

To the international community of human rights defenders and especially the organizations of persons with disabilities,

We, the Georgian human rights organizations, individual activists, and organizations of persons with disabilities, have to draw your attention to the rapid deterioration of the human rights situation in our country.

It has been exactly a year since the [Georgian Parliament reintroduced the bill on the Transparency of Foreign Influence](#), deeming all civil society organizations and media receiving over a fifth of their income as foreign agents. This highly stigmatizing bill was passed into law [without any consultation or consideration of persons with disabilities, despite mass protests in which persons with disabilities participated](#). The passage of this law was followed by the parliamentary elections on October 26, 2024, which, according to many international observation missions, including the OSCE/ODIHR, were marred by irregularities, including violations of ballot secrecy. This had a disproportionate effect on blind persons, who were often unable to detect that their vote was visible to outsiders. This fact has also been substantiated by the [Public Defender of Georgia](#). Additionally, there have been reports of intimidation of persons with disabilities who receive social assistance or rely on state services by municipal authorities. For instance, one family of persons with disabilities had their [ID cards confiscated](#), preventing them from voting. There has been no investigation into these cases.

The Georgian government has now replaced the Transparency of Foreign Influence law with a new, even harsher law, the Foreign Agents Registration Act ([FARA](#)). This law will increase criminal liability for civil society organizations that fail to register as foreign agents, with severe penalties—including up to five years of imprisonment. This law is part of a broader effort to stifle civil society, independent media, and political dissent in Georgia. However, as with the previous law, there has been no consultation with the community, including organizations of persons with disabilities, about the bill's content and implications.

On November 28, 2024, Georgia's reappointed Prime Minister, Irakli Kobakhidze, declared in an [official statement](#) that his government would not enter into EU membership negotiations until 2028. This statement was perceived by many as a violation of the Constitution of Georgia, which obligates the state to take all necessary steps to ensure Georgia's integration into the European Union. It sparked mass protests that continue to this day. Persons with disabilities participating in these protests are disproportionately affected by government repression, including:

1.

During the protests following Kobakhidze's announcement, numerous demonstrators were subjected to police violence. Among them was [Gia Jvarsheishvili, an activist working on the rights of blind and visually impaired persons](#). He was severely beaten, suffered injuries, and was nonetheless charged by the judiciary, which ruled that he had broken the law and imposed a fine.

2.

At least two deaf persons at the main protest venue were beaten by law enforcement representatives. Activist Tatia Datashvili also received a [verbal threat](#) via her social network. None of these incidents have been investigated.

3.

[Hard of hearing persons have also faced severe repression during protests:](#)

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Levan Macharadze and Nodar Kiknadze were charged with administrative offenses for allegedly blocking the road during a protest. However, no police warning was issued in an accessible format, and the presented video evidence lacked clear timestamps. In one case, a judge issued only a verbal warning, justifying the leniency based on the defendant's hearing impairment in a discriminatory manner. In Kiknadze's case, he was fined 5,000 GEL (approximately 2,000 USD), despite receiving only 190 GEL per month in disability financial assistance and having no other means of subsistence due to unemployment.

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Tornike Mskhiladze, a man with significant hearing loss and an oncological patient suffering from third-stage lymphoma, was subjected to illegal police actions after returning home from a protest defending disability rights. Mskhiladze was stopped by the police without cause, his vehicle was searched without a warrant, and he was forcibly detained after attempting to document the encounter. This case highlights the increasing repression of disabled activists.

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Dato Abuladze, a young man with hearing loss, was assaulted by police during the same protests. After the beating, Abuladze's personal belongings, including his phone—an essential tool for communication—were stolen by the very officers who were supposed to protect him.

This theft is part of a disturbing pattern of police misconduct during protests in Georgia. None of these incidents have been investigated.

4.

Parents of persons with disabilities are also victims of repression. For instance, Nino Kalandia, a parent of a person with a disability, has been fined more than ten times, which is more than GEL 50,000. In Georgia, many parents of persons with disabilities are unable to work due to their caregiving responsibilities, making such fines particularly devastating.

5.

At least two civil servants—the disability inclusion adviser of Tbilisi Mayor's Office, Giga Sopromadze, and reception staff member Nana Bregvadze—were [dismissed from their jobs](#) after signing a public statement by civil servants criticizing the Prime Minister's decision and supporting Georgia's European aspirations. Sopromadze was fired outright, while Bregvadze was demoted, prompting her to resign. The unlawful dismissal of employees with disabilities inflicts additional hardship, as the unemployment rate for persons with disabilities is far higher than the national average.

6.

In February 2025, a blind activist, Esma Gumberidze, attending a demonstration in Dmanisi, a city outside of Georgia's capital, was [denied entry](#) into a local city hall office during working hours when she attempted to request public information. According to explanations given to the Ombudsman's office by local authorities, she was not allowed to enter because she was dressed as a protester, wearing EU and Georgian flags.

7.

The participation of persons with disabilities in protests is increasingly suppressed, with civil society organizations being removed from the decision-making process. Consultative mechanisms are no longer functioning, even at the local government level. Since October 2024, the Tbilisi City Hall has also stopped responding to accessibility concerns raised by disabled activists on social media. Previously, such issues were addressed and resolved, but now, despite public calls for action—such as those by activist Ana Sikhashvili regarding the lack of tactile paving at metro stations and inaccessible pedestrian crosswalks—no action has been taken. This shift is a direct consequence of these activists' involvement in protests, as officials now systematically dismiss their opinions on all issues, regardless of their legitimacy.

8.

As some managers of disability service organizations have participated in protests and spoken out in the media, Tbilisi municipal authorities announced that disability service providers would no longer have access to state-owned buildings and spaces previously provided free of charge. Instead, they will now have to pay commercial rent rates.

9.

All of the above is accompanied by intimidation and discrediting of civil society organizations, including Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs). Many reports indicate that local authorities and beneficiaries, especially in the regions, are refraining from cooperating with OPDs due to government pressure.

10.

On February 5, 2025, Parliamentary Majority Leader Mamuka Mdinardze publicly announced plans to amend laws so that civil society participation in state decision-making would no longer be mandatory. This is a direct violation of Articles 4.3 and 33 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

We urge the international community to:

1.

Closely monitor the situation of persons with disabilities in Georgia.

2.

Express concern about the rapid deterioration of human rights protections in the country.

3.

Provide, where appropriate, assistance to Georgian OPDs in their efforts to inform the international public, including through mass media, and to continue their work in Georgia.

4.

Urge international intergovernmental organizations, including the United Nations and its special procedures, the European Union, the Council of Europe, and Georgia's strategic partner states, to investigate and respond to the current situation. Furthermore, we demand that OPDs be involved in consultation formats regarding mainstream issues such as gender equality and

women's rights, rule of law reform, anti-corruption efforts, environmental protection, and disaster risk reduction, beyond the traditional scope of "disability inclusion."

Signatures

Organizations

Platform for New Opportunities

Aures Foundation

Union of the Deaf of Georgia

Foundation Global Initiative on Psychiatry-Tbilisi

Social Justice Center

Mental Health Center Gamma

Society Biliki

Association Dea

Nabiji Kharagauli

Art Arena

"Women and Persons with disabilities' Support Center Speak up"

Persons with disabilities' Integration and Development Association "Hangi"

Batumi Independent Living Center

Sentire

"Movement "Inclusive Society - Georgia""

Families against discrimination

Georgian Network of (Ex-)Users and Survivors of Psychiatry (GNUSP)

Changes for Equal Rights

Partnership for Human Rights (PHR)

Zugdidi Independent Living Center

Mziani

ShShm QalTa Aliansi

Georgian Down Syndrome Association

Women For Changes

Individual activists

Esma Gumberidze

Ana Sikhashvili

Tatia Datashvili

Nodari Kiknadze

Nino Ninoshvili

Gia Jvarsheishvili

Nata Bukia

ZaZa Kakushadze

Koba Nadiradze

Shorena Shavlakadze

Saba Vatcharadze

Gvantsa Kalandadze

Nino Katamadze

Natia gogolashvili

Guram Pirtskhalaishvili

Ana Gogvadze

Giga Sopromadze

Ketevan Tsagareishvili

Ivditi Kvitia