influence on various state agencies.**

Below are discussed the initiatives developed by Georgian Dream, which aim to gain political loyalty from institutionally independent bodies and their representatives. These initiatives place them in a privileged position by enjoying economic benefits and/or other types of advantages, which clearly represents an attempt to influence the activities of legally independent agencies and weaken their political neutrality.

Special Investigation Service

On December 31, 2024, by Irakli Kobakhidze's decree, state protection was appointed for the Head of the Special Investigation Service, Karlo Katsitadze.

The Law of Georgia on the Special State Protection Service defines the list of persons who have the right to enjoy state protection. However, Karlo Katsitadze and Giorgi Kalandarishvili were granted protection as an exception. The decree indicates the basis for the appointment of state protection, paragraph 3 of Article 5 of the Law of Georgia on the Special State Protection Service, according to which, there must be "sufficient data that his or his family members' life and health are in danger".

After Irakli Kobakhidze announced the decision of Georgian Dream to suspend negotiations with the European Union, large-scale and continuous protests began in many cities of Georgia. Before that, in April/May 2024, peaceful protests were held in connection with the reintroduction/adoption of the so-called Russian law. At that time, law enforcement officers exceeded their authority in a number of cases, cracked down on peaceful protests, illegally used special equipment, physically abused those illegally detained (the brutal actions carried out after November were assessed as torture), and their



targets were especially media representatives. Despite the fact that the above facts are proved by numerous pieces of evidence (footage disseminated by the media), the Special Investigation Service, which shall be independent of partisan interests according to the law, has not punished a single law enforcement officer so far.

Constitutional Court

By Irakli Kobakhidze's decision, state protection was also appointed for the former Chairman of the Constitutional Court - Merab Turava. According to the decree, Merab Turava's protection was appointed until April 1, 2026, **"until there is a need for it."** According to the Law of Georgia on the Special State Protection Service, the Chairman of the Constitutional Court is among the persons protected by the Special State Protection Service.

The Government of Georgia has the discretionary authority to extend personal protection for the Chairman of the Constitutional Court after the expiration/termination of his term of office. ***However, for this, it is necessary that there be sufficient data or information received from the relevant services that his or his family members' life and health are in danger.*** Since there is no such an objective circumstance and a general "need" is indicated as the reason for the extension of protection, there is a well-founded suspicion that state resources are being used irrationally, for narrow partisan interests. Merab Turava has been distinguished recently by making decisions beneficial to Georgian Dream, and there are reasoned questions regarding his objectivity. Merab Turava supported the issue of violation of the country's constitution by the President of Georgia, Salome Zurbishvili.

Lack of impartiality is especially clear in relation to the President of Georgia. Salome Zurbishvili was stripped of state protection in December 2024. Unlike the Chairman of the Constitutional Court, in this case, the law directly provides for the extension of state protection. In particular, according to the law, *the state protection of the President of Georgia shall be maintained for a period of one year after the expiration or termination of the term of office.*

The above-mentioned decisions make it clear that Georgian Dream is guided not by law, but by personal partisan interests, for which it uses the state budget.

Central Election Commission (CEC)

The parliamentary elections of October 26, 2024 were held against the backdrop of large-scale violations. Numerous pieces of evidence obtained by the media, civil society organizations and opposition parties indicate that large-scale violations in the run-up to and during the elections had a significant impact on the final outcome. Until now, the election results have no international legitimacy. Earlier (in August 2024), a 3-meter fence was installed near the Central Election Commission building (without any legal basis), the cost of which amounted to more than GEL 300,000.



The large-scale election fraud was preceded (on October 10) by the appointment of state protection for the CEC Chairman. Three days before the elections, by Irakli Kobakhidze's decision, the Central Election Commission, the Government Administration and the Patriarchate were added to the list of strategic facilities, among others. This change was determined for the purposes of the Criminal Code, according to which, **the seizure or blocking of a facility of strategic or special importance, which hindered or could hinder the normal operation of this institution or facility, shall be punishable by imprisonment (Article 222 of the Criminal Code).**

By implementing the above-mentioned changes before the elections, it was clear that Georgian Dream was preparing for a wave of protests that could follow the large-scale election fraud. The changes it adopted (including the change to the list of objects of strategic importance) are aimed at instilling fear in peaceful demonstrators and having a chilling effect on the right to assembly/expression.

In addition, the salaries of the Central Commission members increased in December 2024. As a result, the salary of the CEC Chairman was set at GEL 12,410, and the salary of each member of the Commission was set at GEL 9,928. Later, in January 2025, Georgian Dream introduced a draft law, according to which, additional state compensation were assigned to the CEC members. Accordingly, in the case of the Chairman, the amount of compensation is approximately GEL 4,137, and in the case of members - GEL 3,309. According to the explanatory note to the draft law, the purpose of the amendment is to ensure the creation of appropriate guarantees for the CEC members, considering their functions.

In March 2025, another government decree was amended (Government Decree No. 242 of March 18, 2014) and the Chairman and members of the Central Election Commission were granted the right to bear arms. The Chairman and elected members of the Supreme Election Commission of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara were also added to the list of persons who have the right to bear service weapons.

Public Broadcaster

On October 31, 2024, by decision No. 586 of the Board of Trustees of the Public Broadcaster, the salary of the Director General was set at GEL 16,250 from January 1, 2025. As for the budget of the Public Broadcaster, it will be GEL 101 million, like in 2024.

The Public Broadcaster is one of the main destinations of protests, especially in view of the recent acute political processes in the country. The main demand of the demonstrators is the objectivity of the Broadcaster and independence from partisan interests. Some of the representatives of the Public Broadcaster openly criticized the editorial policy of the media, which directly repeated the narrative of Georgian Dream. On April 11, due to open criticism, some journalists were dismissed from the channel and later several of them quit on their own initiative.



Parliament of Georgia

On the initiative of Georgian Dream, the salaries of Members of Parliament increased from January 1, 2025 and were determined as follows:

The salary of the Speaker of the Parliament increased from GEL 6,740 to GEL 14,600, the First Deputy Speaker of the Parliament - from GEL 6,400 to GEL 13,432, and the Deputy Speaker - from GEL 6,340 to GEL 13,140.

The salary of the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee and Faction increased from GEL 5,540 to GEL 12,556, and the First Deputy Chairman of the Committee and Faction - from GEL 4,800 to GEL 12,410. The salary of the Deputy Chairman of the Committee became GEL 11,972 instead of GEL 4,740. The salary of the Member of Parliament, who has no high position, became GEL 11,680 instead of GEL 4,624.

According to the study conducted by the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), in 2024, GEL 527.5 million were issued as bonuses/supplements in budgetary organizations, which is a record figure for the last 10 years. In particular, in 2024, the largest number of state supplements was issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (GEL 168,742,405), the State Security Service (GEL 27,905,595) and common courts (GEL 25,614,519). In addition, the largest number of bonuses was again issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (GEL 16,118,339).

While in 2024 a number of agencies received large bonuses/supplements from the state budget and from January 1, 2025 the salaries of persons working in a number of state structures were practically doubled, the pension for people aged 70 and over increased by only GEL 35 and amounted to GEL 450. The pension of persons of the same age in mountainous settlements amounted to GEL 540. The pension of persons under 70 also increased by GEL 35 and amounted to GEL 350, and in mountainous settlements - to GEL 420.

This is especially noteworthy against the background that, according to the 2024 data, the number of children (up to 16 years old) receiving social allowance in Georgia is almost 250,000, and compared to the previous year, the number of socially vulnerable children increased by 6.51%. In addition, within a year,¹ the number of recipients of social assistance increased by 47 thousand and reached a record number of 682,739, which is 18.5% of the population of Georgia.

¹ From September 2023 to September 2024

