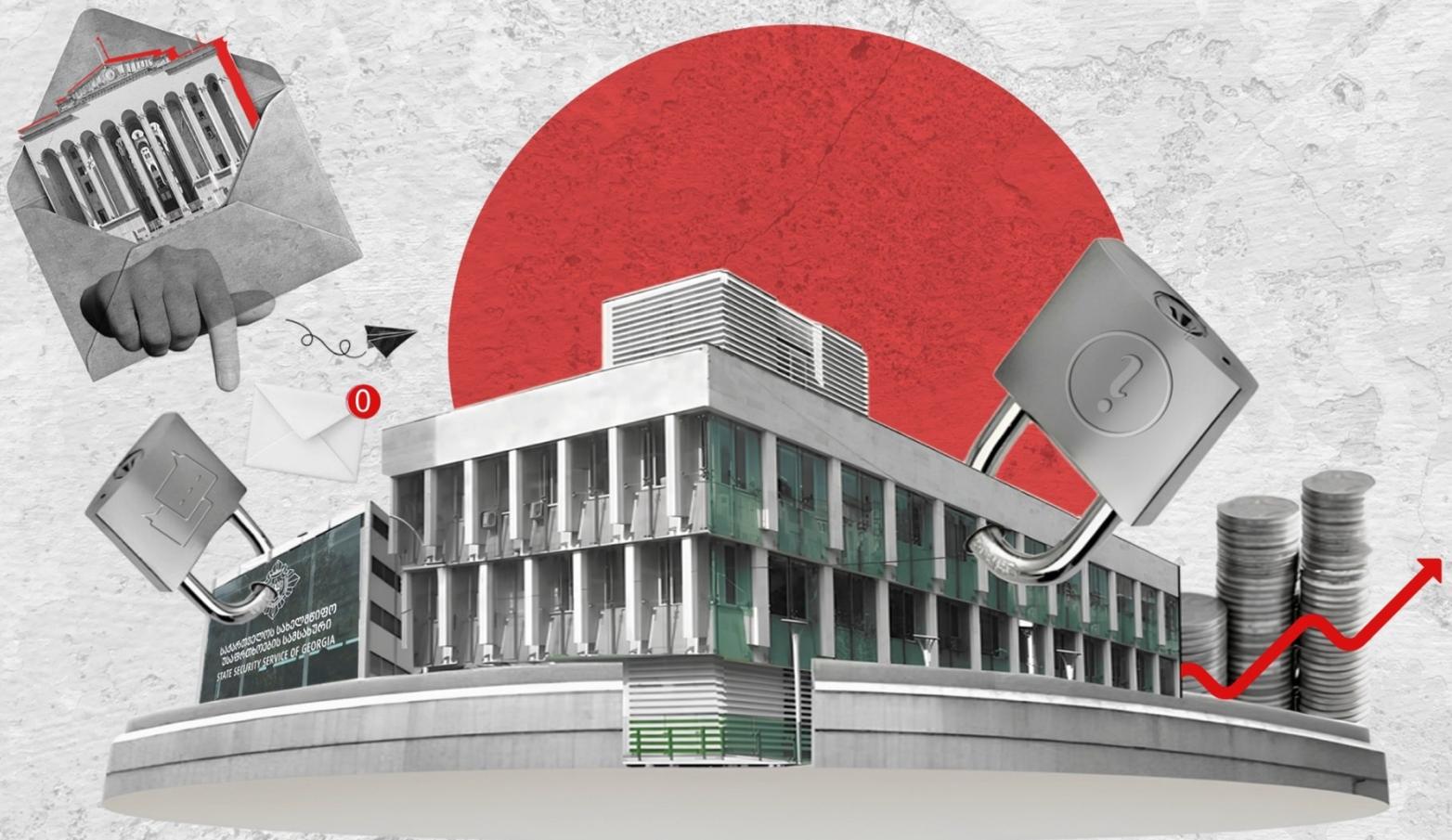


**POLITICAL INFLUENCE**

**OVER THE STATE SECURITY SERVICE AND**

**ITS LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY**



მშვიდობის საზოგადოება



PEACE SOCIETY

2025



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## INTRODUCTION

The State Security Service of Georgia was established on 1 August 2015, as initially promised, as an agency entrusted with operational and analytical responsibilities aimed at ensuring the security of the country. The goal of its establishment was to reduce the unchecked power of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and to depoliticise law-enforcement agencies. However, over the years, the functions of the Service have expanded significantly, and its activities in many areas now exceed the limits of its legally defined mandate. Furthermore, it was granted an investigative function from the moment of its establishment.

For years, the Security Service (hereinafter the “Service”) has investigated criminal cases that are not directly related to the security of the country. The Service also includes an operational and technical agency authorised to carry out covert investigative activities, which, if not properly supervised, increase the risk of human rights violations. Especially in the current tense political climate, the issue of the Service’s politicisation has become even more apparent. Sudden changes and the appointment of party figures behind closed doors provide further evidence of this. Despite the legislative guarantees of the agency’s independence, the investigations initiated and left unfinished over the years, the statements it has made, and its pursuit of party interests all point to its pronounced politicisation. In addition, under the Georgian Dream-led Parliament, parliamentary oversight of the State Security Service has been abolished, making the Service even more opaque. As a result, instead of safeguarding the security of the country, the Service has become a tool in the hands of the ruling party, used to violate human rights.

## KEY FINDINGS

### EXCEEDING/ABUSE OF AUTHORITY

- The Service actively investigates cases that fall outside the scope of its mandate. However, the nature of the investigations it has initiated indicates that its resources are used to serve party interests.

### INCREASED FUNDING AND LACK OF TRANSPARENCY

- From 2016 to 2025, the budget of the Service increased from 104 million GEL to 226 million GEL. While funding has increased, the number of employees has remained unchanged (information that is publicly available). Assessing the effectiveness of this spending is difficult, as much of the relevant data is classified.



In recent months, the agency has become even more closed. It no longer releases information that was available to the public last year.

### **ABOLITION OF OVERSIGHT OF THE SERVICE**

Over the years, the Service has been the least accountable of all agencies within the security sector. The only oversight mechanism in use is the submission of written questions. The number of questions has generally increased each year; however, under the Georgian Dream-led Parliament, not a single written question was submitted to the agency in 2025. In practice, parliamentary oversight has been effectively abolished.

### **THE INSTITUTE OF POLITICISED LEADERSHIP AND OPAQUE APPOINTMENTS**

The recent frequent changes in the leadership of the Service reflect the agency's politicisation and the influence of party interests. The appointment of active members of Georgian Dream to senior positions demonstrates its lack of institutional independence.

### **RISK OF ABUSE OF COVERT WIRETAPPING AND INEFFECTIVE OVERSIGHT**

The Operational and Technical Agency, which operates under the authority of the Service, has conducted covert wiretapping since 2017. Despite the legal framework in place, there is no genuine or independent oversight of these surveillance activities.

### **EXPANSION OF THE SERVICE'S MANDATE AND ABOLITION OF THE INTELLIGENCE SERVICE**

In 2025, the Intelligence Service was abolished and incorporated into the structure of the Service as the National Intelligence Agency. This merger, combining domestic and foreign intelligence functions, further deepens the accountability deficit and is inconsistent with democratic standards.

### **POLITICISATION AND SELECTIVITY OF ANTI-CORRUPTION ACTIVITIES**

Although the Service's mandate includes combating corruption, no cases of high-level corruption have been identified over the years. Several high-profile arrests made in 2025 were more closely linked to political controversies than to a genuine, systemic fight against corruption.

Although the primary goal of the Service is to protect national security, the agency often allocates resources to matters unrelated to safeguarding the country's security, including the investigation of everyday crimes, which does not correspond to the main directions of its activities.



## METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The report assesses and discusses the mandate and powers of the State Security Service, the practical implementation of its functions, the degree of oversight and accountability, and the developments surrounding the institution. The document, among other issues, examines the legal framework governing the Service's activities, its organisational structure and funding, as well as the mechanisms of democratic oversight and accountability. Particular emphasis is placed on assessing the activities of the Anti-Corruption Agency and examining cases of possible misuse of authority or politically biased application of its powers.

### DATA PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS

At the initial stage of preparing the report, we identified the list of normative acts to be examined and reviewed the current legislation governing the activities of the Service and establishing the supervision and oversight mechanisms.

### WEBSITE MONITORING

For years, the main source of information used in preparing the organisation's documents has been data obtained through public information requests. However, due to the current challenging political environment and the increasing opacity of relevant institutions, we relied primarily on publicly available information when preparing the report. In particular, during the preparation of the document, we carried out media monitoring of the websites of relevant state institutions, including the Parliament and the State Security Service.

### REPORTS OF INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

While preparing the document, we also examined materials from various leading international organisations and assessed the mandate and activities of the Service in accordance with relevant international standards. In addition, the report draws on materials from local organisations, which made it possible to carry out a comparative analysis of the process and to assess it against international standards.



# 1. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE OPERATION OF THE SERVICE

The Law of Georgia on the State Security Service<sup>1</sup> is the principal legal act that determines the mandate, powers, areas of activity, and responsibilities of this institution. Under this law, the Service is a special-purpose state agency operating under the direct authority of the Government of Georgia, whose primary task is **to ensure state security**. Its areas of activity include:

- Protection of the constitutional order, sovereignty, and territorial integrity;
- Safeguarding the country’s economic security;
- Combating terrorism and transnational organised crime;
- Detection and prevention of corruption;
- Protection of state secrets; and
- Prevention of external threats.

To achieve these objectives, the law determines in considerable detail the actions that the Service may undertake in the course of its activities. These include the implementation of *preventive measures*, which, among others, encompass interviewing individuals, identification, superficial inspection, special observation, and other similar actions. Another function that the Service is authorised to perform is the *conduct of investigations* and *the prosecution or detention of offenders and accused persons*. The inclusion of investigative powers within the Service’s mandate has repeatedly been the subject of criticism. The Service is also entitled, in cases of urgent necessity, to use *coercive measures* (physical force and special means, within the limits determined by law), as well as transport and communication facilities owned by state bodies, and by natural and legal persons. In terms of international cooperation, the main areas of the Service’s activity include ensuring security measures at both the state and international levels (such as the protection of facilities, high-ranking officials, and border security), preventing the illicit trafficking of weapons of mass destruction, concluding inter-agency international agreements, and ensuring the security of classified information of the European Union.

In the area of protecting state secrets, the Service’s powers include the development and implementation of measures for the protection of state secrets;

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<sup>1</sup> Law of Georgia on the State Security Service, *Sakanonmdeblo Matsne* of Georgia, available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2905260?publication=22>.



monitoring their implementation in organisations, institutions, and enterprises (regardless of their ownership form) engaged in activities related to state secrets; conducting background checks on individuals for access to state secrets in accordance with the procedures established by Georgian legislation; and exercising control over means of communication and electronic devices.

The mandate of the Service is broad and encompasses powers in various fields, which makes it even more important to consider the framework established by law for its activities and the extent of its accountability to the public.

## 2.1 EXPANSION OF THE SERVICE'S MANDATE AND FUNDING

The State Security Service of Georgia was established on 1 August 2015. The main rationale for implementing the reform was the extensive and unchecked power previously held by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. However, the promise made by the Georgian Dream party during the 2012 parliamentary elections – to focus the activities of the State Security Service solely on operational and analytical functions (the collection and analysis of classified information) – was ultimately not fulfilled.

From the moment of its establishment, the Service was granted investigative powers by law, which include the detection, prevention, and investigation of crimes. One of its designated areas of activity is the fight against corruption. According to our observations, over the years the Service has actively investigated minor corruption offences, even though its primary objective is to ensure national security.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the Service investigates criminal cases that, by their nature, do not correspond to its mandate and have no connection to ensuring the country's security. Therefore, the allocation of the Service's budgetary and human resources to such investigations constitutes a misuse of funds. In practice, there have been cases<sup>3</sup> where the Service initiated investigations into crimes such as the preparation of premeditated murder (Articles 18 and 108 of the Criminal Code of Georgia); incitement to suicide (Article 115); negligent infliction of less serious or serious bodily harm (Article 124); and fraud (Article 180). These offences, in accordance with the order of the Prosecutor General of Georgia, fall within the investigative jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and, in certain cases,

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<sup>2</sup> Democracy Research Institute, DRI: Anti-Corruption Agency – Legal Framework and Gaps in Practice, 2022, available at: <https://shorturl.at/MQTcO>.

<sup>3</sup> Democracy Research Institute, DRI: The State Security Service Is Spending Budgetary and Human Resources Irrationally, available at: <https://www.democracyresearch.org/geo/1484/>.



could also be investigated by the Special Investigation Service. However, these crimes – apparently unrelated to the activities of the State Security Service – were investigated by the Service, as the Prosecutor General of Georgia or an official authorised by him is entitled, regardless of investigative jurisdiction, to withdraw a case from one investigative body and transfer it to another.<sup>4</sup> It remains unclear why criminal cases unrelated to the mandate of the Service were referred to it for investigation.

Furthermore, despite the judgment of the Constitutional Court of Georgia of 14 April 2016,<sup>5</sup> which declared unconstitutional the provision of the Law of Georgia on Electronic Communications that had allowed technical access to telecommunication operators’ networks without **proper institutional oversight**, since 22 March 2017 covert investigative activities in Georgia have been carried out by a legal entity of public law operating under the authority of the State Security Service – the Operational and Technical Agency of Georgia. There is no effective mechanism for exercising oversight of this agency. Consequently, the risk of abuse of mandate has increased due to the closed nature, broad powers, and lack of accountability of the institution.

Ultimately, the State Security Service has evolved not into an institution protecting the interests and security of the country, but into a politicised body that, instead of fostering a sense of security in society, instils fear. One of the main reasons for this is the existence of the so-called “key to surveillance” in the hands of the Service and the dissemination of covert recordings, which were made public on a large scale in 2021. According to reports, the State Security Service exercised total control over persons employed in the public sector (including teachers in schools and kindergartens, officials of local self-government bodies), members of the Georgian Dream party, candidates in local self-government elections, employees of the Patriarchate’s administration, and clergy of all ranks.<sup>6</sup> Despite the gravity of the matter, the Prosecutor’s Office has not investigated the case to this day, and at that time the Parliament of Georgia also failed to carry out effective oversight – a temporary investigative commission could not be established despite attempts

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<sup>4</sup> Criminal Procedure Code, Article 33.6.a), available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/document/view/90034?publication=170>.

<sup>5</sup> Judgment of the First Section of the Constitutional Court of Georgia no. 1/1/625,640, 14 April 2016, available at: <https://www.constcourt.ge/ka/judicial-acts?legal=2299>.

<sup>6</sup> Democracy Research Institute, DRI: Illegal Covert Wiretapping and Surveillance Pose a Serious Threat to the Country’s Development, 14.09.2021, available at: <https://www.democracyresearch.org/geo/722/>.



to do so. Moreover, information about another alleged instance of covert surveillance became public in 2025.<sup>7</sup>

Under the legislative amendments adopted in 2022, both the maximum duration for conducting covert investigative measures and the list of offences for which extended authorisation for such measures applies were unjustifiably expanded.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, the amendments introduced in 2019 extended covert investigative measures to all offences provided for under Chapter XXXIX of the Criminal Code of Georgia – that is, to all official misconduct offences, including those committed through negligence. This further increases the risk of serious interference with human rights.

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The most significant change in the functions of the State Security Service occurred in 2025, when the Intelligence Service, previously an independent agency, was abolished and incorporated into the Service as the National Intelligence Agency.<sup>9</sup>

According to the explanatory note accompanying the draft law submitted to Parliament by the Georgian Dream party, “The functions and objectives of the Intelligence Service of Georgia and the State Security Service of Georgia are closely interconnected. Moreover, in many cases these functions and objectives serve the same statutory purpose. Accordingly, it is expedient to place these functions, objectives, and the entities responsible for their implementation within a unified organisational and management framework, which will enhance their effectiveness.”

In reality, however, the merger of the Intelligence Service with the State Security Service further undermines the level of democracy in the country. According to international standards, the *consolidation of internal and external intelligence functions complicates oversight and increases the risk of human rights violations*. From the perspective of operational effectiveness and accountability, these agencies should function separately. The model of security services proposed and implemented in Georgia now resembles that operating in Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and other non-democratic states.

<sup>7</sup> Democracy Research Institute, DRI: Illegal Covert Wiretapping and Surveillance Is One of the Means of Consolidating Authoritarianism, 15.06.2025, available at: <https://www.democracyresearch.org/geo/1650/>.

<sup>8</sup> Law of Georgia on Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code of Georgia, available at: <https://info.parliament.ge/file/1/BillReviewContent/298436>.

<sup>9</sup> The website of the Parliament of Georgia: <https://info.parliament.ge/file/1/BillReviewContent/389518>.



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The dynamics of the Service’s budgetary funding are noteworthy.<sup>10</sup> Between 2016 and 2025, the agency’s annual budget increased from 104 million GEL to 226 million GEL,<sup>11</sup> with particularly high growth rates recorded in 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025. Interestingly, the number of employees remained the same in 2024 as in 2016 – 3,850. At the same time, remuneration rose from 74 million GEL to 138 million GEL. According to the 2024 activity report,<sup>12</sup> the Department of Economy concluded 340 contracts financed from the state budget, with a total value of GEL 21,623,473.04. During the reporting year, 152 tenders were announced, and contracts were signed with 132 bidders. By comparison, according to the previous year’s report, 367 contracts were concluded with a total value of GEL 27,467,384.08. Thus, compared to the previous year, expenditure on material and technical procurement decreased by almost 6 million GEL.

Information concerning the Service’s infrastructural and material needs is classified, which makes it difficult for the public to assess the purposefulness of increased funding and spending. Given that parliamentary oversight has effectively been abolished, none of the democratic mechanisms for monitoring the Service’s financing currently functions.

## **1.2 PROCEDURE AND IMPORTANCE OF APPOINTING THE HEAD OF THE STATE SECURITY SERVICE**

Under the current legislation, the appointment of the Head of the Service requires a multi-stage procedure which, naturally, takes time and is formally intended to ensure the independence of both the agency and its head.

No earlier than two months and no later than eight weeks before the expiration of the term of office of the Head of the Service, the Prime Minister of Georgia submits a candidate for consideration to the Government of Georgia. The Government, in turn, presents the candidate to the Parliament of Georgia for

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<sup>10</sup> Fact Meter, the Budget of the State Security Service Has Doubled and Tripled, available at: <https://shorturl.at/7QwbP>.

<sup>11</sup> Law of Georgia on the State Budget of Georgia for 2025, *Sakanonmdeblo Matsne* of Georgia, available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/document/view/6366063?publication=0>.

<sup>12</sup> The website of the State Security Service, State Security Service 2024 Activity Report, available at: <https://ssg.gov.ge/page/info/reports>.



appointment.<sup>13</sup> The Head of the State Security Service of Georgia is elected by a majority of the total composition of Parliament for a term of six.<sup>14</sup>

At first glance, the involvement of several branches – legislative and executive – in the appointment of the Head of the Service appears to serve the purpose of strengthening institutional independence. Similarly, the six-year term of office, from a formal standpoint, is also designed to ensure the head’s independence, as it does not coincide with the four-year term of members of the legislative body. In turn, Parliament has the authority to dismiss the Head of the Service from office. Specifically, following the presentation of the State Security Service’s annual report, at least one-third of the total composition of Parliament may initiate a motion to remove the Head of the Service if the need for such a decision arises during the hearing. The motion must then be supported by a parliamentary majority.

### 1.2.1 PRACTICAL ENFORCEMENT OF THE LAW

Despite the fact that over the past ten years the Head of the Service has changed four times, Parliament has never exercised the above-mentioned mechanism, and in each case, early resignation was based on a personal statement. Moreover, during this ten-year period, none of the appointments of the Head of the Service was the result of consensus, deliberation, or substantive discussion. It is noteworthy that under none of its leaders has the agency fulfilled its principal function – ensuring the security of the country

The first Head of the Service was **Mr Vakhtang Gomelauri**. He was elected in 2015, when the Service, separated from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, became a new and independent agency. At that time, he held the position of Minister of Internal Affairs, and his candidacy was nominated by Mr Irakli Garibashvili. Mr Vakhtang Gomelauri received the support of 83 members of Parliament, with none voting against. During this period, particular attention was drawn to a statement made by his deputy, Mr Soso Gogashvili<sup>15</sup> (who served from 2015 to 2018), who

<sup>13</sup> Law of Georgia on the State Security Service, Article 7, available at: <https://shorturl.at/HJ6mX>.

<sup>14</sup> Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Georgia, Article 189, see <https://matsne.gov.ge/document/view/6494611?publication=3>.

<sup>15</sup> On 4 April 2023, Mr Soso Gogashvili was sentenced to five years of imprisonment. He was charged with the intentional disclosure of state secrets; the unlawful acquisition and storage of information concerning private life; abuse of official authority by a public official resulting in a substantial violation of the legitimate interests of the state; unlawful acquisition, storage, and dissemination – through mass media – of personal data using his official position, which caused significant harm; and the illegal purchase and possession of firearms and ammunition.



admitted that the agency had engaged in illegal wiretapping of citizens even while he was in office.<sup>16</sup>

The second Head of the State Security Service of Georgia, **Mr Grigol Liluashvili**, was elected on 17 October 2019 with the support of 85 members of Parliament. In this case as well, the appointment was not based on consensus, which is crucial for ensuring the independence of an agency with such a broad mandate. During his tenure, the regional situation became particularly tense – on 24 February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine and the war began. Despite the Service’s obligations, no assessment of potential threats was conducted, the public was not informed, and no strategy was developed to ensure the country’s security.

On 2 April 2025, it became publicly known that the Head of the State Security Service, Mr Grigol Liluashvili, had resigned voluntarily and was expected to assume the position of Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure. The division of the ministry into two entities was linked to this planned appointment. However, due to a disagreement with Mr Irakli Kobakhidze, Mr Liluashvili did not take up the post.

As already noted, under the current legislation the appointment of the Head of the Service requires a multi-stage procedure, which naturally takes some time. Nevertheless, the public learned of the leadership change only on 2 April, and by 4 April the Parliament of Georgia had unanimously approved **Mr Anri Okhanashvili** as Head of the Service with 79 votes in favour. The manner and process of Mr Grigol Liluashvili’s resignation and the appointment of a political figure, Mr Anri Okhanashvili, as his successor once again demonstrate that the Service has never been an independent institution and continues to serve the interests of the ruling party. During Mr Anri Okhanashvili’s tenure, one of the most scandalous cases involved businessman Mr Giorgi Bachiashvili – first his return to Georgia, and later incidents of violence against him in prison, which are still not investigated. Mr Giorgi Bachiashvili has publicly identified Mr Anri Okhanashvili as the organiser of his forced return to Georgia. It should be noted that Mr Bachiashvili has been convicted in a financial crime case. The possible involvement of the State Security Service in this matter illustrates that the Service has entirely deviated from its statutory mandate and operates primarily in defence of the interests of Georgian Dream and its founder.

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<sup>16</sup> Radio Liberty, 15.09.2021, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31461731.html>.



Mr Anri Okhanashvili unexpectedly resigned from his position on 23 August 2025, after less than five months in office. The circumstances surrounding his departure remain undisclosed to the public. His successor, Mr Mamuka Mdinardze, was introduced to the public without any form of democratic discussion. It is evident that, in this case too, within a one-party Parliament, the consideration of the new candidate for Head of the Service proceeded without critical questions or debate, and Mr Mdinardze was appointed to the position with 85 votes in favour.<sup>17</sup> According to statements by Mr Irakli Kobakhidze, Mr Anri Okhanashvili will continue to work in the analytical field within the Government Administration, serving as an adviser to the Prime Minister, while the Service will once again focus on investigative functions. This may create a risk of duplication of analytical functions and lead to even greater institutional ambiguity. At this stage, it remains unclear how responsibilities will be divided between the Security Adviser and the Head of the Service, as the government has not yet made any announcement regarding a formal amendment to the agency's mandate.

Ahead of the local self-government elections and against the backdrop of the ongoing political crisis in the country, Georgian Dream appointed as Head of the Security Service a politician who is one of the party's main spokespersons and is often distinguished by radical, anti-European, and hostile rhetoric towards political opponents, as well as by attempts to polarise society further.

The State Security Service was formally established in 2015 as an agency with an analytical focus; however, investigative functions were soon transferred to it as well. As a result, the Service has evolved into a closed structure with an extensive mandate. It is authorised to investigate not only offences related to state security but also various types of official misconduct – including those committed through negligence. Such an expansion of its mandate does not correspond to its intended competence and grants the agency disproportionate influence and power.

***The premature resignations and appointment procedures of the Heads of the Service – the rapid and non-democratic process of selecting their successors – provide further confirmation that this agency is closed and highly politicised. Such developments further undermine public trust.***

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<sup>17</sup> Mr Mamuka Mdinardze Was Elected to the Position of Head of the State Security Service, 03.09.2025, available at: <https://www.interpressnews.ge/ka/article/847663-mamuka-mdinaraze-sus-is-uprosis-tanamdebobaze-airchies>.



## 2. EVALUATION OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ANTI-CORRUPTION AGENCY

The fight against corruption was included in the mandate of the State Security Service from its very establishment in 2015. This decision ostensibly declared the fight against corruption a matter of national importance. However, the inclusion of corruption investigations within the Service’s mandate was soon criticised by the Anti-Corruption Network of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD),<sup>18</sup> as the delegation of investigative powers to a security agency is considered an undesirable practice. It is noteworthy that in 2023, Georgia withdrew from the OECD Anti-Corruption Network and, for the first time in twenty years, declined to participate in the monitoring process conducted under its auspices.<sup>19</sup> Despite such criticism, the Service continues to investigate offences such as vote-buying, abuse of official authority, exceeding official powers, unlawful exemption from criminal responsibility, coercion to provide explanations, testimony, or conclusions, illegal participation in entrepreneurial activity, acceptance and giving of bribes, trading in influence, acceptance of gifts prohibited by law, official forgery, and official negligence. Over the years, the Service has not investigated any cases of high-level corruption involving senior officials. In this context, the allocation of the Service’s resources to the investigation of minor corruption offences appears unreasonable.<sup>20</sup>

In 2025, cases of high-level corruption investigations increased, including the arrests of senior officials of the Ministry of Defence<sup>21</sup> and a former Deputy Minister of Economy.<sup>22</sup> According to information released by the State Security Service,<sup>23</sup> in the case involving former senior officials of the Ministry of Defence, the matter concerns members of a criminal group who allegedly artificially inflated prices during the procurement of medical equipment through fictitious transactions and the repeated resale of the same equipment using false tax

<sup>18</sup> Democracy Research Institute, DRI: Anti-Corruption Agency – Legal Framework and Gaps in Practice, 18.03.2022, available at: <https://www.democracyresearch.org/geo/933/>.

<sup>19</sup> civil.ge, OECD and local NGOs call for Georgia to return to OECD process, a available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/587755>.

<sup>20</sup> Democracy Research Institute, DRI: Evaluation of the 2024 Activity Report of the State Security Service of Georgia, 24.06.2025, available at: <https://www.democracyresearch.org/geo/1652/>.

<sup>21</sup> Radio Liberty, Ex-Minister Burchuladze’s Deputy and Relative Arrested on Charges of Misappropriation of 1.3 Million GEL, available at: <https://shorturl.at/uN39p>.

<sup>22</sup> Civil.ge, Former Deputy Minister of Economy Romeo Mikautadze Has Been Arrested on Corruption-Related Charges, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/688015>.

<sup>23</sup> Radio Liberty, “Guaranteed” 1.3 million GEL – What We Know About the Detention of Ex-Defence Minister Burchuladze’s Entourage, available at: <https://shorturl.at/fP6Se>.



documentation. The investigation claims that, through this scheme, the defendants caused damage to the state amounting to at least GEL 1,333,728. The investigation of this corruption case entered a new stage on 11 September 2025, when the Anti-Corruption Agency arrested former Defence Minister Mr Juansher Burchuladze. According to the Agency, the scheme used within the Ministry of Defence, which resulted in damage to the state budget, was implemented on Mr Burchuladze's instructions.<sup>24</sup> The former minister has been charged under Article 194.3(c) and Article 332.2 of the Criminal Code of Georgia, which prescribe imprisonment for a term of nine to twelve years.<sup>25</sup>

The investigation has charged the former Deputy Minister of Economy, Mr Romeo Mikautadze, with abuse of official authority and money laundering.<sup>26</sup> According to the indictment, in order to conceal the origin of the funds, the defendant and other individuals prepared a false official document – a purchase agreement – under which a person fictitiously registered as the buyer, the defendant's friend's retired mother, allegedly agreed to pay EUR 600,000 for real estate registered in the name of the defendant's wife. In reality, the defendant's family did not sell this property, and the purpose of the agreement was to conceal the origin of the money to be transferred to Spain. It is noteworthy that the money-laundering scheme which, according to the Service, Mr Mikautadze used, is practically identical to the one allegedly employed by Mr Burchuladze, through which, according to the investigation, a house in Spain was also purchased by means of the fictitious sale of property located in Georgia. It should also be noted that a journalistic investigation<sup>27</sup> into the house purchased in Spain and Mr Mikautadze's alleged corrupt dealings was published more than a year before his arrest, yet law-enforcement authorities did not show any interest in this information at the time, and the public was not informed of any response by them to the publicly available allegations of possible corruption.

The Anti-Corruption Agency charged not only former senior officials of the Georgian Dream government with corruption offences but also a member of the opposition party United National Movement. Specifically, according to the Agen-

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<sup>24</sup> Interpressnews, Former Defence Minister Juansher Burchuladze Has Been Arrested, available at: <https://bit.ly/3JvXhhz>

<sup>25</sup> InterpressNews, citing the State Security Service, reported that Mr Juansher Burchuladze's family had purchased a house in Spain for €544,000, allegedly concealing the source of the funds, which were of particularly large value. This property was not declared, and the family is accused of legalising income amounting to GEL 1,593,212, available at: <http://bit.ly/3IZBmPO>

<sup>26</sup> Radio Liberty, Romeo Mikautadze Was Charged With Abuse of Official Authority and Legalisation of Illegal Income, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/33450843.html>.

<sup>27</sup> Studio Monitor, The European Life of a Dream Official, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n71fQAHuac8>.



cy, Mr Levan Khabeishvili was arrested on charges of offering a bribe, for allegedly publicly promising GEL 200,000 to employees of the Special Tasks Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs if they refused to participate in dispersing demonstrations.<sup>28</sup> The politician’s public statement did not have a specific addressee; there was no concrete agreement between a “bribe giver” and a “bribe taker” and apart from the verbal statement made on air, the investigation presented no other evidence. Consequently, the bringing of criminal charges in this case is absurd and bears signs of political persecution. Later, the Service arrested another member of the opposition party, United National Movement, and member of the Tbilisi City Council, Mr Zviad Kuprava.<sup>29</sup> The reason for his detention was a video address that Kuprava published on 30 September on social media. According to the Service, the investigation accuses him of public incitement to overthrow the government by violent means. In its statement, the Service cites as its main argument the narrative expressed in Kuprava’s video – specifically, his description of the elections as a “Russian special operation” and the polling station as a “special-operation point.”

Over the years, several arrests of former high-ranking officials by the previously passive Anti-Corruption Agency within a short period are more likely to be viewed as manifestations of political rivalries within the ruling party than as the beginning of a new, intensified phase in the fight against corruption.

In addition to investigations, according to the 2024 report,<sup>30</sup> considerable attention is devoted to corruption prevention, for which informational meetings are held with students and public servants. The increase in the number of messages received from whistle-blowers is cited as proof of the success of preventive activities. The exact number of such messages received in 2024 is not specified in the report, while, according to the 2023 activity report, the Service received 47 reports from citizens concerning corruption-related incidents. Mr Mamuka Mdinardze, elected as the new head of the Service,<sup>31</sup> identified the elimination of corruption as one of his main priorities.

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<sup>28</sup> Radio Liberty, The State Security Service Disseminated Information About the Detention of Khabeishvili and Burchuladze at One Briefing, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/33527838.html>.

<sup>29</sup> Radio Liberty, The State Security Service Arrests Zviad Kuprava Over Video Message, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/33545996.html>.

<sup>30</sup> The website of the State Security Service, State Security Service 2024 Activity Report, available at: <https://ssg.gov.ge/page/info/reports>.

<sup>31</sup> Rustavi 2. Mamuka Mdinardze: *Corruption will be at such a low level in this country that we will be in the top three in the world. This will not happen in a month or two, but the Georgian people will see the dynamics of how the fight against corruption is taking place*, available at: <https://rustavi2.ge/ka/news/319993>.



### 3. EXCEEDING THE SERVICE'S MANDATE AND INEFFICIENT USE OF RESOURCES

Since its establishment, the Service has received more than one billion GEL from the state budget. Despite its main purpose – to ensure national security and take concrete measures in this regard – the agency's resources have been used inefficiently throughout its existence.

According to the observations of the Democracy Research Institute, the Service has, for years, investigated criminal cases that fall outside its lawful mandate and have no connection whatsoever with the protection of national security. This constitutes an irrational use of both budgetary and human resources. For example, according to information provided by the Service, between 1 January 2020 and 1 March 2024, it initiated investigations into offences such as preparation for intentional murder, incitement to suicide, negligent infliction of less serious or serious bodily injury, and fraud. All of these crimes, under the order of the Prosecutor General of Georgia, fall within the investigative jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and, in certain cases, may be investigated by the Special Investigation Service. Nonetheless, these cases – which, at first glance, bear no relation to the Service's primary functions – were investigated by the Service.<sup>32</sup>

During the preparation of this document, in order to obtain updated information of the same nature, the organisation again addressed the Service with a public information request, specifying a more recent period.<sup>33</sup> Specifically, we requested information on which criminal articles the Service initiated investigations under during the given period, and which cases were transferred to or from the agency in accordance with investigative jurisdiction rules.

By its letter of 7 May (SSG 2 25 00100566), the Service refused to provide the requested information. The letter stated that the organisation's public information request required the processing and analysis of data, resulting in the creation and delivery of a new informational document (a new compilation of

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<sup>32</sup> Democracy Research Institute, *The State Security Service is spending budgetary and human resources irrationally*, 10.06.2024, available at: <https://www.democracyresearch.org/geo/1484/>.

<sup>33</sup> Letter no. PS/2025/5, sent to the State Security Service on 17 April 2025.



data) related to certain issues concerning ongoing criminal cases within the Service’s proceedings.

The organisation appealed the Service’s response in court, arguing, among other things, that the Democracy Research Institute had submitted a similar request to the Service the previous year.<sup>34</sup> On 22 March 2025 the Service had provided<sup>35</sup> a full response signed by the same official – the Head of the Administration, Ms Nana Beridze – who also signed the contested letter. This clearly indicates that such statistical information does exist within the agency, is regularly maintained without the need for additional processing, and only required consolidation in accordance with the organisation’s specific request.

It is noteworthy that the organisation received full access to public information during the tenure of Mr Grigol Liluashvili, whereas under Mr Anri Okhanashvili, the Service refused to disclose the same category of information.

In addition to investigating cases that fall under the jurisdiction of other investigative bodies (such as preparation for intentional murder, incitement to suicide, negligent infliction of less serious or serious bodily injury, and fraud), the Service has also allocated its resources to investigations that have remained open and unresolved for years. Specifically, the Service initiated investigations into crimes allegedly committed against the state in up to ten cases.<sup>36</sup> However, the outcomes of these investigations – often announced through high-profile press briefings – remain unknown to the public. Notably, such cases (for instance, the alleged plot to assassinate Mr Bidzina Ivanishvili, “Revolutionary Scenario 2023,” “Revolutionary Scenario 2024,” and others) were actively pursued during the tenures of Mr Vakhtang Gomelauri and Mr Grigol Liluashvili.

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<sup>34</sup> Democracy Research Institute, letter no. DRI/2024/10.

<sup>35</sup> State Security Service, letter no. SSG 9 24 00065447.

<sup>36</sup> Democracy Research Institute, DRI: Parliamentary Oversight Mechanisms and Practical Gaps over the State Security Service, 2024, available at: <https://shorturl.at/ixxQb>.



## 5. OVERSIGHT OF THE STATE SECURITY SERVICE AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

The Law on the State Security Service lists among the fundamental principles of the Service's activities: legality, respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms, prohibition of discrimination, proportionality, and political neutrality. Adherence to these principles should set clear boundaries to prevent arbitrariness and ensure that the Service operates within a lawful and publicly accountable framework. One of the key functions of oversight mechanisms is precisely to verify the extent to which the Service's activities comply with these legally established principles.

Legislation assigns the oversight function over the Service to several institutions. Since the Service is directly subordinated to the Government, it is naturally accountable to it, and a hierarchical rule of subordination and accountability applies in this context.

The Constitution of Georgia and the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament establish the framework for parliamentary oversight over the Service. Parliamentary oversight mechanisms include *written questions from Members of Parliament, the format of the Trust Group, investigative commissions, interpellation, summoning the head of the Service to plenary or committee sessions, and hearing the Service's annual activity report*. The law grants the Parliament and its members extensive powers to carry out oversight; however, exercising these powers requires political will and genuine interest from MPs in the Service's work.

Parliamentary oversight of the Service has been weak and flawed over the years<sup>37</sup> – primarily because the ruling party has consistently refused to employ oversight mechanisms and, in some cases, has created procedural obstacles to opposition MPs seeking to do so. Unfortunately, most opposition MPs have also shown little sustained interest in the security sector. Since the 2024 elections, following the formation of a one-party Parliament, parliamentary oversight has effectively ceased to exist. The already limited practice of submitting questions to the Service has been completely abandoned in the current convocation.

In reality, apart from written questions, virtually no other mechanism has been used in relation to the Service. Since its establishment, the head of the Service has never been summoned under the interpellation procedure to appear before a committee or a plenary session, nor has a temporary investigative commission ever been established to examine the Service's activities. The discussions of the

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<sup>37</sup> Democracy Research Institute, DRI: Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector Is Ineffective, 29.02.2024, available at: <https://www.democracyresearch.org/geo/1404/>.

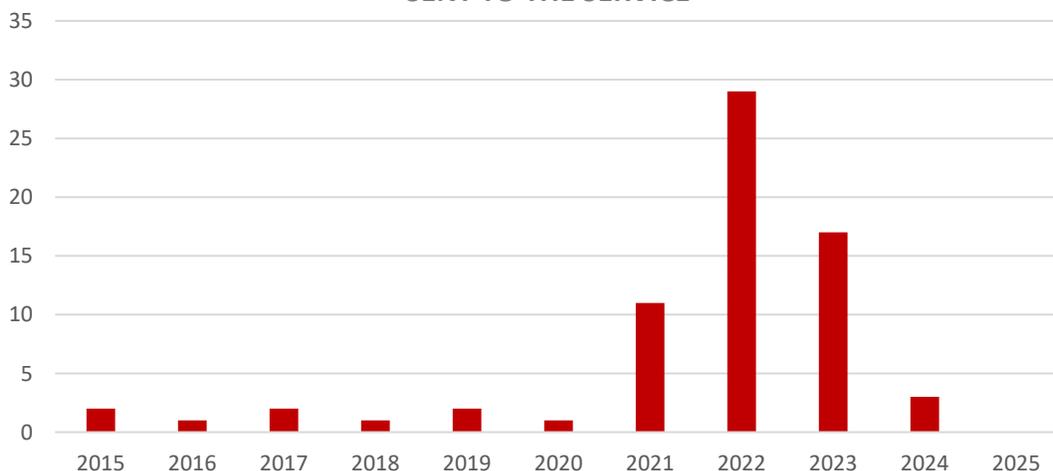


annual reports were mostly held behind closed doors.<sup>38</sup> In many cases, members of the Georgian Dream party obstructed the use of oversight mechanisms. For example, according to members of the opposition in the Tenth Convocation of Parliament, following the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war, the Defence and Security Committee was unable to summon the head of the Service, Mr Grigol Liluashvili, because members of Georgian Dream did not support the initiative.

The only mechanism used by Members of Parliament in relation to the Service was written questions. Over the years, the number of written questions has shown a generally increasing trend: two in 2015, one in 2016, two in 2017, one in 2018, two in 2019, one in 2020, eleven in 2021, 29 in 2022, 17 in 2023, and three in 2024.<sup>39</sup>

In 2025, unlike in previous years, no written questions were sent to the Service by any members of Parliament. This, of course, has an underlying reason. Oversight mechanisms are typically an important tool in the hands of the opposition, and in previous years, questions to the Service were mainly raised by opposition MPs.<sup>40</sup> Only in rare, exceptional cases was a question submitted by a Georgian Dream member. After the large-scale falsification of the parliamentary elections on 26 October 2024, the legislature was composed exclusively of members of a single party – Georgian Dream. Consequently, this one-party Parliament, whose legitimacy is not recognised either domestically or internationally, no longer exercises any oversight mechanisms.

NUMBER OF WRITTEN QUESTIONS  
SENT TO THE SERVICE



<sup>38</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>39</sup> The website of the Parliament of Georgia: <https://www.parliament.ge/supervision/deputy-question>.

<sup>40</sup> For example, see the report of the Democracy Research Institute, DRI: The Importance of Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector and Its Challenges, available at: <https://www.democracyresearch.org/geo/1281/>.



## 6. EVALUATION OF THE STATE SECURITY SERVICE'S 2024 ACTIVITY REPORT

On 2 April 2025, it became publicly known that the Head of the State Security Service, Mr Grigol Liluashvili, had voluntarily resigned from his position. On 4 April 2025, Georgian Dream elected Mr Anri Okhanashvili as Head of the Service with 79 votes in favour and none against.<sup>41</sup> The 2024 activity report of the State Security Service was published during Mr Anri Okhanashvili's tenure.

As in previous years, the information presented in the report is extremely limited and devoid of specificity, preventing the public from forming a realistic understanding of the agency's activities. Moreover, it remains unclear what concrete threats were identified, what actions were undertaken by the Service, and how effective those actions were. The structure of the report largely replicates that of previous years and covers such topics as the occupied territories, disinformation and hybrid warfare, cybersecurity, terrorism, the fight against corruption, international cooperation, relations with the judiciary, and issues of public accountability. The document contains only dry factual descriptions and statistical data. It provides no analysis or assessment of the actual challenges to national security or of the measures taken by the agency in response.

However, the 2024 activity report of the State Security Service differs from previous reports in several significant respects.

In earlier reports, there were no clear or explicit references to the "foreign states" or "foreign intelligence services" which, according to the Service, were allegedly engaged in attempts to destabilise Georgia, spread disinformation, or undertake other threat-generating activities. In contrast to the general and vague wording of earlier years, the 2024 report explicitly states that **representatives of Western countries and institutions were involved in disinformation and propaganda campaigns**.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, the national security agency – which is vested with a mandate, financial and human resources, and a duty to ensure the country's security – identifies the West, rather than Russia, as the main source of threat, while references to Russia (as in previous years) are limited solely to the section on occupation.

Moreover, instead of providing analysis or assessment of the country's actual security challenges, the report speaks in abstract terms, without context, about "traditional values", a notion unrelated to the Service's operational mandate.

<sup>41</sup> Radio Liberty, 04.04.2025, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/33373551.html>.

<sup>42</sup> State Security Service Report 2024, p. 3, available at: <https://www.parliament.ge/legislation/30665>.



Consequently, the 2024 activity report of the Service is perceived even more as a political party communiqué. *The messages contained in the document align directly with the narrative of Georgian Dream,<sup>43</sup> once again demonstrating the agency’s partisan bias.*

## OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

According to the assessment of the State Security Service, the threats emanating from the occupied territories are linked to Russian annexation, borderisation, hybrid warfare, attempts to exert international pressure on the Georgian authorities, and human rights violations in the occupied regions, including restrictions on freedom of movement and steps aimed at the cultural assimilation of ethnic Georgians.

In its overview of the situation in the Abkhazia region, the State Security Service identifies a number of organised actions by the Russian authorities aimed at annexation – including *initiatives related to apartments and investments, attempts to integrate Abkhaz law enforcement and customs systems with those of the Russian Federation, and large-scale infrastructure projects, such as the Sokhumi airport and the Ochamchire port.* It is noteworthy that most of these efforts were suspended as a result of local public resistance. The Service describes the protests by the local population as anti-Russian demonstrations, although due to objective constraints, the rhetoric and demands of these protests were not explicitly anti-Russian but rather positioned as protests against Russian oligarchs.<sup>44</sup> As the report indicates, the annexation processes in Abkhazia have at present been halted solely through the efforts of the local community. At the same time, despite the growing anti-Russian sentiment in Abkhazia, the central authorities of Georgia have still failed to take effective steps to foster closer engagement with the Abkhaz population.

According to the report, in order to break Abkhaz resistance, Russia has employed a range of influence tools, primarily of an economic nature, and has also sought to use hybrid warfare methods to discredit participants of the protests. *Given the inaction of the Georgian authorities and the increasing pressure exerted by Russia, it remains uncertain how long Abkhaz society will be able to resist annexation. The report itself offers no analysis of the possible future developments of these processes.*

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<sup>43</sup> In addition, in 2024, Georgian Dream adopted the so-called “Transparency Law”, and in the current year, the so-called American FARA. The implementation of these laws is planned in a manner characteristic of non-democratic states – targeting, on the one hand, freedom of expression, and on the other, Western countries.

<sup>44</sup> State Security Service Report 2024, p. 8, available at: <https://www.parliament.ge/legislation/30665>.



The report also discusses several problematic issues in Tskhinvali, including restrictions on freedom of movement, the continued economic expansion, and the integration of “customs authorities” into the system of the Russian Federation. As in Abkhazia, the Russian Federation has adopted a position supportive of the local ruling party, stripping two opposition politicians of their Russian citizenship.<sup>45</sup> *However, the report provides no information on the extent of anti-Russian sentiment in the Tskhinvali region.*

Similar to the 2023 report, the 2024 report specifies the number of borderisation incidents, but does not clarify the total area of land affected by borderisation in 2024.

The Service positively assesses the work of various international organisations and missions related to the occupied territories, particularly regarding the release of detained citizens near the occupation line and the investigation of cases involving murdered Georgian citizens. According to the report, the Georgian side continuously employs international mechanisms on these two issues; however, due to Russia’s de facto control over the occupied territories, justice cannot be achieved in the cases involving the killings of Georgian citizens. The Service also considers significant the fact that the United States imposed sanctions on one of the banks operating in the occupied Tskhinvali region, which had participated in illegal financial transactions between Russia and North Korea.

According to the report, the Government of Georgia was effectively unable to exert any influence on the processes taking place in these territories – whether in terms of political engagement, human rights protection, preventing discrimination against ethnic Georgians living there, or ensuring accountability for the killings of Georgian citizens.

As in previous years, this chapter of the 2024 activity report of the State Security Service is the most informative, though it still consists solely of factual descriptions without any analytical assessment.

## STATE SECURITY AND COUNTERINTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES

Counterintelligence activity constitutes one of the most important functions of the State Security Service. The chapter on State Security and Counterintelligence should, in compliance with confidentiality rules, analyse genuinely identified cases supported by specific facts, rather than rely on vague or politically motivated allegations. The public must have access to information on how the Service

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<sup>45</sup> *Idem.*, p. 13.



protects national security while upholding democratic principles and human rights. Notably, Russia is not mentioned as a source of threat in this section.

As in the 2023 report, the 2024 document uses this chapter primarily as a political statement serving partisan interests. In the discussion of “threats”, considerable attention is devoted to the post-parliamentary election developments. However, none of the facts of the 26 October parliamentary election falsification is mentioned, despite the existence of numerous pieces of evidence confirming it. Moreover, due to the significant irregularities during these elections, their legitimacy remains unrecognised by key Western partners.

The report creates the impression that the Service possesses a detailed plan of destabilisation allegedly developed by certain groups. According to the report, this plan included the blocking of various facilities, clashes with law enforcement provoked by demonstrations, and even potential casualties. Within this alleged framework of “destabilisation”, the report names various political entities and youth organisations.<sup>46</sup> It appears that the Service, in this context, is referring to individuals detained during the 2024 protest rallies, who have been charged under criminal law with offences against the State. Yet, to date, no tangible evidence has been presented that would justify their pre-trial detention. Instead of providing specific circumstances or facts, the report offers generic references to confrontations with law enforcement, Molotov cocktails, blocked buildings, and other conspiracy-style narratives, which once again highlight the institution’s bias.

One particularly noteworthy passage of the report asserts that a Georgian political entity maintains links with foreign political actors and state organisations, and participates in events organised by them.<sup>47</sup> Given that the Service openly accuses Western countries and institutions of spreading disinformation, it is likely that this political entity is regarded – according to the Service – as a “political actor dangerous to Georgia’s national security” precisely on those grounds.

In 2024, for the first time, the Service accused Western countries and organisations of engaging in disinformation campaigns. In previous years, it referred more vaguely to “foreign countries” in this context, without specifying which. However, in recent years, the ruling Georgian Dream party has increasingly relied on anti-Western rhetoric. The party-controlled media has amplified this discourse, broadcasting an ever-growing number of anti-Western narratives portraying the West as a source of moral corruption and a civilisation distant from “traditional values.” This anti-Western political rhetoric has also been reflected in legislative developments. In its declared fight against so-called “foreign agents,”

<sup>46</sup> civil.ge, 20.05.2025, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/667009>.

<sup>47</sup> State Security Service Report 2024, p. 23, available at: <https://www.parliament.ge/legislation/30665>.



Georgian Dream first adopted the Law on the Transparency of Foreign Influence, followed by the Foreign Agents Registration Act. In both cases, the purpose of these laws was to label and intimidate civil society organisations receiving funding from Western donors, thereby exerting psychological pressure and constraining their activities. These legislative measures were further reinforced by a new provision in the Law on Grants, obliging donor organisations to seek prior governmental approval before issuing any grant. Collectively, these initiatives may ultimately result in a complete ban on civil-society funding from Western sources, the liquidation of non-governmental organisations, and the criminal prosecution of their leaders and employees. Within this political context, the Service’s 2024 accusation against Western countries and organisations for allegedly producing disinformation must be viewed as part of Georgian Dream’s political propaganda. The Service, without providing any supporting evidence, has effectively echoed political allegations against Western states, thereby contributing to the government’s anti-Western narrative.

According to the Service’s report, 2024 also saw an attempt to establish a political entity on religious grounds, as well as an effort to disseminate anti-Georgian propaganda in a region populated by ethnic minorities.<sup>48</sup> The report states that the Service took measures to prevent such activities, yet provides no further detail. Such ambiguous statements, presented without specific information or explanation of the actions undertaken, serve only to deepen public confusion and mistrust toward the institution.

According to the State Security Service, foreign intelligence agencies have attempted to gain influence in Georgia, including through the acquisition of Georgian citizenship and residence permits. Statistical data presented in the report indicate that the number of individuals denied entry to Georgia is relatively small. The Service claims that in every such case, Georgian legislation is fully respected. However, organisations working on migration issues have for years pointed out that the blocking of entry for foreign nationals by the Service is, in many cases, entirely unsubstantiated.<sup>49</sup> Foreign nationals who have participated in protest rallies have also been expelled from the country, including some who have lived in Georgia with their families for many years.<sup>50</sup>

Entry into Georgia has likewise been problematic for journalists and civil activists openly critical of the Russian government. Taking all these publicly known facts

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<sup>48</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>49</sup> Democracy Research Institute, DRI: Asylum Seekers and State Security in Georgia, 2020, available at: <https://shorturl.at/dX8H0>.

<sup>50</sup> RSF Assesses Refusing French Journalists to Enter Georgia as a Deliberate Strategy of Intimidation, 11.04.2025, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/675351>.



into account, *it appears credible to assume that, in many instances, the denial of entry into Georgia or the refusal to grant residence permits to foreign nationals is not based on objective security risks, but rather on these individuals' perceived political stance towards Georgian Dream. Such actions do not constitute a lawful basis for denying entry or expelling individuals from the country.*

In the section on counterintelligence activities, a separate challenge is identified – the alleged attempts by foreign intelligence services to influence Georgia's youth segment by “confusing their values.” This passage represents an ideological assessment, and it remains unclear which specific “values” foreign countries are purportedly attempting to distort or how this issue poses a concrete threat to national security.

### **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**

A separate subsection of the report is devoted to artificial intelligence. According to the report, artificial intelligence generates both opportunities for strengthening national security and numerous new threats. The Service states that throughout 2024, it worked on analysing the strategic approaches, priority objectives, anticipated legislative regulations, and expected risks of various countries. The report also notes that, *ahead of the parliamentary elections, groups linked to political circles were allegedly planning to use artificial intelligence to disseminate fabricated recordings, which were intended to provoke conflict between the branches of government, between the Church and the authorities, and between Western partners and the government.* Despite these facts, the document provides no information on what measures were taken by the agency following identification of these activities, nor on why the planned counteractions were not implemented.

### **CORRUPTION**

According to the report, corruption constitutes a threat to state security, as it facilitates the advancement of a destructive agenda and enables illegal and criminal activities by various interested actors, both domestic and foreign. In 2024, based on the Service's report, the Anti-Corruption Agency launched investigations into 23 criminal cases, bringing 39 individuals to justice for offences such as accepting and giving bribes, abuse of official authority, exceeding official powers, and others. The number of investigations initiated into corruption-related offences increased compared with 2023, when the Service opened 14 cases.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>51</sup> State Security Service Report 2023, p. 37, available at: <https://ssg.gov.ge/page/info/reports>.



Notably, during the reporting period, plea agreements were applied in three criminal cases involving six individuals. Both the statistical data presented in the report and the relatively minor nature of the offences committed (with plea agreements applied in several cases) once again confirm that allocating the resources of the State Security Service to the investigation of corruption-related crimes is unreasonable. It is also worth noting that the corruption offences cited in the report mainly fall under the category of official misconduct. The report does not provide any explanation as to how these offences constitute direct risks to state security. Given the nature of some of these offences, the use of the country's security resources for their investigation is unjustified.

The Service cites the Corruption Perceptions Index published by the non-governmental organisation Transparency International as a criterion for evaluating its own performance positively. According to this index, Georgia ranks 53<sup>rd</sup> among 180 countries, ahead of 11 member states of the European Union and NATO. Despite the fact that Georgian Dream frequently labels non-governmental organisations as instruments of the so-called Deep State, it appears that, at times, receiving a positive assessment from representatives of this same “Deep State” is still a source of satisfaction.

According to the report, considerable attention is devoted to the prevention of corruption, for which informational meetings are held with students and public officials. As evidence of the success of preventive efforts, the report cites the increase in the number of messages received from whistle-blowers. The specific number of such messages received in 2024 is not indicated in the report, while, according to the 2023 activity report, the Service received 47 messages from citizens concerning corruption-related incidents.<sup>52</sup>

## **LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND INTERACTION WITH COURTS**

This chapter of the report primarily contains statistical data. In particular, it states that the Service prepared more than 150 new legal acts and provided comments on 210 draft legal acts developed by other agencies. A total of 45 legal acts were prepared under the direct authorship of the Service. The Trust Group was proactively provided with seven classified normative acts issued by the Head of the Service. According to the report, the process of refining internal service regulations continued, including those related to EU standards and procedures. As for the subjects of the updated regulations, the report notes that the rules on special military registration of employees, medical examinations of candidates,

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<sup>52</sup> *Idem.*



reliability verification, and the Service’s mobilisation plans were revised and updated. In 2024, legislative amendments also defined the grounds for restricting communication of persons accused or convicted of terrorism or of crimes directed against the constitutional order and security foundations of Georgia. However, based on the limited and general information provided in the report, it is impossible to assess the substance or potential positive implications of these legislative changes.

As for the agency’s interaction with the courts, according to the report, more than 1,100 classified and non-classified pieces of evidence were submitted to the courts on the basis of judicial rulings. 775 documents received from the courts were processed. In 2024, the Service was involved in 39 civil and administrative disputes, 12 of which were concluded at various judicial instances, while one case was settled through an agreement between the parties. The report notes that in the majority of these disputes, the courts found the Service’s position to be substantiated; however, it does not specify the exact number of such cases, nor does it disclose the substance of the disputes.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY, PERSONAL DATA AND PUBLIC INFORMATION**

With regard to accountability, the report refers to the Service’s cooperation with the Parliament’s Trust Group, as well as to the presentation of the 2023 report to Parliament. However, it has become a long-standing flawed practice that, among the institutions within the security sector, the weakest oversight is exercised over the State Security Service.<sup>53</sup> According to the report, during the reporting period the agency responded to five written questions from Members of Parliament, while in 2023, 14 questions were submitted to the Service. As in previous years, Members of Parliament<sup>54</sup> did not resort to any other oversight mechanisms. Typically, such mechanisms were used by representatives of opposition parties. Consequently, following the massively rigged elections of 26 October, oversight exercised by a Parliament composed solely of members of Georgian Dream is expected to become even more formulaic and superficial.

Regarding requests for public information, according to the report, in 2024 the Service received 71 applications, of which 50 were granted, six were forwarded to other agencies for response, six were partially granted, and nine were denied. However, such positive statistics on the disclosure of public information appear less convincing when viewed in light of the Service’s established practice in

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<sup>53</sup> Democracy Research Institute, DRI: The Importance of Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector and Its Challenges, pp. 46-47, available at: <https://www.democracyresearch.org/geo/1404/>.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.



previous years. In the past, the agency frequently refused to disclose information, citing the presence of state secrets, often in a blanket and unsubstantiated manner. According to the Service’s own reports, in 2023 the agency received 66 requests for public information, of which 49 were granted.<sup>55</sup>

## **SUSTAINABILITY AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

According to the available information on infrastructural and material-technical resources, in 2024 the Department of Economy concluded 340 contracts financed from the state budget, with a total value of GEL 21,623,473.04. During the reporting year, 152 tenders were announced, and contracts were signed with 132 bidders. By contrast, according to the previous year’s report, 367 contracts were concluded, with a total value of GEL 27,467,384.08. Accordingly, compared to the previous year, expenditure on material and technical support decreased by almost 6 million GEL. Information regarding the infrastructural and material needs of the Service is classified. Under conditions of effective parliamentary oversight, the fact of such secrecy would not be particularly concerning, as there would exist a democratic mechanism for monitoring the purposeful use of funds.

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<sup>55</sup> State Security Service Report 2023, p. 43, available at: <https://ssg.gov.ge/page/info/reports>.