

Media Freedom and the Right to Information in Georgia

Developments in 2024–2026 and the restrictive legal and institutional environment for independent journalism

KEY MESSAGES

- Between 2024 and 2026, the State measures targeting foreign grants, broadcasting, defamation, assembly and expression rights, public access to courts and media accreditation have combined into a single framework affecting who may finance independent journalism, how journalists may report, and what legal risks follow publication. State offices present the measures as legitimate regulation protecting state sovereignty while international monitors assess them as part of a wider decline in fundamental freedoms.
- Pressure on journalists extends beyond legislation: CMIS documented 357 violations in 2025, journalists covering protests have been fined GEL 5,000 (approximately EUR 1,715) for allegedly blocking roads (including foreign journalists).¹ Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranked Georgia 135th out of 180 countries in its 2026 World Press Freedom Index, down from 114th in 2025.
- Institutional exposure is escalating. Between 2025–2026, the Communications Commission has repeatedly fined broadcasters under the amended Law on Broadcasting, while civil defamation proceedings add retraction orders and financial liability.
- Mzia Amaghlobeli, founder and director of the independent outlets Batumelebi and Netgazeti, was sentenced to two years' imprisonment on 6 August 2025 following the incident with the Batumi police chief during the January 2025 pro-European protest. Twenty-four diplomatic missions, including the EU, called the sentence disproportionate and politically motivated.²
- The Hate Speech Prevention Division, established by the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 1 June 2026, acts mainly under existing administrative-offence provisions on insulting officials and petty hooliganism. By 1 August 2026, the Ministry reported it had sent about 300 cases to court.

135 / 180

Georgia's rank in RSF's 2026 World Press Freedom Index (114th in 2025)

357

violations affecting journalists, outlets and media-rights organisations documented by CMIS in 2025

2 yrs

imprisonment imposed on Mzia Amaghlobeli, upheld on appeal; Supreme Court declined her appeal in March 2026

≈ 300

cases reportedly referred to courts through the Hate Speech Prevention Division by August 2026

¹ Exchange rate: EUR 1 = GEL 2.9155 (as of 9 October 2026).

² European Parliament, Joint Motion for a Resolution on Attempts by the Ruling Party Georgian Dream to Ban Opposition Parties in Georgia, RC-B10-0443/2026, 7 October 2026, procedure 2026/2913(RSP), available at https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-10-2026-0443_EN.html

I. Introduction

In Georgia, while 2024–2026 is described as a period of significant deterioration in media rights, signs of increased state-led political influence over independent and public-interest media had become visible earlier.³ By 2017, although Georgia’s media landscape remained pluralistic and vibrant overall, a series of significant setbacks to media independence, including consolidation among major private television stations and changes in the leadership and editorial policy of the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB), were signalling increasing influence over media freedom. In January 2017, following the appointment of a new GPB director, Vasil Maghlaperidze, a former employee of a television company associated with tycoon Bidzina Ivanishvili,⁴ several programmes critical of the government were discontinued.⁵

These developments coincided with a broader deterioration in Georgia’s democratic trajectory. In its *Democracy Report 2025*, Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) identifies 2017 as the beginning of Georgia’s autocratisation episode, with the reversal beginning in 2018, preceding the much sharper deterioration observed in subsequent years.⁶

The process that started in 2023 accelerated these restrictive tendencies. In 2023, People’s Power, formed in 2022 by MPs who had left Georgian Dream, tabled the draft Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence. The group stayed in Georgian Dream’s parliamentary majority and ran on its list in the 2024 elections.⁷ Although the draft was withdrawn after mass protests, a revived version passed in May 2024 with People’s Power’s support.⁸ Its provisions applied, among others, to broadcasters, print-media owners and Georgian-language online media receiving more than 20 per cent of relevant income from a “foreign power.”

The media environment is further polarised by the presence of pro-government television broadcasters such as Imedi TV and POSTV. As reported, they have been closely linked to the ruling Georgian Dream party.⁹ Media-monitoring organizations have tracked their spread of anti-Western narratives and efforts to discredit opposition actors, independent media and civil society.¹⁰ On 24 February 2026, the United Kingdom imposed sanctions on both broadcasters under its sanctions regime against Russia for spreading deliberately misleading information about Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine.¹¹ The television channels denied the

³ Human Rights Watch, World Report 2016: Georgia (Events of 2015), section “Freedom of Media”, 2016, available at <https://www.hrw.org/node/284946>

⁴ Bidzina Ivanishvili is the founder and honorary chair of the Georgian Dream party.

⁵ Freedom House, Nations in Transit 2018: Georgia (2018), section “Independent Media”, available at <https://freedomhouse.org/country/georgia/nations-transit/2018>

⁶ Nord, Marina, David Altman, Fabio Angiolillo, Tiago Fernandes, Ana Good God, and Staffan I. Lindberg, Democracy Report 2025: 25 Years of Autocratization – Democracy Trumped? (Gothenburg: V-Dem Institute, University of Gothenburg, March 2025), pgs. 23-24 and 27, available at https://www.v-dem.net/documents/61/v-dem-dr_2025_lowres_v2.pdf

⁷ OC-Media, “Georgian Dream satellite party People’s Power will exit majority to create ‘healthy opposition’”, 13 December 2024, available at <https://oc-media.org/georgian-dream-satellite-party-peoples-power-will-exit-majority-to-create-healthy-opposition/>

⁸ Andrei Richter, “Georgia: Transparency of Foreign Influence Bill Tabled Again,” IRIS Legal Observations of the European Audiovisual Observatory, IRIS 2024-5:1/16, European Audiovisual Observatory, 2024, available at <https://merlin.obs.coe.int/article/10048>

⁹ ISFED, “Political advertisements on Meta platforms in Georgia: Second quarter of 2026,” 29 July 2026, available at

<https://isfed.ge/eng/news/politikuri-reklamebi-Meta-s-platfomebze-saqartveloshi-2026-tslis-meore-kvartali>

¹⁰ CMIS, “Incident Source: Pro-government/Propaganda television station “Imedi,” Georgian Dream Officials and Pro-Government Media Renew Their Efforts to Discredit Studio Monitori,” available at <https://cmis.ge/en/incident-source/pro-government-propaganda-television-station-imeri/>

¹¹ UK Government, official sanctions notice: HM Treasury, Sanctions Notice: Russia, 24 February 2026, entries for Imedi TV (RUS3393) and POSTV (RUS3467), available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/699c9dd4882eb23165f1277f/Sanctions_Note_Russia_24_February_2026.pdf

accusations from the UK.¹² Georgian Dream party condemned the sanctions as an assault on media freedom and pledged to support the broadcasters in the public eye.¹³

Key chronology

DATE	DEVELOPMENT
Jan 2017	Following the appointment of a new GPB director, several programmes critical of the government are discontinued.
2023	People's Power, then part of the Georgian Dream parliamentary majority, tables the draft Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence. It is withdrawn after mass protests.
14 May 2024	The Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence is adopted in third reading, covering broadcasters, print-media owners and Georgian-language online media above the 20 per cent threshold.
Oct 2024	Parliamentary elections: MFRR documents at least 19 election-related press-freedom violations affecting 31 media workers.
28 Nov – 7 Dec 2024	At least 50 journalists injured during police dispersals (28 Nov – 3 Dec, CPJ); on 7 December masked individuals attack TV Pirveli journalist Maka Chikhladze and her camera operator on air.
11–12 Jan 2025	Mzia Amaghlobeli, the founder of Netgazeti and Batumelebi, is detained twice during protests in Batumi, including on criminal charges.
Feb 2025	Article 173 ¹⁶ , on insulting officials, is added to the Administrative Offences Code.
1 Apr 2025	Parliament adopts three bills amending the Law on Broadcasting.
Jun 2025	Court-reporting rules restrict unauthorised filming and broadcasting in court premises.
6 Aug 2025	Batumi City Court sentences Mzia Amaghlobeli to two years' imprisonment.
18 Nov 2025 – Mar 2026	Kutaisi Court of Appeals upholds the sentence (18 Nov); the Supreme Court declines to admit her appeal (Mar 2026).

¹²

UK Government, announcement: Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, List of Russia Sanctions Targets, 24 February 2026, section “Entities involved in Russian disinformation”, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/list-of-russia-sanctions-targets-24-february-2026/list-of-russia-sanctions-targets-24-february-2026>

¹³ Imedi TV,

“Georgia’s ruling party: UK imposed sanctions against two leading Georgian broadcasters, which is an unprecedented attack on media freedom,” 27 February 2026, available at <https://imedi.ge/en/politika/8829/georgias-ruling-party-uk-imposed-sanctions-against-two-leading-georgian-broadcasters-which-is-an-unprecedented-attack-on-media-freedom>

DATE	DEVELOPMENT
May – 1 Oct 2026	The Communications Commission fines Formula (GEL 2,500 in May, GEL 5,000 in July, GEL 10,000 on 1 October) and TV Pirveli (GEL 2,500 in June, GEL 5,000 in August) under the amended content-regulation framework.
1 Jun 2026	The Hate Speech Prevention Division is established; almost 60 cases reach courts by 15 June.
Jun 2026	Amended accreditation rules allow repeated violations to affect a media organisation's accreditation.
23 Jun 2026	Parliament adopts Broadcasting Law amendments partly easing the foreign-financing ban for specialised broadcasters and strengthening enforcement.
10 and 22 Jul 2026	Formula TV journalist Vakho Sanaia is fined GEL 6,000 (10 Jul) and sentenced to 14 days' administrative detention (22 Jul) for alleged insult of the officials.
Jul 2026	Tbilisi City Court orders Formula to pay GEL 10,000 in moral damages to Goga Khaindrava and to retract information from investigative reports.
Aug 2026	More than 300 cases concerning public expression reportedly referred to courts through the Hate Speech Prevention Division.

II. The Legislative and Regulatory Framework

Legislative acceleration in 2025–2026

As part of the restrictive legislative developments of 2025, the Georgian Dream parliament adopted the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA). The Act established a foreign-agent registration, disclosure, monitoring and enforcement regime.¹⁴ In the same timeframe, amendments were made to the Law on Broadcasting. These restricted foreign financing and extended enforceable Communications Commission supervision to journalistic standards previously handled through self-regulation.¹⁵ Amendments were also made to the Law on Freedom of Speech and Expression, weakening safeguards in defamation proceedings.¹⁶

¹⁴ Parliament of Georgia, "Parliament Adopts 'Foreign Agents Registration Act' in Third Reading", 1 April 2025, available at <https://www.parliament.ge/en/print/news/parlamentma-utskhoetis-agentebis-registratsiis-akti-mesame-mosmenit-miigho> and OCCRP, "Georgian Parliament Passes Controversial Foreign Agents Law, Raising Crackdown Fears", 1 April 2025 (enforcement by the Anti-Corruption Bureau), available at <https://www.occrp.org/en/news/georgian-parliament-passes-controversial-foreign-agents-law-raising-crackdown-fears>

¹⁵ Parliament of Georgia, "Parliament Adopts Three Bills Amending the Law on Broadcasting", 1 April 2025, available at <https://www.parliament.ge/en/media/news/parlamentma-mautsqeblobis-shesakheb-kanonshi-tsvlilebebis-taobaze-sami-kanonproekti-miigho> and Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), "Georgia Set to Pass Restrictive Broadcast Bills", 31 March 2025 (editor's note: signed into law on 1 April), available at <https://cpj.org/2025/03/georgia-set-to-pass-restrictive-broadcast-bills/>

¹⁶ Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR), "Georgia: Urgent action required as ruling party accelerates efforts to silence independent media", 30 June 2025 (amendments adopted in third reading on 26 June 2025), available at <https://www.mfrr.eu/?p=1024> and Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA), statement on the amendments to the Law on Freedom of Speech and Expression, as reported by JAMnews, "GYLA: New law amendments remove key free speech protections in Georgia", available at <https://jam-news.net/gyla-new-law-amendments-remove-key-free-speech-protections-in-georgia/>

The 2025–2026 amendments to the Law on Grants significantly restricted the framework for local civil society organisations to receive foreign grants and affected the operating environment for foreign representations and donors. The amendments introduced government consent requirements for covered foreign grants and expanded state oversight of foreign-funded activities, increasing legal and administrative constraints on both grant providers and recipients.¹⁷

Alongside these legislative changes affecting media and foreign-funded activities, further measures restricted the broader environment for expression, protest and access to information. Amendments to the Administrative Offences Code substantially increased protest-related fines and detention, including for roadblocking. A new offence in the Code also introduced liability for insulting political officeholders and public officials. The rules adopted in June 2025 regarding the court monitoring restricted filming and broadcasting in court buildings, courtrooms and courtyards without authorisation, while parliamentary accreditation rules were progressively tightened. In addition, in 2026, a dedicated Hate Speech Prevention Division was established within the Ministry of Internal Affairs to monitor publicly disseminated expression, including social-media posts.¹⁸

Key media-related measures

MEASURE	EFFECT
Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence (2024)	Applies to broadcasters, print-media owners and Georgian-language online media receiving more than 20 per cent of relevant income from a “foreign power.”
Foreign Agents Registration Act – FARA (2025)	Establishes a foreign-agent registration, disclosure, monitoring and enforcement regime.
Law on Broadcasting (2025; amended June 2026)	Restricts foreign financing of broadcasters and transfers previously self-regulatory journalistic standards to enforceable supervision by the Communications Commission. Partly eased for specialised broadcasters in June 2026, while enforcement powers were strengthened. In 2026 the Communications Commission has sanctioned broadcasters under provisions on impartiality, accuracy and editorial positions in news programming.
Law on Freedom of Speech and Expression (2025)	Weakens safeguards in defamation proceedings.
Law on Grants (2025–2026)	Introduces government pre-approval requirements for covered foreign grants and expands state oversight of foreign-funded activities.

¹⁷ Democracy Research Institute, Law on Grants: 2025 Restrictions and the March 2026 Expansion, 05 October 2026, available at <https://www.democracyresearch.org/files/418Law%20on%20Grants.pdf>

¹⁸ Democracy Research Institute, “Eroding Human Rights Protections in Georgia: A Review of Legislative, Policy and Institutional Changes”, p.p. 19-29, available at <https://www.democracyresearch.org/eng/1770/>

MEASURE	EFFECT
Administrative Offences Code	Substantially increases protest-related fines and detention, including for roadblocking; Article 173 ¹⁶ (February 2025) introduces liability for insulting political officeholders and public officials.
Common Courts amendments (June 2025)	Restrict filming and broadcasting in court buildings, courtrooms and courtyards without authorisation.
Parliamentary accreditation rules	Permit suspension where journalists continue questioning MPs after an interview has been ended; June 2026 amendments allow repeated violations to affect the accreditation of the media organisation.
Hate Speech Prevention Division (1 June 2026)	Ministry of Internal Affairs unit mandated to monitor publicly disseminated statements, including social-media content, and initiate administrative proceedings; it created no new substantive offence.

Official justification and international assessment

Georgian authorities defend the media rights-affecting measures as legitimate regulation protecting state sovereignty.¹⁹ Georgian Dream representatives argue that foreign financing could shape editorial agendas, and that controlling it would safeguard impartial information. Parliament said moving journalistic standards into statute would improve pluralism, factual reporting and professionalism.²⁰ International monitors disagree:²¹ the European Commission's 2025 assessment cited serious backsliding on fundamental rights, arbitrary arrests of journalists and shrinking civic space, and the 2026 OSCE Moscow Mechanism treated the restrictions as part of a wider decline in fundamental freedoms.²²

Economic pressure on independent media

The measures also hit an already fragile economic model. Smaller investigative, regional and online outlets have long depended on foreign donor support in a limited advertising market. The 2024 foreign-influence law covers several categories of media, and the 2025 Broadcasting Law broadly barred broadcasters from receiving direct or indirect financing from a "foreign power," with some exceptions.²³ That ban was partly eased for specialised broadcasters in June 2026, while enforcement powers were strengthened.

¹⁹Parliament of Georgia, "Parliament Endorsing Draft Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence in III Reading", 14 May 2024, available at <https://www.parliament.ge/en/media/news/parlamentma-utskhouri-gavlenis-gamchvirvalobis-shesakheb-kanonproekti-mesame-mosmenit-miigho>

²⁰Parliament of Georgia, "Parliament Adopts Three Bills Amending the Law on Broadcasting", 1 April 2025, available at <https://www.parliament.ge/en/media/news/parlamentma-mautsqeblobis-shesakheb-kanonshi-tsvlilebebis-taobaze-sami-kanonproekti-miigho>

²¹Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), "Georgia Set to Pass Restrictive Broadcast Bills", 31 March 2025, available at <https://cpj.org/2025/03/georgia-set-to-pass-restrictive-broadcast-bills/>

²²European Commission, 2025 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy, Georgia extract (4 November 2025), via EEAS: https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/2025-communication-eu-enlargement-policy-extract-about-georgia_en; OSCE Moscow Mechanism, report on Georgia, presented to the OSCE Permanent Council on 12 March 2026, available at https://odihr.osce.org/sites/default/files/documents/official_documents/2026/03/odgal0009c1%20ODIHR%20NV%2082-2026%20report_Moscow%20Mechanism%20invoked%20in%20respect%20of%20Georgia_0.pdf; JAMnews, "Georgia's government called the critical OSCE Moscow Mechanism report biased", 13 March 2026, available at <https://jam-news.net/?p=225613>

²³International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) and European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL), The Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence and Its Impact on Non-entrepreneurial (Non-commercial) Legal Entities and Media Organizations in Georgia, 22 May 2024, updated 23 May 2024, available at https://www.icnl.org/wp-content/uploads/05.23.2024-Georgia_Implications_of_the_FR_Law_FV.pdf

The framework therefore goes beyond regulating content. It affects who can fund independent journalism, the conditions for reporting, the legal risks of publishing, and access to the institutions journalists are meant to scrutinise.²⁴

The deterioration in media rights should thus be seen as part of a longer, gradual pattern of pressure on media independence and pluralism, not an abrupt shift.

III. Harassment and Persecution of Media Workers

Physical attacks and election-period violations

In the period of the October 2024 parliamentary elections, the Media Freedom Rapid Response documented at least 19 election-related press rights violations affecting 31 media workers.²⁵ ODIHR's election observation likewise described journalists' safety as a major concern and reported assaults, intimidation and pressure in a highly polarised media environment.²⁶ During the first weeks following the start of the pro-EU November 2024 protests, 127 violent incidents were recorded against journalists.²⁷

The situation deteriorated further during the Pro-European demonstrations in late November 2024. CPJ reported that at least 50 journalists were injured during police violent dispersals of the demonstrations between 28 November and 3 December 2024,²⁸ followed on 7 December by an attack by masked individuals on TV Pirveli journalist Maka Chikhladze and her camera operator while they were broadcasting live.²⁹

One of the most serious cases was that of Formula TV reporter Guram Rogava, who was struck on the head from behind by a special-forces officer while reporting live on the night of 28–29 November 2024, hit his head on the curb and lost consciousness. In May 2026, Formula TV broadcast an investigation by its journalist Eliso Jariashvili that identified his alleged attacker through security-service sources.³⁰ Two days later, the Prosecutor General's Office announced the arrest of five current and former law enforcement officers over violence against Rogava, the opposition politician Levan Khabeishvili and the protester Zviad Maisashvili, who was repeatedly kicked in the head and face while lying on the ground.³¹ These were the first publicly known arrests of officers over violence during the 2024 protests and did little to change the broader picture of impunity.³²

²⁴Parliament of Georgia, "Parliament Adopted the draft Law on Broadcasting", plenary session, 23 June 2026 (third reading, 75 votes in favour), available at <https://parliament.ge/en/media/news/parlamentma-mautsqeblobis-shesakheb-kanonshi-tsvlilebebi-miigho>; on the meaning of "specialized broadcasters" (channels that do not air news or political programming), see Civil.ge, "Georgian Dream Proposes Exempting Broadcasters Without Political Content From Foreign Funding Ban", 19 May 2026, available at <https://civil.ge/archives/735003>

²⁵Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR) partners, "Georgia: Protect intimidated and attacked journalists", ARTICLE 19, 31 October 2024, available at <https://www.article19.org/resources/georgia-protect-intimidated-and-attacked-journalists/>

²⁶OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Georgia: Parliamentary Elections, 26 October 2024 – ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report, Warsaw, 20 December 2024, p.p. 3, 22–24, available at https://cdn.osce.org/sites/default/files/f/documents/1/6/584029_0.pdf

²⁷Reporters Without Borders (RSF), "Unprecedented crackdown in Georgia: 600 attacks against the press in one year", available at <https://rsf.org/en/unprecedented-crackdown-georgia-600-attacks-against-press-one-year>

²⁸Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), "CPJ condemns police brutality against journalists covering Georgian protests", 4 December 2024, available at <https://cpj.org/2024/12/cpj-condemns-police-brutality-against-journalists-covering-georgian-protests/>

²⁹Reporters Without Borders (RSF), "Georgia: the violence against reporters covering protests has been met with shocking impunity", December 2024, available at <https://rsf.org/en/georgia-violence-against-reporters-covering-protests-has-been-met-shocking-impunity> and Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics, "List of incidents involving Georgian media representatives November 28 – December 8, 2024", 16 December 2024, available at <https://www.qartia.ge/ka/siakhleebebi/article/99312>

³⁰Formula News, The Guram Rogava Case — Formula's Investigative Report, YouTube Channel, 5 May 2026, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1H1HRxDcc0>

³¹JAMnews, "Five special forces officers have been arrested in Georgia for brutally beating protesters during the 2024 protests", May 2026, available at <https://jam-news.net/arrests-in-georgia-over-violence-against-protesters-during-the-2024-protests/>

³²Democracy Research Institute, Police Violence and Impunity in Georgia, 01 July 2026, available at <https://www.democracyresearch.org/eng/1752/>

Documented incidents

The physical attacks formed part of a broader pattern of pressure on independent media that also included administrative penalties, detention, threats and restrictions on journalistic activity.³³

CMIS documented 357 violations affecting journalists, media outlets and media-rights organisations during 2025, including 48 fines and 20 cases of detention, arrest or imprisonment. It identified law-enforcement bodies as the principal alleged perpetrators in its dataset.³⁴

Between October 2024 and October 2025, RSF and CMIS reported approximately 600 press rights-related incidents encompassing assaults, fines, arrests, threats and accreditation suspensions.³⁵

Although the reporting periods overlap and the figures should therefore not be added together, the monitoring data illustrate the breadth of pressures affecting independent journalism beyond cases of physical violence alone.

Administrative fines against journalists covering protests

Since the end of 2024, the administrative sanctions were widely used against media representatives.³⁶ Journalists covering demonstrations have repeatedly been treated as participants and fined for allegedly “artificially blocking” roads while reporting.³⁷

Cases Examples

JOURNALIST	CIRCUMSTANCES	AMOUNT
Keti Khutsishvili <i>Netgazeti</i>	Notified of two GEL 5,000 fines relating to her reporting work. ³⁸	2 × 5,000 GEL · two fines
Zuka Khidashvili <i>Radio Liberty</i>	Fined GEL 5,000 while filming; the case was subsequently dismissed. ³⁹	5,000 GEL · case dismissed

³³ Reporters Without Borders (RSF), “Unprecedented crackdown in Georgia: 600 attacks against the press in one year”, available at <https://rsf.org/en/unprecedented-crackdown-georgia-600-attacks-against-press-one-year>

³⁴ Center for Media, Information and Social Research (CMIS), Safety Challenges Facing Independent Media in Georgia, 2025, 18 December 2025, available at <https://cmis.ge/en/attacks-on-media-in-georgia-2025/>

³⁵ Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Unprecedented crackdown in Georgia: 600 attacks against the press in one year, 24 November 2025, based on data from the Center for Media, Information and Social Research (CMIS), available at <https://rsf.org/en/unprecedented-crackdown-georgia-600-attacks-against-press-one-year>

³⁶ European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), “Georgia: An escalating media freedom crisis”, 7 May 2026 (MFRR documented 36 cases of arbitrary fines in 2025, 25 of them linked to covering demonstrations; in all 25 the journalists had identified themselves as press), available at <https://europeanjournalists.org/blog/2026/05/07/georgia-an-escalating-media-freedom-crisis/>

³⁷ CMIS, Between May 2024 and May 2025, 342 cases of violations against the rights of media representatives were reported in Georgia, 01 June 2025, available at <https://cmis.ge/en/between-may-2024-and-may-2025-342-cases-of-violations-against-the-rights-of-media-representatives-were-reported-in-georgia/>

³⁸ CMIS, “MIA Accuses Netgazeti Journalist of ‘Artificially Blocking the Road’”, 31 March 2026 (two fines totalling GEL 10,000, issued on 2 April and 13 June 2025), available at <https://cmis.ge/en/incident/mia-accuses-netgazeti-journalist-of-artificially-blocking-the-road/>

³⁹ RFE/RL, “The judge terminated the “standing on the sidewalk” case against a Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty cameraman,” 19 March 2026, available at <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/33685376.html>

JOURNALIST	CIRCUMSTANCES	AMOUNT
Maka Chikhladze <i>TV Pirveli</i>	Reportedly discovered that she had been fined GEL 5,000 for allegedly blocking a road while covering events on Rustaveli Avenue only after her bank accounts were frozen in April 2026. ⁴⁰	5,000 GEL · accounts frozen
Mariam Nikuradze <i>OC Media, co-founder and photographer</i>	Fined four times, each time GEL 5,000, for allegedly blocking the road while photographing demonstrations, bringing the total to GEL 20,000. OC Media reported that the alleged violations included her coverage of protests on 11 March, 15 March and 2 April 2025; by April she had received four separate fines. ⁴¹	20,000 GEL · four fines of 5,000
Nini Gabritchidze <i>Civil Georgia, chief editor</i>	Learned after her bank account was seized in February 2026 that she had been fined GEL 5,000 in connection with a July 2025 demonstration she had covered as a journalist. ⁴²	5,000 GEL · account seized

The fines impacted foreign journalists as well. Italian journalist Giacomo Ferrara reportedly learned at the Georgian border in September 2025 that he had been fined GEL 5,000 for allegedly blocking a road while covering a March protest.⁴³ The sources also reported on a German journalist of Ukrainian origin who was told at the Georgian border that she owed an alleged unpaid administrative fine of GEL 5,000 and, despite paying part of it, was denied entry to Georgia.⁴⁴

Restrictions on access to courts and Parliament

The June 2025 Common Courts amendments restrict independent recording and broadcasting in court premises unless authorised,⁴⁵ reducing journalists' ability to document proceedings directly.⁴⁶ Parliamentary rules likewise permit accreditation suspensions where journalists continue questioning MPs after an interviewee has indicated that an interview should end; further amendments adopted in June 2026

⁴⁰Civil.ge, "Protesters, Journalists Report Frozen Accounts Over Unnotified 'Road Blockage' Fines", 18 April 2026, available at <https://civil.ge/archives/730435> ; Mapping Media Freedom, "Georgia: TV Pirveli's journalist's bank accounts frozen", 15 April 2026 (reporting Mediachecker.ge), available at <https://www.mapmf.org/alert/34801> ; EFJ, "Georgia: An escalating media freedom crisis", 7 May 2026 (see note 10); Nodar Meladze, Facebook post, 15 April 2026, available at <https://www.facebook.com/nodar.meladze/posts/pfbid0FjEB6Qx2PFqyBZD992BASgWQtJNtH9CbaCjBeGZMZi8kiRubg2piiLQtt9H8T6Ubl>

⁴¹OC Media, "OC Media's Mariam Nikuradze fined again, reaching a total of more than \$7,000", 22 April 2025, available at <https://oc-media.org/oc-medias-mariam-nikuradze-fined-again-reaching-a-total-of-almost-5-500/>

⁴²Nini Gabritchidze, "Dispatch – March 25: This is fine", Civil.ge, 25 March 2026 (fine for blocking Rustaveli Avenue on 17 July while covering protests as a journalist; account frozen on 20 February), available at <https://civil.ge/archives/725429> ; Civil.ge, "Protesters, Journalists Report Frozen Accounts Over Unnotified 'Road Blockage' Fines", 18 April 2026 (see note 14)

⁴³Council of Europe, Platform to Promote the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists, "Italian Journalist Giacomo Ferrara and Swiss Photojournalist Gregor Sommer Denied Entry to Georgia", Alert, 07 October 2025, available at <https://fom.coe.int/en/alerte/detail/107643030>

⁴⁴Council of Europe, Platform to Promote the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists, "Freelance Journalist Marina Klimchuk Denied Entry to Georgia", Alert, 21 May 2026, available at <https://fom.coe.int/en/alerte/detail/107644216>

⁴⁵Legislative Herald of Georgia (Matsne), Organic Law of Georgia on Common Courts, Article 13⁽²⁾, as amended by Organic Law of Georgia No. 827 of 26 June 2025, published 27 June 2025, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/90676?impose=translateEn>

⁴⁶Center for Media, Information and Social Research (CMIS), "Amendments to the Organic Law on Common Courts Restrict Transparency of Court Proceedings", 26 June 2025, available at <https://cmis.ge/en/incident/amendments-to-the-organic-law-on-common-courts-restrict-transparency-of-court-proceedings/>

allow repeated violations to affect not only individual journalists but potentially the accreditation of their media organisation. Suspensions involving journalists from TV Pirveli and Formula were recorded during 2026.⁴⁷ Parliament, for its part, has stated that the revised 2026 accreditation framework was modelled on rules applicable in the European Parliament.⁴⁸

Conviction of Mzia Amaghlobeli

The prosecution and imprisonment of Mzia Amaghlobeli, founder and director of the independent Batumelebi and Netgazeti outlets, has become the most prominent individual media-freedom case arising from this period. Amaghlobeli was detained twice during protests in Batumi on the night of 11–12 January 2025. Her second arrest followed an incident in which she allegedly slapped Batumi Police Chief Irakli Dgebuadze. She was initially prosecuted under Article 353¹ of the Criminal Code, carrying a substantially heavier potential sentence, and remained in pre-trial detention. Amnesty International reported allegations concerning her treatment after arrest, including explicit and sexualised threats allegedly made by Dgebuadze, while also pointing to allegations of police violence against other detainees that night.⁴⁹

On 6 August 2025, Batumi City Court reclassified the conduct under Article 353(1), concerning resistance, threats or violence against a public-order defender or other government representative, and sentenced Amaghlobeli to two years' imprisonment. The Kutaisi Court of Appeals upheld the sentence on 18 November 2025,⁵⁰ and in March 2026 the Supreme Court declined to admit her appeal, exhausting the national legal remedies. During her detention, Amaghlobeli undertook a 38-day hunger strike, and Amnesty International subsequently raised serious concerns about deterioration in her eyesight and access to specialist medical care.⁵¹

The Georgian authorities have treated the proceedings as a criminal-law response to conduct against a police officer while local and international organisations and media-freedom monitors have questioned the proportionality of the prosecution, detention, sentence and the fairness of the proceedings. The EU condemned the two-year sentence and described the case as part of the use of the justice system against independent voices. The Council of Europe Platform's 2026 press-freedom report highlighted her prolonged pre-trial detention, conviction and the pressure experienced by her media organisations.⁵²

⁴⁷ Center for Media, Information and Social Research (CMIS), "Parliament Suspends Accreditation of 'Formula' Journalist Nini Balanchivadze for 6 Months", 23 June 2026, available at <https://cmis.ge/en/incident/parliament-suspends-accreditation-of-formula-journalist-nini-balanchivadze-for-6-months/>; Center for Media, Information and Social Research (CMIS), "Parliament Suspends Accreditation of 'TV Pirveli' Journalist Maka Chikhladze", 6 June 2026, available at <https://cmis.ge/en/incident/parliament-suspends-accreditation-of-tv-pirveli-journalist-maka-chikhladze/>; Center for Media, Information and Social Research (CMIS), "Parliament Suspends Accreditation of 'TV Pirveli' Journalist Maka Andronikashvili", 20 June 2026, available at <https://cmis.ge/en/incident/parliament-suspends-accreditation-of-tv-pirveli-journalist-maka-andronikashvili/>; Center for Media, Information and Social Research (CMIS), "Parliament Suspends Accreditation of 'TV Pirveli' Journalist Nata Kajaia for One Year", 27 June 2026, available at <https://cmis.ge/en/incident/parliament-suspends-accreditation-of-tv-pirveli-journalist-nata-kajaia-for-one-year/>

⁴⁸ Parliament of Georgia, "Amendments Introduced to the Rules on the Accreditation of Media Representatives in the Parliament of Georgia by Order of the Speaker of Parliament, Based on the European Parliament Model", 8 June 2026, available at <https://parliament.ge/en/media/news/sakartvelos-parlamentis-tavmjdomaris-brdzanebit-sakartvelos-parlamentshi-masobrivi-informatsiis-sashualebata-tsarmomadgenlebis-akreditatsiis-tsesshi-tsvlilebebi-shevida-romelits-1>

⁴⁹ Amnesty International, Georgia: Justice for Journalist Mzia Amaghlobeli, EUR 56/9262/2025, 14 April 2025, available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur56/9262/2025/en/>

⁵⁰ TrialWatch/Clooney Foundation for Justice, Fairness Report on the trial of Mzia Amaghlobeli, January 2026, available at https://cfj.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/2025.01-Fairness-Report_Georgia-Mzia-Amaghlobeli.pdf

⁵¹ Amnesty International, Georgia: Georgian Journalist May Lose Eyesight in Jail, EUR 56/0159/2025, July 2025, available at <https://www.amnestyusa.org/urgent-actions/georgia-georgian-journalist-may-lose-eyesight-in-jail/>

⁵² Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, "Commissioner for Human Rights Calls for Stronger Protection of Human Rights in Georgia", 1 April 2025, available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/commissioner-for-human-rights-calls-for-stronger-protection-of-human-rights-in-georgia> and Council of Europe Platform alert on Mzia Amaghlobeli, Updated 25 Mar 2026, available at <https://fom.coe.int/en/alerte/detail/107642002>

The case thus has a significance beyond the physical act itself. The lengthy detention and prosecution of the head of two prominent independent outlets have become press-freedom organizations' symbol indicating the wider legal and personal risks that critical journalism face in the country.

Criminal Persecution of journalists

The February and May 2026 arrests of journalists Eliso Kiladze and Irakli Chikhladze have raised concerns about criminal proceedings involving media professionals. Both deny wrongdoing.

Eliso Kiladze was arrested on 18 February 2026 on fraud and money-laundering charges linked to alleged fraudulent call-centre operations. According to the Prosecutor's Office, she allegedly used her media platforms to facilitate the activities of the criminal network and exert pressure on competing operations.⁵³ Kiladze has denied the allegations, claiming that her prosecution is retaliation for her investigative reporting, including investigations into alleged corruption and fraudulent call centres.⁵⁴ Her defence has challenged the prosecution's evidence, while closed court hearings and restrictions on her communication during pretrial detention have prompted further criticism.

Irakli Chikhladze, editor of the Russian-language outlet *Newcaucasus.com*, was detained in May 2026 on espionage charges.⁵⁵ The State Security Service has alleged that he transferred information to a foreign state, without publicly identifying the country or disclosing the underlying evidence. His defence has rejected the accusations, arguing that the case lacks evidence of espionage and warning that the authorities' interpretation of intelligence-gathering activities could criminalise legitimate analytical work and cooperation with international organisations.⁵⁶ The proceedings have been classified, with closed hearings and a non-disclosure agreement imposed on the defence.

Both cases have raised concerns about the use of criminal proceedings against journalists, particularly given the limited public scrutiny of the evidence and fair trial principles.⁵⁷

The Hate Speech Prevention Division and Liability for insulting officials⁵⁸

In February 2025, Article 173¹⁶ was added to the Administrative Offences Code, establishing liability for insulting, swearing at or otherwise offensively addressing specified political officeholders and public officials in connection with their duties. Before the establishment of a specialised enforcement unit, proceedings were already being brought against journalists, activists and opposition representatives over statements concerning Georgian Dream politicians; Tbilisi City Court considered cases against 18 people, including six journalists, on 12 June 2025 alone.

On 1 June 2026, the Ministry of Internal Affairs established its Hate Speech Prevention Division, mandated to proactively monitor publicly disseminated statements, including social-media content, identify suspected offenders and initiate administrative proceedings. The case of Formula TV journalist Vakho Sanaia

⁵³ ITV, "Former Prosecutor General Partskhladze charged in major call centre fraud and money laundering case; journalist Eliso Kiladze arrested," 18 February 2026, available at <https://itv.ge/lang/en/news/former-prosecutor-general-partskhladze-charged-in-major-call-centre-fraud-and-money-laundering-case-journalist-eliso-kiladze-arrested/>

⁵⁴ TV Pirveli, "Eliso Kiladze's First Statement Following Her Arrest" [ელისო კილაძის პირველი განცხადება დაკავების შემდეგ], 18 February 2026, available at <https://tvpirveli.ge/ka/siaxleebi/sazogadoeba/121612-eliso-kiladzis-pirveli-gantskhadeba-dakavebis-shemdege>

⁵⁵ Civil.ge, "SSSG Arrests Second Georgian in One Day on Spying Allegations," 30 May 2026, available at <https://civil.ge/archives/736351/amp>

⁵⁶ SOVA, "Lawyer: There Is Not a Single Piece of Evidence in Irakli Chikhladze's Case," 9 September 2026, available at <https://sovanews.tv/en/2026/09/09/lawyer-there-is-not-a-single-piece-of-evidence-in-irakli-chikhladzes-case/>

⁵⁷ Social Justice Center, "Social Justice Center Assesses the Criminal Law Provisions on Espionage," 19 June 2026, available at <https://socialjustice.org.ge/en/products/sotsialuri-samartlianobis-tsentr-jashushobis-shesakheb-siskhlis-samartlis-normebs-afasebs>

⁵⁸ Democracy Research Institute, State-Enabled Hate Speech and Hate Speech Prevention in Georgia, 27 August 2026, available at <https://www.democracyresearch.org/eng/1758/>

Giorgi Badridze Tabula	3 May 2024	Administrative	Detained at foreign-influence-law protest	Released after signing statement; no penalty reported
Sergi Baramidze ⁶² Mtavari Arkhi	19 Nov 2024	Administrative	Detained during protest coverage	Verbal warning ⁶³
Nikoloz Tabukashvili Photographer	30 Nov 2024	Administrative	Detained at protest	Outcome not publicly reported
Beka Beradze Radio Liberty	1 Dec 2024	Administrative	Detained while covering protest	Taken to detention centre; released after two days without imposing a penalty. ⁶⁴
Giorgi Chagelishvili Mautskebeli	2 Dec 2024	Administrative	Detained despite identifying as a journalist	GEL 2,200 fine
Beslan Kmuzov Caucasian Knot	7 Dec 2024	Administrative	Detained after photographing riot police	GEL 2,000 fine; released 8 December ⁶⁵
Beka Korshia Mtavari Arkhi	6-7 Dec 2024	Administrative	Detained at protest	GEL 2,200 fine; released 9 December
Afgan Sadygov ⁶⁶ Exiled Azerbaijani journalist	Aug 2024; 22 Oct; 12 Nov 2025; Apr 2026	Extradition / Administrative case;	Detained in 2024 in extradition proceedings; later arrested twice for alleged road blocking.	2024 extradition detention (not a Georgian criminal conviction); 14 days and 7 days administrative detention in 2025; expulsion from Georgia on protest participation-related administrative offence grounds (Apr 2026)

<https://www.freiheit.org/ka/south-caucasus/sergi-baramidzis-istoria>

⁶² Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, 'Diary of Violence: The Story of Sergi Baramidze' (ძალადობის დღიური: სერგი ბარამიძის ისტორია), 9 January 2025, available at <https://www.freiheit.org/ka/south-caucasus/sergi-baramidzis-istoria>

⁶³ Sergi Baramidze, a camera operator for Mtavari Arkhi, was detained on 19 November 2024 while performing his professional duties and subsequently released. The court discontinued administrative proceedings against him for petty hooliganism (Article 166) but found him responsible for disobeying a police officer (Article 173), issuing a verbal warning without imposing a fine or detention. Source: InterPressNews, 'Court Discontinues Petty Hooliganism Proceedings Against Camera Operator Sergi Baramidze and Issues Verbal Warning for Disobeying Police', 10 February 2025, available at <https://www.interpressnews.ge/ka/article/830024-operator-sergi-baramidze-mimart-sasamartlom-xulignobis-paktze-sakmis-carmoeba-sheqcvita-xolo-policielis-daumorchileblobaze-sitqvieri-gaprtxileba-misca/>

⁶⁴ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) producer Beka Beradze was detained and reportedly beaten by police near Ingorokva Street during a pro-European protest in Tbilisi on 1 December 2024. He was initially accused of petty hooliganism and disobeying police orders. After 48 hours in detention, he was released on 3 December without administrative penalties, as his case was never referred to court. Source: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (Radio Tavisupleba), 'RFE/RL Producer Released After Two Days in Detention', 3 December 2024, available at <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/33224550.html>

⁶⁵ On 8 December 2024, Caucasian Knot journalist Beslan Kmuzov was fined GEL 2,000 for allegedly disobeying police orders during a protest in Tbilisi. Following his release, he was summoned to the Ministry of Internal Affairs' Migration Department, raising concerns about possible deportation to Russia. No formal deportation decision has been confirmed. See Caucasian Knot, 'Court Imposes Fine on Caucasian Knot Journalist in Tbilisi', 8 December 2024, available at <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.info/articles/406428/> and Caucasian Knot, 'Caucasian Knot Correspondent Faces Deportation After His Detention in Tbilisi', 12 December 2024, available at <https://www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/65537/>

⁶⁶ On 5 April 2026, Azerbaijani journalist Afgan Sadygov was arrested in Tbilisi on alleged administrative grounds and deported to Azerbaijan within hours, despite a binding interim measure issued by the European Court of Human Rights in January 2025 prohibiting his extradition. His forced return raised serious concerns about refoulement, transnational repression and Georgia's compliance with its obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights. Source: World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and seven other human rights organisations, 'The Forced Return of Afgan Sadygov to Azerbaijan: A Test of the Council of Europe's Credibility', Joint Statement, 20 April 2026, available at <https://www.omct.org/en/resources/statements/the-forced-return-of-afgan-sadygov-to-azerbaijan-a-test-of-the-council-of-europes-credibility>

Mzia Amaghlobeli Batumelebi / Netgazeti	11–12 Jan 2025	Administrative and criminal	Initially detained for protest sticker - released; shortly arrested after altercation with police chief	Criminal: 2 years imprisonment (6 Aug 2025)
Guram Murvanidze Batumelebi	12 Jan 2025	Administrative	Detained during protest coverage	8 days administrative detention ⁶⁷
Lasha Jioshvili TV Pirveli	18 Feb 2025	Administrative	Alleged disobedience of police	GEL 2,500 fine
Saba Sordia Indigo	6 Apr 2025	Administrative	Alleged disobedience of police; not working at time	Held 48 hours under police custody; GEL 2,500 fine
Vakho Sanaia Formula	19 Oct 2025 and 22 July 2026	Administrative	Protest-related / Freedom of speech-related arrests	6 days (19 Oct) and 14 days (22 July) administrative detention ⁶⁸
Keta Tsitskishvili Formula / TV Pirveli (source inconsistent)	20 Oct 2025	Administrative	Protest-related arrest	5 days administrative detention
Tsira Zhvania TV journalist	21 Oct 2025	Administrative	Protest-related arrest	10 days administrative detention
Vasil Ivanov-Chikovani Former Georgian Public Broadcaster journalist	21 Oct 2025	Administrative	Protest-related arrest	7 days administrative detention ⁶⁹
Lika Basilaia-Shavgulidze Public Broadcaster board member	22 Oct 2025	Administrative	Protest-related arrest	5 days administrative detention ⁷⁰
Basti Mgaloblishvili Publika	24 Oct 2025	Administrative	Detained while reporting on protest	Released within hours; no penalty reported
Giorgi Liponava Formula / Founder	16 Nov 2025 and 24 Oct 2025	Administrative	Arrested at protest	Gel 2,500 fine (16 Nov 2024); 3 days administrative detention (24 Oct 2025)
Zviad Kvaratskhelia Formula presenter / Writer and publisher / Editor-in-Chief of Intelkti Publishing House.	24 Oct 2025	Administrative	Arrested at protest	3 days administrative detention
Nika Pataraia Formula cameraman	25 Oct 2025	Administrative	Arrested at protest	4 days administrative detention

⁶⁷ RFE/RL, “According to a cameraman for Batumelebi, all the material on his phone was deleted following his arrest,” 23 January 2026, available at <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/33286216.html>

⁶⁸ Civil.ge, “Formula TV Anchor Vakho Sanaia Sent to 14-Day Detention over Facebook Post on GD MPs,” 22 July 2026, available at <https://civil.ge/archives/745382/amp>

⁶⁹ RFE/RL, “Journalist Vasil Ivanov-Chikovani Sentenced to Seven Days of Administrative Detention; His Wife Fined GEL 5,000,” 25 October 2025, available at <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/33569755.html>

⁷⁰ Basti Mgaloblishvili, a journalist for Publika, was unlawfully detained in a police vehicle for 40 minutes on October 24, 2025, while covering protests in Tbilisi; police released him at his home after stating they “made a mistake” and confused him with someone else. Source: Publika, “Journalist Basti Mgaloblishvili Detained While Covering Protest on Rustaveli Avenue,” 24 October 2025, available at <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/33569492.html>

Ninia Kakabadze MediaChecker	3 Nov 2025	Administrative	Detained while covering protest	Released within 3-4 hours; Court dismissed the case (21 Apr 2026) ⁷¹
Liza Tsitsishvili Formula	5 Nov 2025	Administrative	Detained while reporting	Released after ~10 minutes; police apologised ⁷²
Giorgi Mamniashvili TV Pirveli	23 Nov 2025	Administrative	Alleged police disobedience while reporting	GEL 3,000 fine

IV. Cumulative Impact on Media Freedom and the Public's Right to Information

A multi-layered enforcement environment

The developments of 2024–2026 indicate a shift from episodic pressure on individual journalists towards a multi-layered regulatory and enforcement environment affecting the entire process of independent newsgathering and publication. Independent outlets face constraints on access to foreign financing and heightened financial scrutiny; broadcasters face stronger regulatory oversight of both financing and editorial content; journalists and media organisations face greater exposure in defamation proceedings; court and parliamentary access has become more conditional; journalists covering demonstrations risk substantial fines or detention under public-order rules; online criticism of officials may result in administrative proceedings; and physical attacks, threats and discrediting campaigns remain part of the operating environment. The cumulative effect of these measures cannot therefore adequately be understood by examining individual legislative amendments or enforcement actions in isolation.

Enforcement of the amended Law on Broadcasting

The enforcement of the amended Law on Broadcasting in 2026 illustrates this cumulative pressure at the institutional level. The Communications Commission has repeatedly sanctioned broadcasters under provisions regulating impartiality, accuracy and the expression of editorial positions in news programming.

BROADCASTER	CIRCUMSTANCES	AMOUNT
Formula	Fined in May and July 2026, then again on 1 October 2026, its fourth sanction under the amended content-regulation framework.	2,500 → 5,000 → 10,000 GEL · May, July, 1 Oct

⁷¹ Following her November 2025 arrest for allegedly blocking a road while on duty, the Tbilisi City Court dismissed the administrative case against Media Checker journalist Ninia Kakabadze, who subsequently filed a lawsuit against the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) demanding that her detention be declared unlawful and seeking compensation for moral damages. Sources: Media Checker, "Ninia Kakabadze: 'The dismissal of my case has nothing to do with justice, this is a political decision'," 21 April 2026, available at <https://www.mediachecker.ge/ka/mediagaremo/article/102438-ninia-kakabadze-chemi-saqmis-shetsyvets-araferi-aqvs-saertho-samarthlianobasthan-es-politikuri-gadatsyvetelebaa> and Media Checker, "Ninia Kakabadze appealed to the court regarding the declaration of her administrative detention as unlawful," 27 April 2026, available at <https://www.mediachecker.ge/ka/mediaethika/102457-ninia-kakabadzem-misi-administraciuli-dakavebis-ukanonod-cnobasthan-dakavshirebith-sasamarthlos-mimartha>

⁷² On April 7, 2026, the bank accounts of TV Formula journalist Liza Tsitsishvili were seized due to an unnotified 5,000 GEL fine for allegedly blocking a road in September 2025, a charge she disputes as she was performing her official professional duties. Despite a subsequent detention and crossing the national border, she was never notified of the penalty until her accounts were blocked. Source: CMIS, "TV Formula Journalist Liza Tsitsishvili's Accounts Frozen," 07 April 2026, available at https://cmis.ge/en/incident/tv-formula-journalist-liza-tsitsishvilis-accounts-frozen/?return_url=https%3A%2F%2Fcmis.ge%2Fen%2Fincident%2F

BROADCASTER	CIRCUMSTANCES	AMOUNT
TV Pirveli	Similarly fined in June and August 2026.	2,500 → 5,000 GEL · June, August

The decisions have concerned, among other matters, terminology and assessments used by journalists and presenters in reporting on political and public affairs.⁷³ The progressive increase in the level of fines is particularly relevant because repeated violations can expose broadcasters to increasingly severe financial sanctions and potentially proceedings concerning their broadcasting authorisation.

Civil defamation and investigative reporting

Civil defamation proceedings add another layer of legal and financial exposure, particularly for investigative reporting concerning public officials and politically connected individuals. Earlier litigation brought by then-head of the State Security Service Grigol Liluashvili resulted in findings of defamation against Formula and Mtavari Arkhi in connection with reporting and statements concerning alleged links between the State Security Service, Liluashvili and so-called call-centre schemes.⁷⁴ In 2022, the judgment was upheld on appeal. Notably, in December 2025, Liluashvili was arrested and,⁷⁵ in September 2026, the court convicted him for exceptionally large-scale bribery in proceedings that also included allegations concerning the protection of call-centre operations.⁷⁶

In another case, in July 2026, the Tbilisi City Court ordered Formula to pay GEL 10,000 in moral damages to Goga Khaindrava and to retract information contained in investigative reports alleging his involvement in a scheme concerning the entry of foreign nationals into Georgia.⁷⁷ The same reporting also became the subject of a launched criminal investigation for alleged false denunciation, during which Formula journalists were questioned by the Prosecutor's Office.⁷⁸

For an investigative newsroom, the relevant risk is therefore no longer confined to a conventional civil defamation action. Publication may generate civil liability and retraction requirements, regulatory scrutiny and escalating financial sanctions, or, in certain circumstances, investigative measures by law-enforcement authorities. The combination increases the legal and financial consequences associated with reporting on matters involving public officials, state institutions and politically connected individuals.

The public's right to information

The consequences extend beyond the institutional rights of media organisations. Freedom of the media is also instrumental to the public's ability to receive information.

⁷³ OC Media, "Georgia's opposition-leaning TV Formula to appeal fourth sanction over alleged impartiality," 2 October 2026, available at <https://oc-media.org/georgias-opposition-leaning-tv-formula-to-appeal-fourth-fine-over-alleged-impartiality/>

⁷⁴ Georgian Democracy Initiative (GDI), "The Defamation Suit of SSSG Chief Grigol Liluashvili Against Formula and Mtavari Arkhi," 14 November 2022, available at <https://gdi.ge/en/news/tbilisi-saapelacio-sasamartlom-cilistsamebastan-d>

⁷⁵ Civil.ge, "Former State Security Service Head Grigol Liluashvili Detained in Anti-Corruption Crackdown," 24 December 2025, available at <https://civil.ge/archives/715625>

⁷⁶ Georgian Public Broadcaster (1TV), "Prosecutor's Office Releases Official Details Following 13-Year Prison Sentence for Former SSSG Head Grigol Liluashvili," 16 September 2026, available at <https://1tv.ge/lang/en/news/prosecutors-office-releases-official-details-following-13-year-prison-sentence-for-former-sssg-head-grigol-liluashvili/>

⁷⁷ Center for Media, Information and Communications (CMIS), "The court upheld Goga Khaindrava's lawsuit and ordered 'Formula' to pay 10,000 GEL," 14 July 2026. <https://cmis.ge/en/incident/the-court-upheld-goga-khaindravas-lawsuit-and-ordered-formula-to-pay/>

⁷⁸ Council of Europe Safety of Journalists Platform, "Criminal Investigation Into Formula TV Broadcast," 15 July 2026. <https://fom.coe.int/en/alerte/detail/107644392>

- Restrictions on journalists' physical access to Parliament and courts reduce first-hand scrutiny of state institutions.
- Legal exposure for investigative reporting can discourage reporting dependent on confidential sources.
- Financial restrictions may reduce the number and capacity of independent outlets.
- Regulatory sanctions affecting the language and framing of news reporting may influence editorial decision-making.
- Sanctions imposed on journalists while covering demonstrations can reduce documentation of police conduct and other events occurring in public space.

ODIHR had already identified barriers to access to public information and journalist safety as significant concerns during the 2024 election period,⁷⁹ while the European Commission subsequently reported continuing complaints about restrictions on access to public information affecting media outlets, journalists and human-rights defenders.⁸⁰

V. Summary

In Georgia, the cumulative effect of financial and regulatory pressure, litigation, restrictions on institutional access, administrative and criminal liability, and physical insecurity create a highly restrictive and polarised media environment.⁸¹

These mechanisms, adopted or amended during the 2024–2026 period, can operate simultaneously, increasing the financial and personal risks associated with independent journalism and creating a chilling effect even in the absence of formal censorship. Journalists and media organisations may increasingly have to weigh the risks of fines, imprisonment or violence when covering protests. At the same time, investigative reporting may expose them to litigation and raise concerns about the protection of confidential sources. Broadcasters face additional regulatory sanctions and restrictions on funding, while restrictions on access to Parliament and the courts hinder journalists' ability to gather and report information directly. These pressures can lead to self-censorship, reduced investigative reporting and diminished scrutiny of public authorities, affecting not only journalists' freedom of expression but also the public's ability to receive independently gathered information.

These developments are reflected in Georgia's position in RSF's 2026 World Press Freedom Index, where it ranked 135th out of 180 countries, compared with 114th in 2025. The report identified violence, intimidation, ineffective investigations and legal restrictions among the obstacles to independent journalism.

⁷⁹ OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), "Georgia, Parliamentary Elections, 26 October 2024: ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report," 20 December 2024, p.p. 2-4 and 22-24, available at https://cdn.osce.org/sites/default/files/f/documents/1/6/584029_0.pdf

⁸⁰ European Commission, "Georgia 2025 Report: Communication on EU Enlargement Policy," 4 November 2025, p.p. 3-4, 7-8, 14-18, 25-26, and 36-37, available at https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/b3089ad4-26be-4c6a-84cc-b9d680fe0a48_en?filename=georgia-report-2025.pdf

⁸¹ Democracy research Institute, "Systematic restrictions on critical media in Georgia," 24 April 2026, available at <https://www.democracyresearch.org/eng/1722/>