

TI-Georgia Warns of Rising State Repression Against Journalists on World Press Freedom Day

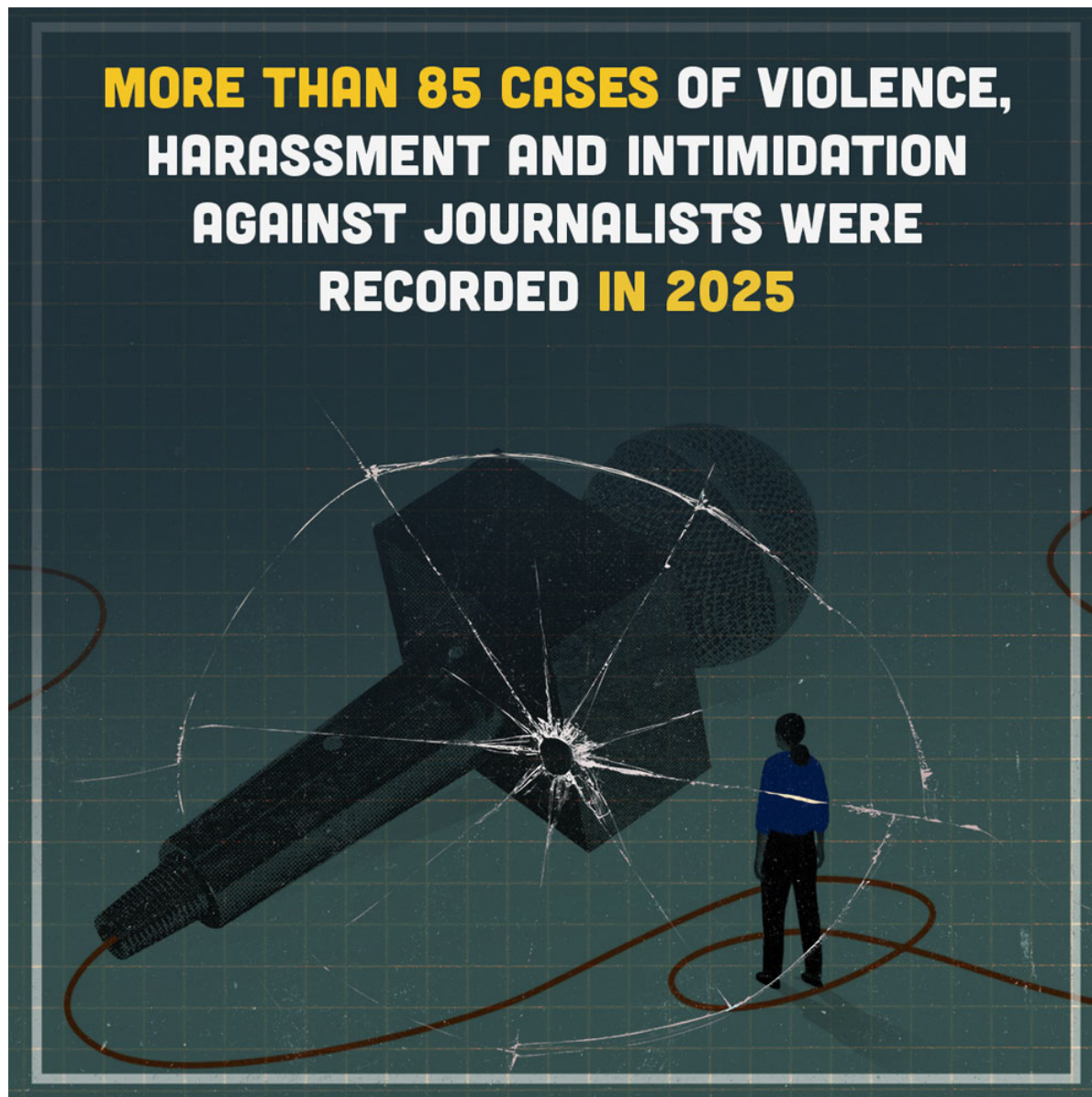
By Liza Mchedlidze

Transparency International (TI) Georgia has warned of an escalating crackdown on press freedom by the ruling Georgian Dream (GD) party, citing increasing use of law enforcement and the judiciary to target journalists. The warning came in a report released on World Press Freedom Day.

According to the report, 33 of the 85 documented violations against journalists in 2025, around 40%, involved unlawful detentions and disproportionate fines. TI-Georgia described the trend as "particularly dangerous" and comparable to media repression tactics in Belarus and Russia.

The report highlighted the arrest of Batumelebi/Netgazeti founder Mzia Amaghlobeli during a January protest. She faces 4–7 years in prison for allegedly slapping Batumi Police Chief Irakli Dgebuadze. TI-Georgia claims the charge is politically motivated, citing her history of exposing government corruption.

Other cases cited include: Guram Murvanidze, Batumelebi cameraman, detained for 8 days while reporting; Lasha Jioshvili (TV Pirveli), detained and fined GEL 5,500 after a protest and a Facebook post; Saba Sordia (Indigo), held for 48 hours despite



identifying as press and later fined GEL 2,500.

TI-Georgia also criticized courts for labeling journalists as offenders despite evidence of police violence. It cited Mtavari Arkhi cameraman Sergi Baramidze, who was assaulted at a protest, and Publika's Aleksandre Keshelashvili, who required surgery after being beaten by riot police but was still found guilty of disobeying orders.

The watchdog reported a growing use of administrative fines for protest coverage, including a February ruling against three regional journalists fined GEL 5,000 each for protesting near a judge's home.

Additionally, over 20 journalists have been fined in 2025 for allegedly "blocking roads" while reporting. TI-Georgia called this a "chilling tactic" that encourages self-censorship, despite most cases being dropped after proof of journalistic status is shown.

"The failure to investigate crimes against journalists, combined with impunity for perpetrators, exposes the government's intent to eliminate media freedom," the report stated. TI-Georgia praised independent outlets for continuing to report despite mounting pressure and limited resources.

Georgia Sees 342 Violations Against Journalists in One Year, Watchdog Reports

By Liza Mchedlidze

A total of 342 violations against media representatives have been documented in Georgia over the past year, according to a new report released by the Center for Media, Information and Social Research. The report raises concerns about the growing pressure on journalists, especially during politically sensitive events.

The violations, recorded between May 2024 and May 2025, include physical assaults, illegal detentions, restrictions on filming, denial of access to public institutions, verbal abuse, fines, and administrative harassment. The organization monitors working conditions for journalists across the country.

According to the report, 112 cases involved physical violence, and 13 journalists were unlawfully detained. In 77 cases, media workers were blocked from filming, and 34 journalists were fined for allegedly "blocking roads" while covering protests.

Two key time periods accounted for most of the incidents: On October 26, 2024, the day of Georgia's parliamentary elections, 67 violations were reported, including 10 assaults and 46 filming bans. Since the start of the pro-European protests on November 28, 169 incidents were recorded, including 85 cases of violence, 22 filming bans, and 11 detentions.

The report reads that one journalist, Mzia Amaghlobeli, remains in prison following her arrest during the January protests. Most of the fines for road-blocking are still being contested in court. Only one journalist has paid the fine to date.

According to the report, 193 journalists have faced some form of repression since the beginning of the protests, ranging from police intimidation and fines to direct violence and obstruction of their work.

The Center warned that the data reflects a worsening environment for independent media in Georgia, with authorities increasingly restricting journalistic activity through both legal and physical means.



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The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

German Embassy in Georgia Reaffirms Support for Media Freedom on World Press Freedom Day



The German Embassy in Georgia marked World Press Freedom Day with a public message of support for independent media, highlighting the essential role of press freedom in democratic societies. In a statement shared on social me-

dia, the Embassy thanked journalists for their work and emphasized that press freedom is a cornerstone of democracy. "Democracy is unthinkable without free media," the statement reads. "The media provides the public with news, draws attention to problems, and contrib-

utes to the formation of opinion." The Embassy also warned that in places where press freedom is absent, human rights violations are common. It underscored the need for a free, diverse, and independent media environment to

ensure accountability and transparency. "On World Press Freedom Day, we thank all media representatives for their work," reads the statement.

Judge Gvritishvili Slams Sanctions as Politically Motivated and Unjustified



Judge Dimitri Gvritishvili, a member of Georgia's High Council of Justice, has criticized recent sanctions imposed on Georgian judges, calling them politically motivated and lacking in legal basis. "Sanctions are groundless. This is a political decision driven by a certain

agenda," Gvritishvili said. He argued that certain actors within the European Union, the U.S., and Brussels oppose Georgia's current foreign policy direction and are using sanctions to exert pressure. He emphasized that targeting judges and their families is "absolutely unjustified and unfair," stating that the accusations of corruption made against sanc-

tioned individuals are not supported by evidence. "Accusing someone of corruption without evidence is the gravest accusation," Gvritishvili added, reiterating his position that the sanctions do not meet European or American legal standards.

Entering European markets: 50 Georgian companies participate in capacity-building programme



More than 50 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) came together in Tbilisi on 30 April to celebrate their graduation from the Trade Fair Assistance for SMEs in Georgia programme.

ducted as part of the 'Inclusive Access to Markets' programme, funded by the European Union in partnership with the Estonian International Development Centre (ESTDEV) and UNDP Georgia. This four-year, Euro5.2 million project is designed to empower small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Georgia, fostering their capabilities to enhance value chains and secure access to EU and other European markets. The initiative will be active until November 2027. (euneighbourseast.eu)

EBRD and Unibank relaunch partnership to expand MSME finance in Azerbaijan

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is providing a loan of up to US\$ 10 million (Euro8.8 million) to Unibank in Azerbaijan in local currency. The proceeds will be lent on to local micro,

small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). The transaction seeks to boost the competitiveness of Azerbaijani businesses by partnering with a robust financial intermediary.

opment of local businesses, while also strengthening the lending capacity of the country's financial sector." The EBRD will also help Unibank to develop strategies, products and monitoring pro-



"We're delighted to relaunch our partnership with Unibank, which is a systemically important bank in Azerbaijan. Agreements like these are great for the economy," Nataly Mouravidze, the EBRD's Head of Azerbaijan, said. "With this financial package, we're supporting the devel-

cesses aimed at improving the efficiency of MSME lending. These measures will include the development of an environmental and social management system. (euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Monday, May 5
Day Mostly Cloudy
High: 20°C
Night T-storm
Low: 12°C
Tuesday, May 6
Day Showers
High: 18°C
Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 11°C

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