

## Evidence of Torture, Ill-Treatment, and Excessive Force Against Peaceful Protesters in Georgia (November 28–December 5, 2024)

The announcement by the Georgian Dream political party on November 28, 2024, to suspend European Union accession negotiations has ignited widespread protests across Georgia. Hundreds of thousands of people have taken to the streets in Tbilisi and other cities throughout the country to oppose the authorities' decision.

From the onset of the protests, authorities have responded with severe repression and excessive force on an unprecedented scale, including brutal beatings both during and after the arrests of demonstrators. At this stage, [assessments](#) by local and international human rights organizations, as well as Georgia's Public Defender, have identified cases of torture, inhumane treatment of detainees, and excessive and disproportionate use of force against peaceful demonstrators. GYLA assessed the [systemic and violent repressions](#) against the civilians as a crime against humanity.

### 1. Use of excessive force and violent measures against protesters:

- The excessive and indiscriminate use of force has affected a large number of protesters and journalists during demonstrations where the overwhelming majority of [demonstrators were peaceful](#). Dozens of [thousands of protesters](#) have been injured as a result of the usage of pepper spray, water cannons and chemical irritants against protesters and journalists. Some victims of peaceful protests have reported that special forces deliberately targeted their faces [with rubber bullets](#).
- During the dispersal of demonstrations, riot police fired large quantities of gas canisters at tens of thousands of gathered protesters, severely hindering their ability to move. As a result, many people suffered significant physical and psychological trauma.
- Police officers have repeatedly resorted to excessive violence against demonstrators showing no signs of resistance, including punching and kicking individuals who were already subdued and lying on the ground. Additionally, hundreds of people were reportedly pursued and assaulted by unidentified individuals dressed in black uniforms and balaclavas, including a person with [disabilities](#).
- In some cases while deploying tear gas grenades, police officers fired them directly at demonstrators instead of launching them into the air along a ballistic trajectory. As a result, one [individual](#) was struck in the face by a grenade and is currently fighting for their life in the emergency unit.
- As clearly stated in the assessment of [OSCE ODIHR](#) and [UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#), Police used excessive force in dispersing demonstrations which overall were peaceful. The usage of rubber bullets, water canons and pepper spray separately and in combination against the peaceful part of the demonstrators was clearly excessive and disproportional.

### 2. Torture and inhumane treatment of detainees:

- [Victims of torture and ill-treatment](#) have detailed accounts of police officers continuing their brutality inside the transport vans carrying arrested individuals. Demonstrators were [beaten](#), with particular focus on their faces, kidneys, and heads. A senior officer reportedly issued instructions to subordinates on where and for how long to administer the beatings.
- According to victims' accounts, the forms of torture and ill-treatment include prolonged and repeated beatings, bleeding, denial of medical assistance, spitting in their faces, threats of rape, deliberately breaking body parts, [kidnapping](#);

- [Detainees](#), including a [deaf and non-verbal](#) individual and [journalists](#), have reported instances of [looting](#) by the police. Specifically, detained and beaten citizens had their personal belongings deprived, including items such as phones, shoes, cross, glasses, wallets, etc.
- As of December 5, around 400 persons [were arrested](#) (of which 350 were detained on administrative and 26 criminal charges. More than 300 persons fell victim to violence and ill-treatment such as torture or inhuman treatment.
- more than 80 demonstrators needed hospital treatment. However, according to lawyers, a significantly larger number of detainees require medical assistance, which is being disregarded by both the courts and the police.
- According [to Public Defender of Georgia](#) between November 28 and December 5, representatives of the Public Defender visited 268 individuals in temporary detention centers and clinics. Of these, 191 reported improper treatment, and 138 had visible injuries.

### **3. Deliberate physical assault by police against journalists:**

Since November 28, media personnel, including journalists, cameramen, and photographers, have been among the primary [targets of police brutality](#). This has resulted in injuries sustained by media professionals and significant obstruction of their work. During the coverage of the protests, dozens of journalists were injured.

Despite wearing press badges and holding microphones or cameras, many were [deliberately and brutally assaulted](#) by riot police with exceptional cruelty.

### **4. Arbitrary sentencing of tortured detainees to imprisonment and fines by the courts:**

Courts have arbitrarily imposed administrative detentions and substantial fines on beaten and tortured detainees without proper justification. In doing so, the authorities have predominantly relied on Georgia's Code of Administrative Offences, a Soviet-era legacy dating back to 1984. This outdated Code, adopted in the last century, fails to meet the standards of a fair trial. It prescribes harsh penalties, including administrative detention or imprisonment for certain violations, and offers significantly fewer procedural safeguards compared to those provided to individuals accused of criminal offenses.

### **5. Illegal searches of political party and civil activist offices, accompanied by arrests and physical violence:**

Since December 4, police have initiated unlawful searches of political party offices and the homes of [civil activists](#). Numerous individuals including [actors](#), [stand-up comedian](#), and members of political parties, including [Aleksandre ElisaSvili](#), [Nika Gvaramia](#), [Saba Skhvitardze](#) [Gela Khasaia](#)) have been detained on both administrative and criminal charges. During their arrests and subsequent interrogations in temporary detention facilities, police subjected them to physical abuse.

### **6. Threats of persecution against civil servants and diplomats by the prime minister and Tbilisi mayor:**

Around 1000 civil [servants](#), including employees of the Ministry of [Foreign Affairs](#) and [Tbilisi City Hall](#), have publicly expressed their commitment to Georgia's European choice and criticized the suspension of EU integration. In response, Prime Minister [Irakli Kobakhidze](#) and Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze [announced](#) a systematic purge of public institutions.

Additionally, David Janjalia, the son of deputy foreign minister Teimuraz Janjalia, who resigned in protest, publicly [disclosed](#) receiving threats, further escalating concerns over intimidation tactics.

#### **7. Impunity of violent police officers:**

Police officers conducting the arrest and subsequent brutal treatment had no signs of identification (either number or name tag). This raised the sense of impunity among officers inflicting ill-treatment to individuals; Despite substantial evidence of torture and inhumane treatment, not a single riot officer or their superiors have been held accountable.

Special Investigation Service, which, alongside the Prosecutor's Office, is responsible for investigating abuses of power, including torture, inhumane treatment, and crimes against journalists committed by law enforcement officers, has failed to ensure proper investigation in these cases.

#### **8. Individuals responsible for torture, inhumane treatment, and gross human rights violations:**

Since November 28, responsibility for acts of torture, inhumane treatment, excessive use of force against peaceful protesters, interference with the freedom of assembly through violence, the threatening with persecution of public servants for expressing their opinions and impunity of perpetrators lies with the following individuals:

- The honorary chair of the Georgian Dream party, Oligarch and de facto leader of the government - Bidzina Ivanishvili;
- Prime Minister, Irakli Kobakhidze;
- Prosecutor General of Georgia - Giorgi Gabitashvili;
- Head of the Special Investigation Service - Koka Katsitadze;
- Tbilisi Mayor - Kakha Kaladze;
- Minister of Internal Affairs, Vakhtang Gomelauri;
- First Deputy Minister of MIA- Shalva Bedoidze
- Deputy Minister of MIA - Ioseb Chelidze
- Deputy Minister of MIA - Aleksandre Darakhvelidze
- Deputy Minister of MIA - Giorgi Butkhuzi
- Director of the Special Tasks Department of the MIA - Zviad Kharebava;
- Deputy Director - Mileri Lagazauri
- Deputy Director - Mirza Kezevadze
- Director of the Central Criminal Police Department of MIA - Teimuraz Kupatadze
- Head of the Patrol Police department of MIA - Vazha Siradze;