



**Alternative Report on the implementation
of the Council of Europe Convention
*on preventing and combating violence against women and
domestic violence***

in Georgia

for submission to the GREVIO Committee

2025

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INTRODUCTION

Georgia's compliance with the **Istanbul Convention** is currently under severe strain due to systemic legal regression, political interference, and the shrinking of civic space. In 2024-2025, the State **removed the term “gender”** from all legislation¹ and **abolished legal gender quotas**², undermining the foundational recognition of women's rights and signaling a sharp retreat from international standards on equality. These changes erode the State's capacity to prevent and respond effectively to violence against women and domestic violence, while weakening mechanisms designed to ensure accountability for perpetrators.

Concurrently, the State has imposed a series of repressive measures targeting civil society, including women's rights organisations and human rights defenders. Legislative and administrative restrictions on foreign and domestic funding, stigmatising and criminal investigations against prominent NGOs have created a climate of fear and operational paralysis. These developments severely limit the ability of specialised organisations to provide legal aid, psychosocial support, and other essential services to survivors of violence, directly undermining the coordinated, multi-sectoral response envisioned under the Istanbul Convention.

The impact of these developments is compounded by systemic gaps in protection and risk management. Law enforcement practices frequently fail to provide effective protection, with risk assessment tools and restraining measures inconsistently applied, and gender-based misconduct by police - including harassment, intimidation, and ill-treatment of women protesters - remaining largely unaddressed. Vulnerable groups, including women and children with disabilities, face particular barriers to access support services, justice, and protection.

This report provides a thematic assessment of these intersecting challenges, highlighting the **deterioration of the legal and policy framework for gender equality, the repression of civil society actors, and the practical barriers faced by survivors** in accessing protection and justice. The analysis underscores that, in the current context, structural, institutional, and political obstacles significantly hinder Georgia's ability to meet its obligations under the Istanbul Convention and protect women and girls from violence.

This report is submitted by: Equality Now, Sapari, Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA), Partnership for Human Rights (PHR), Rights Georgia, Women's Initiatives Supporting Group (WISG) and Equality Movement

¹ **Social Justice Center**, The Removal of the Concepts and Principles of Gender and Gender Equality from Legislation Will Worsen the Situation of Women, 2025. Available: <https://socialjustice.org.ge/en/products/kanonmdeblobidan-genderisa-da-genderuli-tanastsorobis-terminebisa-da-printsipebis-gakroba-kalta-mdgomareobas-gaauaresebs>

² **OSCE/ODIHR** Publishes Opinion on Abolition of Gender Quotas, Available: <https://www.ombudsman.ge/eng/akhali-ambebi/eutoodirma-genderuli-kvotebis-gaukmebastian-dakavshirebit-daskvna-gamoakveqna>; See also **EUROPEAN COMMISSION** FOR DEMOCRACY THROUGH LAW (VENICE COMMISSION) OPINION ON AMENDMENTS TO THE ELECTION CODE WHICH ABOLISH GENDER QUOTAS, Approved by the Council for Democratic Elections at its 80th meeting (Venice, 20 June 2024) and adopted by the Venice Commission at its 139th Plenary Session (Venice, 21-22 June 2024), Available: [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2024\)023-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2024)023-e)

INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHORS OF THIS REPORT

Equality Now is an international human rights NGO with ECOSOC status with the mission to achieve legal and systemic change that addresses violence and discrimination against all women and girls around the world. Founded in 1992, Equality Now is a global organisation with partners and supporters in every region. Ending sexual violence, ending sexual exploitation, ending harmful practices and achieving legal equality are the main areas of Equality Now's work.³

Sapari is a women's rights organisation in Georgia established in 2001. The organisation covers all aspects of women's rights, gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment. The mission of 'Sapari' is to create and sustain an equal, non-discriminatory and non-violent environment. To that end, the organisation engages, inter alia, in strategic litigation, advocacy, research, capacity building of professionals and awareness raising campaigns, provides legal aid and psychosocial services for the survivors of gender-based violence.

Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA) is a non-governmental organisation which aims to protect human rights and promote good governance in Georgia through strategic litigation, advocacy and awareness-raising on human rights. Over the last 30 years, GYLA has been implementing a number of projects dedicated specifically to the recognition and protection of domestic violence victims' rights, combating domestic and gender-based violence.

Partnership for Human Rights (PHR) is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organisation which aims to create an environment where all humans have equal rights and opportunities to pursue happiness. PHR unites motivated human rights defenders, researchers and other professionals who are dedicated to use their knowledge, beliefs, and solidarity to reach equality and justice for children, the elderly, individuals with disabilities, women and other underprivileged groups of Georgia.

Rights Georgia (formerly "Article 42 of the Constitution") is a non-governmental, non-profit human rights organisation dedicated to protecting and promoting fundamental freedoms. The organisation provides strategic litigation at national and international levels, legal aid to vulnerable groups, and advocacy to harmonise Georgian legislation with international human rights standards. Its work includes enhancing public awareness and professional legal education. Rights Georgia also focuses on the rights of refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs, prisoners, women, and children, contributing to the advancement of rule of law, justice, and human rights protection nationwide.

Women's Initiatives Supporting Group (WISG) is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation defending the human rights of lesbian, bisexual women, trans and intersex persons in Georgia.

Equality Movement is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation focused on promoting equality and protecting the rights of women and the LGBTQ community in Georgia. It provides social and legal services, supports social integration, and engages in policy advocacy and public awareness initiatives to address sexism, homophobia, and discrimination.

³ worked solely on monitoring of Article 25 of the Convention [pages 21-24]

Chapter I. Purposes, definitions, equality and non-discrimination, general obligations

Article 4 - Fundamental rights, equality and non-discrimination

The situation of lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LBTI) women in Georgia warrants particularly close scrutiny in the context of Article 4, paragraph 3, of the Istanbul Convention. The Convention expressly requires States Parties to secure implementation of its provisions without discrimination on grounds including sexual orientation and gender identity.⁴ LBTI women experience what the Council of Europe thematic paper describes as 'intersectional discrimination'—the compounding effect of gender-based discrimination with discrimination arising from sexual orientation or gender identity, whereby multiple inequalities simultaneously affect the individual's capacity to access protection from violence and support services.

Whilst the Law of Georgia on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination formally prohibits discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation,⁵ and the Public Defender has adjudicated cases establishing discrimination on intersecting grounds,⁶ the practical situation reveals systematic barriers to protection across all four Convention pillars. Since 2022, anti-gender approach has increasingly surfaced in political discourse, translating within governmental rhetoric and becoming embedded in strategies of national importance, thus entrenching the normalization and institutionalization of political homophobia and transphobia within state governance frameworks⁷. In the State Concept of Gender Equality of Georgia, adopted by the Parliament in December 2022, the definition of “gender equality” was narrowed to binary distinctions between “women” and “men”, marking the starting point of a cascade of anti-gender legislative changes that have led to a severe deterioration of rights of LBTI individuals⁸. Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex persons were completely eroded from the National Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights of Georgia for 2022-2030 and the respective Action Plan for 2024-2026. The barriers to protection Convention provisions have been dramatically exacerbated by the adoption of the Law on the Protection of Family Values and Minors in September 2024 and subsequent amendments made in the Law on Gender Equality (reformulated as Law on Equality between Women and Men) in April 2025 removing 'gender identity' as a protected ground under anti-discrimination legislation.⁹

This analysis proceeds by examining, first, the prevalence of violence affecting LBTI women and barriers to reporting; second, the distinct situations of lesbian and bisexual women,

⁴ Council of Europe, Ensuring the Non-discriminatory Implementation of Measures against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence: Article 4, paragraph 3, of the Istanbul Convention, A collection of papers on the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, Strasbourg, 2021, 12–13.

⁵ Law of Georgia on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, Article 1 and Article 2, paragraph 4. Available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2339687?publication=3> [10.12.2025].

⁶ Women's Initiatives Supporting Group, Third Shadow Report on Monitoring of Implementation of CM/Rec(2010)5 in Georgia, Tbilisi, 2024, 89.

⁷ Report on LGBTQ+ Rights Violations in Georgia, Equality Movement, 2024. Available at: https://equality.ge/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/ENG-lgbtang-5-2-9_merged.pdf [21.12.2025]

⁸ State Concept of Gender Equality of Georgia. Available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5664358?publication=0> [21.12.2025].

⁹ UPR Submission on Human Rights of LGBTI People in Georgia, 51st Session, July 2025, § 9.

transgender women, and intersex women; third, systematic analysis across all four Convention pillars; and fourth, specific recommendations employing GREVIO's graduated terminology.

Prevalence of Violence and Barriers to Reporting

Research conducted by the Women's Initiatives Supporting Group (WISG) provides the most comprehensive quantitative data on violence affecting LBTI individuals in Georgia. According to a 2021 survey, nearly one-third (N=63, 31.3%) of LBTI individuals with an intimate partner in the preceding two years reported experiencing intimate partner violence at least once.¹⁰ The same study found that seven out of ten respondents (73.5%, N=155) had been victims of a crime motivated by bias at least once in the two-year period surveyed. Of these, 30.3% (N=147) had experienced physical and sexual violence or harassment, whilst 68.7% (N=145) had been subjected to psychological violence.¹¹

These prevalence figures significantly exceed official statistics, reflecting substantial under-reporting. Research by the Social Justice Center found that whilst 30.4% of respondents reported experiencing violence between 2018 and 2020, 69.6% refrained from reporting incidents to law enforcement due to lack of confidence in state institutions.¹² A further survey indicated that 66% of LBTI respondents do not trust the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 74% do not trust the Prosecutor's Office, and 68% do not trust the courts.¹³ This pervasive distrust—rooted in documented experiences of secondary victimisation, fear of forcible disclosure of sexual orientation or gender identity, and inadequate institutional responses—constitutes a significant barrier to accessing criminal justice protections contemplated by Chapter VI of the Convention.

Disaggregated Analysis: Distinct Situations Within the LBTI Category

(i) Lesbian and Bisexual Women

The ILGA-Europe Annual Review 2025 documented deteriorating conditions for LB women in Georgia, noting increased harassment in public spaces, workplace discrimination forcing concealment of identity, and severance of family ties.¹⁴ The invisibility of lesbian and bisexual women in state policy frameworks - reflected in the absence of targeted prevention measures, awareness-raising campaigns, or specialist support services - perpetuates their vulnerability to violence and limits effective access to protection.

(ii) Transgender Women

¹⁰ Women's Initiatives Supporting Group, Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on LGBT(Q)I Community in Georgia, Tbilisi, 2022, 10. Available at: https://wisg.org/Data/docs/publications/research-study/WISG_Covid-impact-on-LGBTQI-community-EN.pdf [10.12.2025].

¹¹ Ibid, 100.

¹² Social Justice Center, Social Exclusion of LGBTQ Group in Georgia, Tbilisi, 2020, 76. Available at: <https://socialjustice.org.ge/en/products/lgbtk-jgufis-sotsialuri-ekskluziis-kvleva-sakartveloshi> [10.12.2025].

¹³ Ibid, 55.

¹⁴ ILGA-Europe, Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex People in Europe and Central Asia 2025, Brussels, 2025, Georgia chapter.

Transgender women face compounded barriers arising from the prohibition of legal gender recognition¹⁵ and criminalisation of gender-affirming healthcare.¹⁶ The violence affecting transgender women has intensified dramatically. One day after Parliament adopted the anti-LGBTI law in September 2024, Kesaria Abramidze, a prominent transgender woman, was found brutally murdered. One month later, transgender activist Nata Talikishvili was physically attacked with a brick, sustaining a concussion. These incidents occurred in a context of state-promoted anti-transgender rhetoric and documented impunity for violence against the community.¹⁷

(iii) Intersex Women

Intersex women remain largely invisible within Georgian legal and policy frameworks addressing violence against women. The specific forms of violence affecting intersex persons - including non-consensual medical interventions, forced assignment to binary sex categories, and family-based coercion - are not addressed in national action plans, professional training curricula, or awareness-raising campaigns. The absence of disaggregated data on violence affecting intersex persons precludes evidence-based policy development and represents a failure to implement Article 11 obligations on data collection.

Legal gender recognition. In *A.D. and Others v. Georgia*, the European Court found that Georgia's failure to provide efficient, transparent, and accessible procedures for legal gender recognition violated Article 8.¹⁸ Rather than implementing this judgment, the Law on the Protection of Family Values and Minors completely prohibits legal gender recognition, mandating that biological sex be determined 'on the basis of hereditary genetic characteristics' and criminalising gender-affirming healthcare with penalties of up to four years' imprisonment.¹⁹ The Committee of Ministers' Interim Resolution of March 2025 noted that this legislation 'raises serious questions as to compliance' with judgment execution obligations.²⁰

Systemic investigation failures. The European Court has found systemic failures in Georgia's investigation of SOGI-based violence across multiple judgments: *Identoba and Others v. Georgia* (failure to protect demonstrators from homophobic violence and conduct effective investigations),²¹ *Women's Initiatives Supporting Group and Others v. Georgia* (similar failures regarding the 17 May 2013 events);²² and *Aghdgomelashvili and Japaridze v. Georgia* (discriminatory police misconduct including degrading treatment motivated by homophobic and transphobic hatred).²³

¹⁵ Law of Georgia on the Protection of Family Values and Minors, Article 7.

¹⁶ Law of Georgia on the Protection of Family Values and Minors, Article 6 and Criminal Code of Georgia Article 176¹.

¹⁷ ILGA-Europe, Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex People in Europe and Central Asia 2025, Brussels, 2025, Georgia chapter.

¹⁸ *A.D. and Others v. Georgia*, no. 57864/17, 1 December 2022, §§ 56–64.

¹⁹ Law of Georgia on the Protection of Family Values and Minors (n 15), Articles 2(c), 6, and 7.

²⁰ Committee of Ministers, Interim Resolution CM/ResDH(2025)31, Execution of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, *A.D. and Others v. Georgia*, 6 March 2025.

²¹ *Identoba and Others v. Georgia*, no. 73235/12, 12 May 2015, §§ 94–100.

²² *Women's Initiatives Supporting Group and Others v. Georgia*, nos. 73204/13 and 74959/13, 16 December 2021, §§ 61–72.

²³ *Aghdgomelashvili and Japaridze v. Georgia*, no. 7224/11, 8 October 2020, §§ 35–51.

The Committee of Ministers' Interim Resolution CM/ResDH(2025)31 identified 'the structural problem of the State's failure to ensure protection from homophobic or religiously-motivated attacks by private individuals during marches or gatherings and in some instances official acquiescence and connivance in these acts, as well as police abuse committed with homophobic/transphobic or religious bias, and the absence of effective investigations'.²⁴ Despite over a decade of supervision, investigations remain incomplete, with the Government's July 2025 action report indicating unwillingness to implement the Committee's recommendations.²⁵

Prosecution data. Official statistics record minimal prosecutions for intersectional discrimination: in 2023, prosecution was launched against only 5 individuals on grounds combining gender with sexual orientation, gender identity, or other characteristics (out of 1,169 prosecutions for gender-based intolerance); in 2024, only 7 such prosecutions were initiated.²⁶ These figures represent a fraction of documented incidents and suggest significant under-identification of bias motivation.

The foregoing analysis demonstrates systematic failures across all four Convention pillars. LGBTI women in Georgia face: exclusion from domestic violence protection mechanisms due to heteronormative statutory definitions; complete prohibition of legal gender recognition rendering transgender women invisible to state protection systems; the collapse of civil society support networks under legislative pressure; absence of SOGI-specific content in awareness-raising campaigns and professional training; pervasive distrust of law enforcement arising from documented discrimination and secondary victimisation; and continuing impunity for bias-motivated violence despite binding European Court judgments. The Public Defender has consistently concluded that 'members of the LGBTI community still face violence, discrimination, and harassment' caused by 'homophobic attitudes, hate crimes and other discriminatory attitudes in society'.²⁷ The adoption of the Law on the Protection of Family Values and Minors and subsequent legislative amendments have institutionalised discrimination in direct contravention of Article 4, paragraph 3, of the Istanbul Convention.

Recommendations

- Repeal the Law on the Protection of Family Values and Minors in its entirety, in accordance with the Committee of Ministers' Interim Resolution CM/ResDH(2025)31, and to reverse the April 2025 amendments removing gender identity from protected grounds under anti-discrimination legislation.
- Amend the Law on the Prevention of Violence Against Women and/or Domestic Violence to ensure that same-sex partners are included within the definition of family members eligible for protection, thereby securing access to emergency barring orders, restraining orders, and shelter services;

²⁴ Committee of Ministers, Interim Resolution CM/ResDH(2025)31, Execution of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, Identoba and Others group against Georgia, 6 March 2025.

²⁵ Joint Rule 9 Submission to the Committee of Ministers, EHRAC, WISG, GYLA, ILGA-Europe, and TGEU, Identoba group of cases, 7 November 2025, §§ 4–6.

²⁶ Government of Georgia, GREVIO Report (n 20), 147–148.

²⁷ Public Defender of Georgia, Report on the Situation of Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia 2023, Tbilisi, 2024, 145.

- Establish quick, transparent, and accessible procedures for legal gender recognition in conformity with the European Court's judgment in *A.D. and Others v. Georgia* and CM/Rec(2010)5;
- Ensure that investigations into violence against LGBTI women systematically consider bias motivation and that such cases are prosecuted under appropriate aggravating circumstances provisions.
- Include SOGI-specific issues in the National Human Rights Strategy and Action Plan, along with clearly defined challenges, corresponding objectives, activities, timeframes, and budget allocations.
- Establish shelter services specifically adapted to the needs of LGBTI individuals, including transgender women, in line with UN Independent Expert recommendations.
- Incorporate SOGI-specific content into professional training programmes for law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, healthcare professionals, and social workers.
- Ensure that awareness-raising campaigns systematically address violence against LGBTI women and include strategies to reach this population.
- Improve data collection systems to enable disaggregation by sexual orientation and gender identity across all relevant indicators.

Chapter II. Integrated policies and data collection

Article 7 - Comprehensive and co-ordinated policies

National action plans. The National Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights (2022–2030) references intersectionality and includes general provisions on women with disabilities, ethnic minority women, and conflict-affected women.²⁸ However, LGBTI women are not specifically addressed, and no targeted measures exist to address their heightened vulnerability. Civil society monitoring confirms that 'the state's social policy failed to recognize homophobia and transphobia as systemic and structural problem'.²⁹

Civil society participation. The combined effect of the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence and the anti-LGBTI legislative framework has severely constrained the capacity of civil society organisations serving LGBTI women to participate in policy design, implementation, and monitoring. Several LGBTI organisations have been forced to relocate or cease operations, destroying the civil society infrastructure that previously provided essential services and advocacy.³⁰ This contravenes Article 9 requirements for recognition, encouragement, and support of NGO work.

Recommendations

- **Abolish restrictive legislation**, including the 2024 Law “On Transparency of Foreign Influence”, the 2025 Foreign Agents Registration Act, and amendments to the Law on Grants

²⁸ Government of Georgia, GREVIO Report (n 20), 147.

²⁹ Women's Initiatives Supporting Group, Third Shadow Report (n 3), 77.

³⁰ ILGA-Europe Annual Review (n 10), Georgia chapter.

- **Restore and expand support to core service providers**, including key NGOs delivering legal aid, psychosocial support, rehabilitation, and advocacy for survivors of domestic and gender-based violence, to prevent disruption of essential services.
- **Engage civil society in policy and funding decisions**, creating structured consultations with NGOs and service providers to ensure that state priorities align with real needs of survivors of violence and that reforms are evidence-based.
- **Protect women human rights defenders** from harassment, criminalisation, and undue administrative or financial pressure, recognizing their central role in implementing the Istanbul Convention and safeguarding victims' rights.
- **Restore recognition of gender in legal frameworks** to ensure that policy-making, planning, and resource allocation effectively address gender-based violence and promote equality.

Article 8 – Financial resources

GREVIO's baseline report urged Georgia to ensure adequate, sustainable and transparent funding for all policies and services required under the Istanbul Convention, including sufficient human and financial resources for shelters, crisis centres, social services, and specialist NGOs. It also stressed the need to allocate stable funding to women's rights organisations whose work is indispensable to a coordinated national response.

In its most recent submission to GREVIO, the State presents a picture of strengthened financial commitment, referring primarily to the existence of two budgeted national action plans (the 2022-2024 NAP on Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and the NAP for the implementation of UN Resolution on Women, Peace and Security NAP) and to the creation of a reorganised Human Rights Department with an analytical division. The Government also highlights the 2022-2023 amendments that removed the "victim status" requirement for accessing shelters and crisis centres and introduced a compensation scheme. Additionally, it provides a detailed description of various Ministry of Justice grant programmes, largely focused on penitentiary rehabilitation, and points to the establishment of a new State Grant Management Agency in 2025, tasked with issuing state funds to NGOs through competitive public calls.

As 2026 approaches, the State has not presented any follow-up action plans, updated financial strategies, or new funding initiatives that would demonstrate continuity or expansion of its commitments. Monitoring of the 2022-2024 Action Plan on Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence reveals that the three-year plan lacked the concrete measures needed to tackle deep-rooted problems, leaving existing challenges unaddressed and, in some cases, further exacerbated.³¹ Moreover, many of the plan's activity indicators were overly general, preventing a meaningful assessment of the State's fulfillment of its obligations and

³¹ Report of the Public Defender of Georgia, 2024, p. 192, available at <https://www.ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2025091211433999093.pdf>

creating additional obstacles to the development of a new, effective action plan. These deficiencies are further compounded by the removal of the term “gender” from the entire Georgian legal framework in April 2025, signaling a clear regression in the recognition of women’s rights and undermining the broader framework for addressing gender-based violence.³²

Similarly, while the State highlights the reorganisation of the Human Rights Secretariat into a Human Rights Department and the establishment of a Research and Analysis Division, these changes remain primarily structural. No evidence has been presented that the reorganisation has led to improved coordination, analytical capacity, or more effective implementation of human rights policies. In the absence of demonstrable outcomes, the institutional transformation cannot be considered proof of enhanced institutional commitment.

While the removal of the “victim status” requirement for accessing shelters and crisis centres and the introduction of a compensation scheme represent positive legislative steps, practical challenges remain. Despite the approval of the compensation procedure, the absence of special regulations for cases where the perpetrator is deceased or incapacitated prevents some victims from actually receiving compensation from the state.³³ Notably, the Public Defender has repeatedly recommended adjustments to address these gaps, yet no specific changes have been made.

In 2024, additional shelters and crisis centres were established for victims of domestic and gender-based violence. However, the selection of their locations did not adequately ensure regional coverage, and the facilities are not adapted for people with disabilities, creating additional barriers to access.³⁴ Moreover, the shelters continue to face issues with insufficient available spaces, delays in recruiting necessary staff, and challenges in providing proper rehabilitation for beneficiaries.³⁵ These systemic shortcomings limit the effectiveness of the legislative amendments in practice.

Although the State points to the Ministry of Justice grant programmes and the establishment of the State Grant Management Agency as evidence of a more structured and transparent funding system, the broader context since 2023 tells a different story. The Agency was created amid an increasingly repressive legal and political environment that has significantly shrunk civic space and restricted access to independent sources of funding. Instead of expanding support for organisations providing essential services under the Istanbul Convention, recent measures have had the opposite effect: they have curtailed foreign funding, centralised control over public resources, and placed unprecedented pressure on independent civil society organisations, including women’s rights groups.

³² მარიამ ბოგვერაძე, ბრძოლა სიტყვასთან, რომლის ფასსაც ქალები გადაიხდიან, 08.07.2025, [Mariam Bogveradze, The Battle with Words, the Price of Which Women Will Pay, 08.07.2025, available at <https://chaikhana.media/ka/stories/1633/brdzola-sityvastan-romlis-fassats-qalebi-gadaikhdian>]

³³ Report of the Public Defender of Georgia 2024, p. 192.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 192-193

³⁵ Ibid.

Beginning in 2023, the government launched an extensive legislative campaign targeting civil society and independent media. The first draft of the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence, introduced in March 2023, sought to brand NGOs and media receiving more than 20% foreign funding as “agents of foreign influence.”³⁶ Although withdrawn after mass protests, the initiative reappeared in 2024, when Parliament adopted a second version of the law that again imposed stigmatizing registration requirements, intrusive financial reporting obligations, and broad supervisory authority for the Ministry of Justice.³⁷ In 2025, the legislative restrictions deepened dramatically with sweeping amendments to the Law on Grants,³⁸ the creation of the State Grant Management Agency, and the enactment of a Georgian version of the Foreign Agents Registration Act.³⁹ These measures centralized the distribution of state grants, granted the Agency exclusive control to determine beneficiaries of public financing, and introduced a prior government approval requirement for all foreign grants. The legislation provides no exemptions: funding originating from foreign states, diplomatic missions, the European Union, or United Nations agencies is uniformly classified as “foreign funding.” As a result, donors required to obtain prior government approval before providing grants to specific organizations, and organizations that receive funds without such approval are subject to fines equal to twice the value of the grant. Together, these laws severely restricted the inflow of international funding, which had historically enabled women’s rights organizations to provide specialized services not covered by the State.

This restrictive legal framework has been accompanied by active and targeted enforcement. While the 2023-2024 Law on Transparency on Foreign Influence remains dormant, the amended Law on Grants and the FARA-based legislation have been used aggressively against civil society. Donors have been unable to proceed with grants due to the lack of government approval mechanisms, forcing the cancellation of planned support for civic initiatives. Major NGOs, including women’s rights organization SAPARI, have received broad and intrusive court orders demanding sensitive information on beneficiaries, training participants, and community members, issued with retroactive effect and under threat of criminal liability.⁴⁰ In 2025, the Anti-Corruption Bureau vastly expanded monitoring, targeting approximately 30 organizations and routinely obtaining court approval for requests despite procedural violations.⁴¹ These enforcement practices have created a climate of fear and administrative paralysis for service providers.

³⁶Draft Law of Georgia On Transparency of Foreign Influence, available at <https://info.parliament.ge/file/1/BillReviewContent/383774>

³⁷Law of Georgia on Transparency of Foreign Influence, 28 May 2024, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/document/view/6171895?publication=0>

³⁸Law of Georgia on the Amendments to the Law of Georgia "On Grants", 16 April 2025, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/6475816?publication=0>

³⁹ Law of Georgia „Foreign Agents Registration Act“, 1 April 2025, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/document/view/6461578?publication=0>

⁴⁰ Civil Georgia, Five Organizations Report Being Inspected Under “Russian Laws”, 18 June 2025, available at <https://civil.ge/archives/687395?utm>

⁴¹ IDFI, The “Georgian Dream” has started a new stage of repressions against civil society, targeting up to 30 Georgian non-governmental organizations , 22 September 2025, available at <https://idfi.ge/en/the-georgian-dream-has-started-a-new-stage-of-repressions-against-civil-society-targeting-up-to-30-georgian-non-governmental-organizations?utm>

At the same time, direct persecution of NGOs has escalated. Since early 2025, criminal investigations have been launched against prominent organizations, accusing them of “sabotage,” “assisting foreign powers,” and “mobilizing funds against the constitutional order.”⁴² Bank accounts of leading NGOs, including Sapari, and leaders face potential prison sentences of up to 15 years. Funds frozen under these investigations include grants from the EU, UN Agencies (UN Women, UNDP, UNFPA), originally intended to support human rights, democracy, and equality in Georgia.

In a case involving similar factual circumstances - *Democracy and Human Rights Resource Centre and Mustafayev v. Azerbaijan* (Applications nos. 74288/14 and 64568/16, 14 October 2021), the European Court of Human Rights emphasized that freezing of bank accounts can constitute direct interference with the work of human rights defenders. The Court noted that freezing the bank accounts of a human rights organization not charged with any criminal offence effectively prevents it from carrying out its professional activities. It stressed the particular importance of human rights defenders in promoting and protecting rights, highlighting that restrictions capable of paralyzing their work, including freezing all bank accounts instead of specific amounts, cannot be justified in the absence of clear legal grounds and legitimate reasons (paras. 107–108).

In this environment, the State’s claim that the creation of a central grant management body enhances financial support for civil society is fundamentally misleading. The Agency was established not as part of a strategy to expand sustainable funding for services required under the Istanbul Convention, but in parallel with measures that restrict foreign funding, criminalize NGO activities, and place civil society under direct political control. The centralization of state grants under the Agency combined with the drying up of international funding streams and the persecution of independent NGOs has left many service providers without reliable resources to maintain shelters, legal assistance, psychosocial support, or specialized services for women and girls facing violence. Instead of ensuring stable and needs-based financing, recent reforms have produced a system in which access to funding is politically contingent, arbitrary, and subject to government approval and retaliation. These measures have been reinforced by state-aligned media campaigns portraying NGOs as hostile actors, further eroding public trust and shrinking civil society’s operational space. It is worth mentioning that in an interview explaining amendments to the Law on Grants, Levan Machavariani, a member of the so-called Parliament from Georgian Dream Party, stated that the government would decide which grants are appropriate for the Georgian people and which are not. He stated: “When a specific donor organization applies to the government regarding the issuance of a particular grant, if it succeeds in convincing the government that this will serve the interests of our country and be beneficial for our population, this will, of course, be followed by government approval. However, if it fails to convince the government and we once again see signs that the funds are

⁴² OCCRP, NGO Accounts Frozen in Georgia as Prosecutors Link Groups to 2024 Protests, 27 August 2025, available at <https://www.occrp.org/en/news/ngo-accounts-frozen-in-georgia-as-prosecutors-link-groups-to-2024-protests?utm>

intended to be directed to Lomjaria, Gigauri, Ms Patariaia, and others for the purpose of organizing yet another revolutionary scenario, such approval will not be granted.”⁴³

These developments do not occur in isolation. The Special Rapporteur on Human Rights has repeatedly raised concerns about the harassment of human rights defenders and the broader pattern of legal and administrative pressure against civil society in Georgia. She has specifically highlighted the intimidation of women human rights defenders, including Ms. Baia Patariaia, as well as the administrative charges brought against human rights defenders, journalists, and opposition politicians (GEO 2/2024, 29 August 2024), to which the Government has not responded.⁴⁴ This pattern further illustrates that the State’s reconfiguration of the funding environment is unfolding alongside broader measures aimed at restricting civic space and silencing independent voices, including women human rights defenders.

Furthermore, the Agency’s distribution of grants of up to 100,000 GEL to 17 organisations in 2025 totalling 1,657,775 GEL⁴⁵, and the Ministry of Justice’s allocation of 1,313,409 GEL to 56 projects between 2021 and 2025 cannot be cited as evidence of progress toward compliance with Article 8. This level of funding is negligible when compared to the substantial international support previously available to the sector, which had enabled CSOs to provide a wide range of essential services to the public. According to the EU Delegation in Georgia, between 2019 and 2024 civil society organisations received 46.1 million euros from the European Union alone to support the population of Georgia and ensure access to services across multiple sectors.⁴⁶ The EU was only one of several major donors contributing to this broader effort.

Thus, the introduction of the Agency’s grant mechanism has not enhanced the sustainability of specialised organisations. Instead, it has replaced a diverse, independent, and adequately funded system with a highly centralised and politically controlled model that fails to guarantee support for organisations working to fulfil the State’s obligations under the Convention. Notably, among all state grant recipients, only one organisation - the National Network of Women with Disabilities focuses on women’s issues, and it received just 100,000 GEL.

⁴³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z32BR_h8CSM, from 3:47-4:18

⁴⁴ UN Special Raporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Georgia: administrative charges against human rights defenders and harassment of civil society organisations (joint communication), 20 November 2025, available at https://srdefenders.org/georgia-administrative-charges-against-hrds-and-harassment-of-civil-society-organisations-joint-communication/?fbclid=IwY2xjawOjaPpleHRuA2FlbQIxMQBzcnRjBmFwcF9pZBAyMjIwMzIxNzg4MjAwODkyAAEetjthsylh8xL4KTXCEHTrnjoqSRVEkaIbvT8oN82XJ_Ji7cvipbiw4NYooHE_aem_zCuBzssYEqYN_CewlOVHWEg

⁴⁵ List of winning civil initiatives, available at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NXt1Jt-tfkX3oNIiIyEv2lse4_ISWQ4p/view

⁴⁶ [Civil.ge](https://civil.ge), EU Delegation: Georgian Gov’t Received 11 Times More Financial Support from EU than CSOs, available at https://civil.ge/archives/616325?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Finally, it is important to underline that the largest and most experienced service-providing organisations in Georgia, including Sapari, the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA), Rights Georgia, the Partnership for Human Rights (PHR), Women's Initiatives Supporting Group (WISG), the Human Rights Centre, and the Georgian Centre for Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (GCRT) deliver the vast majority of specialised services for survivors of domestic and gender-based violence nationwide. According to their publicly available annual reports for the past two to three years, these organisations collectively handle thousands of legal aid cases annually and represent victims before national courts and international mechanisms. Despite their scale, expertise, and indispensable role in fulfilling the State's obligations under the Istanbul Convention, none of these organisations has received funding through the State Grant Management Agency or recent Ministry of Justice grant schemes. As a result of frozen accounts, blocked foreign grants, and ongoing criminal and administrative pressure, many of these key service providers now face severe operational constraints, staff reductions, and the risk of suspension of essential services. By contrast, for the organisations that did receive state grants, publicly accessible information does not allow verification of the scope, quality, or annual volume of services they provide, raising serious concerns about transparency, needs-based allocation, and the effectiveness of state funding in meeting the real demands of victims of violence.

Recommendations

- **Abolish restrictive legislation**, including the 2024 Law "On Transparency of Foreign Influence", the 2025 Foreign Agents Registration Act, and amendments to the Law on Grants
- **Guarantee funding independence of civil society organisations**, particularly women's rights organisations, from government interference, ensuring access to domestic and international funding without prior approval or risk of criminal, administrative, or financial retaliation.
- **Restore and expand support to core service providers**, including key NGOs delivering legal aid, psychosocial support, rehabilitation, and advocacy for survivors of domestic and gender-based violence, to prevent disruption of essential services.
- **Engage civil society in policy and funding decisions**, creating structured consultations with NGOs and service providers to ensure that state priorities align with real needs of survivors of violence and that reforms are evidence-based.
- **Protect women human rights defenders** from harassment, criminalisation, and undue administrative or financial pressure, recognizing their central role in implementing the Istanbul Convention and safeguarding victims' rights.
- **Restore recognition of gender in legal frameworks** to ensure that policy-making, planning, and resource allocation effectively address gender-based violence and promote equality.

Article 9 - Non-governmental organisations and civil society

The year 2025 has been marked by systemic legislative and practical attacks on core civil and political rights that sustain a democratic order: freedoms of association, expression, and assembly, accompanied by politicised justice, ill-treatment of protesters, deterioration of equality guarantees, and neglect of socio-economic rights. Civil society space contracted dramatically through a triad of laws: the 2024 Law “On Transparency of Foreign Influence”, the 2025 “Foreign Agents Registration Act” (FARA), and restrictive amendments to the Law on Grants, all assessed as incompatible with international standards by the Venice Commission and ODIHR. These norms stigmatise civil society organisations as “agents”, subject them to intrusive monitoring by a politicised Anti-Corruption Bureau (soon to be merged into the State Audit Office), and condition foreign grants on alignment with government policy, leading to suspensions, downsizing, and de-facto closure of dozens of organisations, especially local community groups.⁴⁷ The authorities coupled this with coercive tools: massive data demands (including sensitive personal data),⁴⁸ account freezes, house searches and investigations under sabotage and national-security provisions⁴⁹, creating a chilling effect on human rights defenders and undermining the “public watchdog” function crucial for vulnerable groups’ access to services and remedies.

Recommendations:

- Abolish restrictive legislation, including the 2024 Law “On Transparency of Foreign Influence”, the 2025 Foreign Agents Registration Act, and amendments to the Law on Grants
- End the stigmatisation and political labelling of civil society organisations, including the use of “foreign agent” terminology.
- Cease coercive and punitive measures against civil society organisations and human rights defenders, including excessive, sensitive personal data demands, account freezes, searches, and investigations under national-security or sabotage provisions used in response to peaceful civic activity.

⁴⁷ **Under Siege: How Georgia Is Dismantling Civil Society.** Findings from the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders’ Field Mission. The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, November 2025. Available at: <https://www.omct.org/site-resources/images/Under-Siege-Georgia-Final.pdf>

⁴⁸ The international legal community has recognized the severity of data demands, with both the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in July 2025 and the UN CEDAW Committee in August 2025 issuing interim measures specifically protecting beneficiary data from forced disclosure. Read more at <https://sapari.ge/en/saparis-statement-the-un-committee-on-the-rights-of-the-child-has-suspended-the-enforcement-of-the-court-order/> and <https://sapari.ge/en/saparis-statement-the-un-committee-on-the-elimination-of-discrimination-against-women-cedaw-has-protected-the-personal-data-of-a-sapari-beneficiary/>

⁴⁹ **Georgia: Tbilisi City Court Freezes Bank Accounts of Seven Further Leading Civil Society Organisations amid Unfounded Investigations for “Sabotage.”** The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, August 29, 2025. Available at: <https://www.omct.org/en/resources/urgent-interventions/georgia-tbilisi-city-court-freezes-bank-accounts-of-seven-further-leading-civil-society-organisations-amid-unfounded-investigations-for-sabotage>

- Protect women human rights defenders from harassment, criminalisation, and undue administrative or financial pressure, recognizing their central role in implementing the Istanbul Convention and safeguarding victims' rights.
- Protect and promote an enabling environment for human rights defenders, ensuring that freedoms of association can be exercised without fear of retaliation, surveillance, or arbitrary sanctions.

Chapter III. Prevention

Article 13 – Awareness-raising

The Government's GREVIO State Report documents extensive awareness-raising activities on violence against women, including the '16 Days of Activism' campaign, the 'No to Femicide' campaign, and community outreach sessions.⁵⁰ The State Care Agency conducted approximately 75 informational sessions in 2024.⁵¹ However, none of these campaigns specifically addresses violence affecting LBTI women or includes content designed to reach this population. The problem has further aggravated by the adoption of the Law on the Protection of Family Values and Minors censoring LGBTI content across broadcasting and advertising. The law has even prohibited the direct communication with minors on LGBTI topics.⁵² Although the law has not yet been actively enforced, therefore, no cases of fines or detentions for its alleged 'violation' have been recorded, its objective has largely been achieved through its chilling effect, including the disappearance of LGBTI-related content from local media and public discussions. Furthermore, civil society monitoring confirms that 'proactive initiatives aimed at reducing homophobia and transphobia, such as broad educational and awareness-raising campaigns, were excluded from the government's action plans'.⁵³

Recommendations

- **Ensure inclusion in national action plans:** Integrate proactive measures to reduce homophobia and transphobia into all government action plans on violence against women, including educational, media, and community outreach components.
- **Remove legal barriers to information and awareness**

⁵⁰ GREVIO, State Report submitted by Georgia pursuant to Article 68, paragraph 1 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Baseline Report), GREVIO/Inf(2025)12, 25 September 2025, 41-42.

⁵¹ Ibid., 47.

⁵² Law of Georgia on the Protection of Family Values and Minors, Article 9

⁵³ Women's Initiatives Supporting Group, Third Shadow Report (n 3), 14.

Article 14 - Education

CSE topics are poorly represented in Georgia's general education system. Despite the existence of the subject "Me and Society", comprehensive education about human sexuality has not yet been implemented in schools.⁵⁴ Adolescents' knowledge about reproductive health and rights is still scarce, and students and adults lack information about their bodies, relationships, reproductive rights, and sexuality⁵⁵

Absence of the education on reproductive health and rights (also known as CSE) causes a high rate of sexual crimes against minors and a high percentage of labor and abortions⁵⁶. Introducing CSE is crucial for children with disabilities, as only 13 children with disabilities have been granted the status of victim out of 638 cases of sexual crimes against children⁵⁷. Although the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia is aware of the problems, the accountable administrative body does not take effective measures to protect the children from sexual abuse.

Policymakers often avoid the topic due to societal stigma surrounding CSE, while experts and curriculum developers continue to make efforts to expand CSE topics in the school program. Schools cannot provide children with important information about their feelings and bodies, sexual identity, gender-based violence, healthy relationships, etc. The component of human sexuality isn't fully integrated into school education, as the approach applied by the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia towards education on human sexuality is narrow and deals only with the medical aspects of reproductive health⁵⁸. Inadequate knowledge/competence of teachers themselves on reproductive health issues also remains a challenge.⁵⁹ Since 2021, the "Doctor's Hour" has been developed, which was taught in a pilot mode in 18 schools in Tbilisi and Kakheti until 2023 by the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia, NGO "Tanadgoma", and UNFPA.⁶⁰

In 2024 The Parliament of Georgia adopted the law on "Protection of family values and minors", which completely prohibits the dissemination of sexually explicit information in educational institutions. All existing initiatives for the introduction of comprehensive education about human sexuality in schools are under threat. To the extent that the provision in question categorically denies students access to age- and development-appropriate, comprehensive sexuality education, as well as objective information on the diversity of sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, and sex characteristics, it must be regarded as incompatible with the right to education guaranteed under Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 to the European Convention on Human Rights and other applicable international human rights

⁵⁴ Ind. Expert SOGI Country Visit. (2019). Report of the Independent Expert on his visit to Georgia A/HRC/41/45. para 84.

⁵⁵ გენდერული თანასწორობის საპარლამენტო საბჭო (2022). გენდერული თანასწორობა საქართველოში, ბარიერები და რეკომენდაციები, ნაწილი II. UNDP, UNFPA, NDI

⁵⁶ Increase in sexual violence against children in Georgia due to refusal of comprehensive sexual education, policy document. Ana Arganashvili, Ana Abashidze, November, 2022. P.2. <https://shorturl.at/eBPW4>

⁵⁷ The statistics of sexual crimes against minors from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2022.

⁵⁸ Report of the Public Defender of Georgia on the Situation of Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia, 2021, pages 117, available at: <https://bit.ly/3PZMMly>

⁵⁹ UNFPA. (2022). ადამიანის სექსუალობის შესახებ განათლების მიმოხილვა საქართველოში. <https://georgia.unfpa.org/en/CSE-in-Georgia>

⁶⁰ UNFPA, საინფორმაციო სამედიცინო-ფსიქოლოგიური ცენტრი თანადგომა (2023). ექიმის საათი-დაწყებითი საფეხურის საპილოტე პროგრამა.

standards, in particular Article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The Venice Commission published a critical opinion regarding the aforementioned law.⁶¹

The legislative prohibition on dissemination of information regarding LGBTI issues in educational settings directly contravenes Article 14 obligations requiring education on equality between women and men. The Venice Commission concluded that this provision 'deprives all pupils of comprehensive, age-appropriate sex education' and 'may increase bullying, harassment, and health risks'.⁶² Article 8 of the Law on the Protection of Family Values and Minors prohibits sharing information 'aimed at the promotion of belonging of a person's sex different from biological sex' or 'promotion of a relationship expressed on the grounds of sexual orientation between individuals of the same biological sex', with violations subject to administrative fines and, for repeated offences, criminal liability.⁶³

Considering the importance of CSE and link between the non-existence of CSE and the sexual crime rate against children, including children with disabilities, there are two pending cases⁶⁴ at the Tbilisi Appeal Court regarding the implementation of CSE in the educational plan; however, both of them were unsuccessful in the Tbilisi City Court and were appealed by the claimant.

Recommendations

- Ensure access to comprehensive education on reproductive health and rights by integrating age-appropriate, scientifically accurate, and rights-based education on human sexuality, relationships, consent, bodily autonomy, and gender-based violence into the national school curriculum at all levels of general education.
- Guarantee non-discriminatory access to education on reproductive health and rights for all children, including children with disabilities, by developing inclusive curricula, accessible teaching materials, and tailored methodologies to address their heightened risk of sexual violence.
- Strengthen prevention of sexual violence against children by explicitly recognising education on reproductive health and rights as a core protective measure and integrating it into national strategies on child protection, gender-based violence prevention, and sexual and reproductive health.
- Ensuring that educators receive mandatory, continuous training on education on reproductive health and rights, child-centred pedagogy, and trauma-informed approaches, and are equipped to deliver content confidently and without stigma.

⁶¹ Georgia - Opinion on the draft constitutional law on Protecting Family Values and Minors, adopted by the Venice Commission at its 139th Plenary Session (Venice, 21-22 June 2024) https://www.coe.int/en/web/venice-commission/-/cdl-ad-2024-021-e?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁶² Venice Commission (n 16), §§ 63–68.

⁶³ Law of Georgia on the Protection of Family Values and Minors (n 15), Article 8.

⁶⁴ Administrative Case #3b/3196-25; administrative case #38/3378-24,

Article 15 – Training of Professionals

The Government's GREVIO Report documents extensive professional training on violence against women for law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, and social workers.⁶⁵ Training covers the Istanbul Convention, CEDAW, and European Court jurisprudence.⁶⁶ However, civil society monitoring indicates that law enforcement agencies have 'ceased cooperation with LGBTI organizations' and the Ministry of Internal Affairs' Human Rights Protection Department has 'eliminated its engagement on LGBTI issues'.⁶⁷ The absence of SOGI-specific training content, combined with institutional withdrawal from engagement with the LGBTI community, undermines the capacity of professionals to respond appropriately to violence affecting LGBTI women.

Recommendations

- Integrate SOGI-specific content into professional training: Ensure that all training programs for law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, and social workers explicitly address violence against LGBTI women, including understanding specific risks, barriers to reporting, and appropriate investigative and support measures.
- Restore and strengthen engagement with LGBTI organisations: Re-establish collaboration between law enforcement and LGBTI civil society groups to inform training curricula, case handling, and community outreach, ensuring that professional actors understand the lived experiences and needs of LGBTI women.

Chapter IV. Protection and support

Article 18 - General obligations

Law of Georgia on the Prevention of Violence Against Women and/or Domestic Violence defines 'family members' eligible for protection by reference to relationships that implicitly exclude same-sex partners.⁶⁸ LGBTI persons in cohabiting relationships fall outside the statutory definition and are consequently denied access to emergency barring orders, restraining orders, and state-funded shelter accommodation.⁶⁹ This exclusion has been

⁶⁵ Government of Georgia, GREVIO Report (n 20), 60–64.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 170–189 (Tables I and II on professional training).

⁶⁷ Women's Initiatives Supporting Group, Eradication of LGBTIQ+ Issues from State Policy: Challenges to Equality in Georgia, Tbilisi, 2025, 17.

⁶⁸ Law of Georgia on the Prevention of Violence Against Women and/or Domestic Violence, Protection and Assistance to Victims of Violence, Article 4(б). Available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/26422?publication=17> [10.12.2025].

⁶⁹ Women's Initiatives Supporting Group, Third Shadow Report (n 3), 52.

compounded by the Law on the Protection of Family Values and Minors, which the Venice Commission concluded is 'incompatible with European human rights standards'.⁷⁰⁷¹

The Commissioner for Human Rights warned that the law 'provides a legal footing for discrimination against LGBTI people and appears to be at variance with the European Convention on Human Rights'.⁷² The Committee of Ministers expressed 'deep concern' and concluded that enactment 'could raise serious questions as to the compliance by Georgia with its obligation to abide by the final judgments of the Court'.⁷³ The April 2025 amendments removing 'gender identity' from protected grounds under anti-discrimination legislation further eroded the legal foundation for protection.⁷⁴

Recommendations

- Reinstatement of gender identity protections in anti-discrimination legislation: Reverse the April 2025 amendments that removed “gender identity” as a protected ground, aligning national law with human rights standards and ensuring legal remedies for discrimination against LGBTI persons.
- Guarantee equal access to shelters and protective measures: Ensure that state-funded shelters and crisis services are legally obliged to serve LGBTI persons experiencing violence, removing administrative or policy-based barriers that restrict access.

Article 22 - Specialist support services

The UN Independent Expert on SOGI recommended in 2019 the establishment of programmes and shelters specifically adapted to the needs of LGBTI persons, observing that no such dedicated facilities existed.⁷⁵ Research indicates that transgender women are in practice prevented from accessing mainstream domestic violence services.⁷⁶ Focus group discussions revealed that civil society organisations have provided emergency shelter in organisational offices or staff members' personal residences.⁷⁷ This informal support network is now under existential threat from the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence and anti-LGBTI legislative framework.⁷⁸

⁷⁰ Law of Georgia on the Protection of Family Values and Minors, adopted 17 September 2024, entered into force 2 December 2024. Available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/6283110?publication=0> [10.12.2025].

⁷¹ Venice Commission, Opinion on the Draft Constitutional Law on Protecting Family Values and Minors, CDL-AD(2024)021, 25 June 2024, §§ 99-104.

⁷² Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Letter to Mr Shalva Papuashvili, Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia, CommHR/MOF/sf 095-2024, 6 September 2024.

⁷³ Committee of Ministers, Supervision of the execution of judgments and decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, *Identoba and Others v. Georgia* group, CM/Del/Dec(2024)1507/H46-8, 19 September 2024, § 4.

⁷⁴ UPR Submission (n 4), § 9.

⁷⁵ UN Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, Report on visit to Georgia, A/HRC/41/45/Add.1, 15 May 2019, § 74.

⁷⁶ Women's Initiatives Supporting Group, Third Shadow Report (n 3), 78.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Women's Initiatives Supporting Group, Eradication Report (n 28), 9.

Recommendations

- Establish dedicated shelters and services for LGBTI survivors of violence: Develop safe, accessible, and fully staffed shelters and crisis services specifically designed to meet the needs of LGBTI persons, including transgender women, in line with the 2019 UN Independent Expert recommendations.
- Ensure accessibility in mainstream services: existing state-funded shelters and domestic violence services be fully inclusive of LGBTI individuals, with staff trained in SOGI-sensitive approaches to avoid discrimination or denial of access.

Article 25 – Support for victims of sexual violence

The only specialized support services available to survivors of sexual violence are integrated into shelters and crisis centers operating under the State Care Agency. Despite the requirements of the Istanbul Convention, there are no separate rape crisis centers and/or specialized referral centers for survivors of sexual violence functioning in the country.⁷⁹ Accordingly, survivors of sexual violence rely on the same general support services that are provided to survivors of other forms of violence, with the distinction that survivors of sexual exploitation (trafficking) and sexual violence undergo medical examinations for sexually transmitted infections within 48 hours of admission to a shelter.⁸⁰ It should be positively noted that medical examinations are also conducted for beneficiaries who disclose experiences of sexual violence after a certain period following their placement in a shelter.⁸¹

Due to the absence of referral centers for survivors of sexual violence that would provide emergency medical care, high-quality forensic medical examinations, and crisis intervention, survivors of sexual violence undergo forensic examinations at the National Forensic Bureau named after Levan Samkharauli. In addition, access to medical care and forensic medical examinations for survivors of sexual violence depends on whether they report the incident of violence to law enforcement authorities.⁸²

For survivors of sexual violence, undergoing a forensic medical examination is often a traumatic procedure. In a number of cases, survivors encounter insensitive, degrading, and gender-stereotype-based approaches, which hinder their participation in the justice process and significantly increase the risks of secondary victimization.⁸³ Given that survivors of sexual

⁷⁹ This was noted in GREVIO Baseline Evaluation Report Georgia, 2022, para. 195 and situation as of now is the same.

⁸⁰ ძალადობისა და ტრეფიკინგის მსხვერპლთა მომსახურების დაწესებულებების მონიტორინგის ანგარიში, საქართველოს სახალხო დამცველი, 2024, 13. [Monitoring Report on Service Institutions for Victims of Violence and Trafficking, Public Defender of Georgia, 2024, p. 13].

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 10, footnote 17.

⁸² This was noted in GREVIO Baseline Evaluation Report Georgia, 2022, para. 197 and situation as of now is the same.

⁸³ ქალთა მიმართ სექსუალური ძალადობის დანაშაულებზე მართლმსაჯულების განხორციელება საქართველოში, საქართველოს სახალხო დამცველის სპეციალური ანგარიში, 2020, 39. [Administration of Justice in Cases of Sexual Violence against Women in Georgia, Special Report of the Public Defender of Georgia, 2020, p. 39.]

violence do not have the opportunity to choose the sex of the forensic expert, and that in some cases an examination conducted by an expert of the opposite sex causes additional stress, survivors often refuse to undergo the examination. The shortage of medical experts, particularly female forensic experts, is due to the extreme lack of qualified personnel in the field of forensic medicine and the overall low level of qualification in the labor market.⁸⁴ Moreover, in the majority of criminal cases in which the survivor indicates that sexual intercourse occurred, it remains problematic that forensic examinations are ordered to determine the integrity of the hymen, which has often played the role of one of decisive evidence, especially for minors.⁸⁵ It should also be noted that forensic examinations to determine the condition of the hymen are conducted even in cases where there is no indication of sexual intercourse and the child does not allege sexual penetration.⁸⁶

It should be positively noted that legislative amendments entered into force on 1 July 2023, pursuant to which survivors of violence, including survivors of sexual violence, may access shelter and crisis center services without being granted a special status. Accordingly, whereas previously the existence of victim status was a prerequisite for accessing shelter services, as a result of the legislative amendments, obtaining such status is no longer a condition for benefiting from shelter services. The shelter/crisis center service provider now independently determines the criteria and/or develops special tools (for example, risk and needs assessment tools) on the basis of which it decides whether to provide services or to refuse service provision.⁸⁷

Although, following the legislative amendments, a standardized questionnaire was developed to assess the risks of violence against women, domestic violence, and sexual violence, as well

⁸⁴ თემატური მოკვლევის ანგარიში “ქალთა მიმართ ძალადობისა და ოჯახში ძალადობის პრევენციისა და აღკვეთის შესახებ” ევროპის საბჭოს კონვენციის (სტამბულის კონვენცია) ვალდებულებების კანონმდებლობაში ასახვის და მათი აღსრულების ეფექტიანობის შესახებ, საქართველოს პარლამენტი, 2022, 31-32; ქალთა მიმართ სექსუალური ძალადობის დანაშაულებზე მართლმსაჯულების განხორციელება საქართველოში, საქართველოს სახალხო დამცველის სპეციალური ანგარიში, 2020, 40. [Thematic Inquiry Report on the Reflection of the Obligations of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) in Legislation and the Effectiveness of Their Implementation, Parliament of Georgia, 2022, pp. 31–32; Administration of Justice in Cases of Sexual Violence against Women in Georgia, Special Report of the Public Defender of Georgia, 2020, p. 40.]

⁸⁵ ადრეული/ბავშვობის ასაკში ქორწინების საზიანო პრაქტიკა საქართველოში - არსებული გამოწვევები და გადაჭრის გზები, საქართველოს სახალხო დამცველის სპეციალური ანგარიში, 2022, 8; 30; ქალთა მიმართ სექსუალური ძალადობის დანაშაულებზე მართლმსაჯულების განხორციელება საქართველოში, საქართველოს სახალხო დამცველის სპეციალური ანგარიში, 2020, 39-40. [Harmful Practice of Early/Child Marriage in Georgia – Existing Challenges and Ways Forward, Special Report of the Public Defender of Georgia, 2022, pp. 8, 30; Administration of Justice in Cases of Sexual Violence against Women in Georgia, Special Report of the Public Defender of Georgia, 2020, pp. 39–40.]

⁸⁶ ადრეული/ბავშვობის ასაკში ქორწინების საზიანო პრაქტიკა საქართველოში - არსებული გამოწვევები და გადაჭრის გზები, საქართველოს სახალხო დამცველის სპეციალური ანგარიში, 2022, 30; ბავშვზე სექსუალური ძალადობისა და სექსუალური ექსპლოატაციის დანაშაულებზე მართლმსაჯულების განხორციელება, საქართველოს სახალხო დამცველის სპეციალური ანგარიში, 2021, 59. [Harmful Practice of Early/Child Marriage in Georgia – Existing Challenges and Ways Forward, Special Report of the Public Defender of Georgia, 2022, p. 30; Administration of Justice in Cases of Sexual Violence and Sexual Exploitation of Children, Special Report of the Public Defender of Georgia, 2021, p. 59.]

⁸⁷ საქართველოს კანონი „ქალთა მიმართ ძალადობის ან/და ოჯახში ძალადობის აღკვეთის, ძალადობის მსხვერპლთა დაცვისა და დახმარების შესახებ“, მე-18 და მე-18¹ მუხლები. [Law of Georgia “On the Elimination of Violence against Women and/or Domestic Violence, and the Protection and Support of Victims of Violence,” Articles 18 and 18¹].

as to identify survivors' needs and the services to be provided, the effectiveness of it has been challenged. In particular, due to the extensive volume of the questionnaire, completing it is reported to often be exhausting for survivors, and in some cases the questions are formulated in a manner that is difficult to understand, requiring simplification.⁸⁸

In July 2020, the Minister of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia approved the Standard Clinical Management Protocol for Survivors of Rape, pursuant to which the State covers the main costs for survivors of rape, including emergency contraception, medical treatment, testing for sexually transmitted infections, and, where necessary, safe abortion. However, there is still no publicly available information on the implementation of this protocol, including with regard to strengthening the capacities of service providers supporting survivors of sexual violence.⁸⁹

Women survivors of sexual violence continue to face legislative barriers to the termination of pregnancies resulting from sexual violence.⁹⁰ Specifically, after 12 weeks of pregnancy, the termination of a pregnancy resulting from violence is permitted only after a court has issued a conviction.⁹¹ Since criminal proceedings often extend beyond the duration of pregnancy, refusing access to termination in such situations may become a source of psycho-emotional distress and social stigma for the affected woman.⁹²

Georgia still lacks services focused on the long-term rehabilitation of child survivors of sexual violence and on supporting their families. To date, only one psychosocial service center for child survivors of violence is provided by authorities, and it is located in Tbilisi, which does not ensure the geographical accessibility of rehabilitation services. In addition, when a child survivor of sexual violence requires a forensic medical examination, access to this service is still possible only in Tbilisi, which not only contradicts a child-friendly approach to the administration of justice but also clearly creates additional risks of traumatization of children in the process.⁹³

In light of the above, referral centers for survivors of sexual violence, rape crisis centers, and other specialized services are not available to survivors. Although services for victims of violence do exist, they are unable to adequately address the specific needs of survivors of sexual violence. This confirms that services available to survivors of sexual violence are neither organized nor systematized, as a result of which survivors are forced to approach different institutions and services separately. Furthermore, there is a severe shortage of rape and sexual violence crisis centers and specialized referral centers.

⁸⁸ ძალადობისა და ტრეფიკინგის მსხვერპლთა მომსახურების დაწესებულებების მონიტორინგის ანგარიში, საქართველოს სახალხო დამცველი, 2024, 9; სქოლიო 6. [Monitoring Report on Service Institutions for Victims of Violence and Trafficking, Public Defender of Georgia, 2024, p. 9; footnote 6.]

⁸⁹ This was noted in GREVIO Baseline Evaluation Report Georgia, 2022, para. 199 and situation as of now is the same.

⁹⁰ Written Submission for 84th session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) by the Public Defender of Georgia, 2023, para. 23.

⁹¹ საქართველოს სახალხო დამცველის ანგარიში „საქართველოში ადამიანის უფლებათა და თავისუფლებათა დაცვის მდგომარეობის შესახებ“, 2024, 243. [Report of the Public Defender of Georgia “On the State of Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia,” 2024, p. 243.]

⁹² დისკრიმინაციის წინააღმდეგ ბრძოლის, მისი თავიდან აცილებისა და თანასწორობის მდგომარეობის შესახებ, საქართველოს სახალხო დამცველის სპეციალური ანგარიში, 2021, 13-14. [Special Report of the Public Defender of Georgia on Combating Discrimination, Preventing Discrimination, and the State of Equality, 2021, pp. 13–14.]

⁹³ საქართველოს სახალხო დამცველის ანგარიში „საქართველოში ადამიანის უფლებათა და თავისუფლებათა დაცვის მდგომარეობის შესახებ“, 2024, 328. [Report of the Public Defender of Georgia “On the State of Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia,” 2024, p. 328.]

Recommendations:

- Ensure the establishment of an adequate number of accessible rape crisis centers and/or sexual violence referral centers for survivors of sexual violence, capable of meeting all their needs in the short, medium, and long term, and providing immediate medical assistance, high-quality forensic examinations, psychological and legal support, and referrals to specialized support organisations;
- Guarantee survivors access to these services regardless of whether they wish to report the crime to law enforcement authorities and/or whether they have been granted victim status;
- Ensure child-friendly environments for rehabilitation and the conduct of investigative/procedural actions, make the “Psychosocial Service Center for Child Victims of Violence” accessible in other territorial units of Georgia as well;
- Increase the number of female forensic experts so that women survivors of sexual violence are able to choose the sex of the expert;
- Ensure that forensic medical examinations for child survivors of sexual violence are accessible in different territorial units of Georgia;
- In cases of pregnancy resulting from sexual violence, ensure that the initiation of a criminal investigation into the sexual violence is sufficient (rather than requiring court judgment) to allow for the termination of the pregnancy.

Woman with disabilities

For women and girls with disabilities, the lack of or insufficient access to appropriate support services is a significant obstacle to the investigation process. For example, the lack of psychological support resources is problematic, which often leaves victims of violence without any support at all. Access to shelters for victims of violence is also difficult for women with disabilities. Access to shelters remains a challenge for people with disabilities, as shelters are partially adapted for people with disabilities using wheelchairs, while they are not adapted for people with other disabilities. It is worth noting that crisis centers are adapted only for people with disabilities using wheelchairs, and the space is inaccessible to people with other disabilities. In practice, there have been cases where, due to the inadaptability of shelters for victims of violence, a female victim with disabilities may be placed in a homeless shelter that is not equipped with the appropriate human resources required to serve victims of violence⁹⁴.

There is no coordinated work between state agencies when a complex approach is required, given the complexity of the case. Due to the lack of state services, children who are victims of violence receive qualified psychological services with a delay, and art therapy is also needed, which is not adapted for children with disabilities.⁹⁵

⁹⁴Assessment of the needs of women and girls with disabilities and the state of protection of their rights in Georgia, Public Defender's Office; 2022

⁹⁵ Administrative Case #3/9786-24; Tbilisi City Court

Recommendations:

- Ensure equal and effective access to specialised support services for women and girls with disabilities, including timely psychological assistance, trauma-informed counselling, and long-term recovery services, without discrimination based on type of disability.
- Adapt shelters and crisis centres to all forms of disability, not only physical mobility impairments, by ensuring accessibility for women with psychosocial, intellectual, sensory, and multiple disabilities, including through appropriate infrastructure, assistive technologies, and communication support.
- Strengthen inter-agency coordination mechanisms between law enforcement, social services, disability support services, child protection authorities, and healthcare providers to ensure a comprehensive, victim-centred response in complex cases involving disability.
- Guarantee timely access to specialised psychological services for child victims of violence, including the availability of adapted therapeutic methods such as art therapy and other non-verbal interventions that are accessible to children with disabilities.

Chapter V. Substantive law

Article 29 – Civil lawsuits and remedies

Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation (SLAPP) of GBV Survivors and Women Human Rights Defenders

SLAPP cases in Georgia are rarely recognised as such and are generally adjudicated as ordinary defamation claims. The absence of jurisprudence addressing SLAPPs targeting survivors of gender-based violence constitutes a systemic failure, leaving survivors without procedural safeguards and exposing them to abusive litigation.

Domestic courts consistently fail to use preparatory hearings to dismiss manifestly unmeritorious claims. This is not an isolated procedural oversight but reflects a misunderstanding of early dismissal mechanisms, which are intended both to promote judicial efficiency and to protect defendants from the harm of protracted litigation. By declining to apply these mechanisms in cases with clear SLAPP characteristics, courts effectively enable continued harassment through legal processes. The consistency of this failure indicates an institutional deficiency requiring systemic response through appellate guidance, judicial training, and legislative clarification.

Judicial practice further demonstrates an overly formalistic approach to defamation law, to the detriment of survivors. In documented cases⁹⁶, courts have refused to use privilege protection to public statements that were substantively identical to survivors' communications with

⁹⁶ Tbilisi City Court, Case No.2/18681-22, 21 November 2023.

investigators,⁹⁷ despite acknowledging the defendant's good faith. This approach elevates form over substance, creating a doctrinally incoherent situation in which a survivor enjoys protection when reporting to authorities but faces liability for publicly repeating the same facts. Such reasoning undermines the purpose of courtroom speech privilege, which is to encourage truthful disclosure without fear of retaliatory litigation.

Inconsistencies in burden of proof allocation exacerbate these problems. While some Supreme Court decisions correctly place the burden on plaintiffs to prove falsity and malicious intent, other judgments improperly required defendants to prove the truth of their statements. This contradicted Article 7(6) of the Law on Freedom of Speech and Expression, which clearly assigned the burden to plaintiffs. Prior to the amendments of 26 June 2025 to the Law on Freedom of Speech and Expression, Article 7(6) placed the burden of proving falsity and damage on the plaintiff, rather than requiring the defendant to prove the truth of the disputed statement. This allocation of the burden of proof constituted one of the most significant protections afforded to defendants in defamation cases under Georgian law.⁹⁸ Following the amendments, however, this provision has been abolished, and the law no longer contains any comparable safeguard for defendants. Instead, the defendant is required to prove that the allegedly defamatory statement is not entirely false.⁹⁹ This improper burden allocation disproportionately harms survivors, who are often unable to prove violence occurring in private settings, thereby transforming procedural rules into substantive barriers to justice

Courts have also failed to protect statements consistent with findings of the Public Defender of Georgia. Supreme Court and lower instance court decisions have held that such findings have no predetermined probative value, exposing survivors and human rights defenders to defamation liability even when relying on conclusions reached through independent institutional investigation. This practice undermines both survivor speech and the authority of the Public Defender as a constitutional human rights institution.¹⁰⁰

The cumulative effect of these restrictive interpretations is that courtroom speech privilege becomes largely illusory for survivors. Survivors face an untenable choice between remaining silent outside official proceedings or risking civil liability for publicly sharing experiences already disclosed to authorities. This discourages reporting, public awareness, and community support, contrary to the objectives of the Istanbul Convention.

Overall, Georgian defamation jurisprudence continues to apply a formal equality framework that ignores power asymmetries inherent in gender-based violence cases. Courts rarely examine plaintiff motivation, resource imbalance, or patterns indicating abuse of process. This failure to integrate power-sensitive analysis allows defamation law to be used as a tool of control and intimidation, rather than as a legitimate means of reputation protection, undermining Georgia's obligations under Article 29 of the Istanbul Convention.

⁹⁷ Tbilisi Court of Appeals, Decision of 9 December 2020, Case No.2b/318-20.

⁹⁸ Law of Georgia "On Freedom of Speech and Expression", Art. 7(6).

⁹⁹ Law of Georgia "On Freedom of Speech and Expression", Art. 13(2); 14(2)

¹⁰⁰ See: Supreme Court of Georgia, Decision of 13 April 2022, No.as-358-2021; Tbilisi City Court, Case №2/18834-18, 19 May 2025

Recommendations:

- Explicitly recognise Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs), including those targeting survivors of gender-based violence and human rights defenders, within civil procedural law.
- Introduce legislative provisions enabling courts to identify SLAPP characteristics at an early stage, including when defamation claims follow disclosures of violence or discrimination.
- Clarify, through legislation or authoritative judicial guidance, that courts have a positive obligation to assess potential abuse of process at the preparatory hearing stage and dismiss manifestly unmeritorious defamation claims at an early stage where litigation appears intended to harass, silence, or intimidate survivors.
- Ensure uniform application of Article 7(6) of the Law on Freedom of Speech and Expression by reaffirming that plaintiffs bear the burden of proving falsity and damage in defamation cases and prevent practices that require survivors to prove the truth of allegations of violence occurring in private settings.
- Ensure protection to public statements that are substantively identical to communications made to investigative bodies, courts, Public Defender and clarify that the rationale of courtroom speech privilege applies to the content of statements, not merely the forum in which they are made.
- Provide mandatory, continuous training for judges on SLAPPs and their impact on survivors and gender-sensitive adjudication and power dynamics in violence cases.

Article 31 – Custody, visitation rights and safety

Law of Georgia on “the Prevention of Violence against Women and/or Domestic Violence, Protection and Assistance to Victims of Violence” partially addresses domestic violence when determining custody and visitation rights for children. In particular, the law provides for the possibility of issuing a restraining and protective order in cases of domestic violence, which involves restricting communication and contact between the perpetrator and the victim of violence. However, in cases where the violence reaches the level of a criminal offense and an investigation is initiated, unless an additional restraining or protective order is issued, or a decision is issued prohibiting communication with the outside world, the convicted person has the right and opportunity to establish communication, including requesting to see the minor child against whom the violence was committed.¹⁰¹

The training of foster families in state care regarding the needs of victims of violence and persons with disabilities is problematic. When a child with disabilities who is a victim of violence is transferred to foster care, the state program for foster parents does not provide the caregiver with appropriate knowledge and information so that he or she can take into account

¹⁰¹ A(A)IU "Partnership for Human Rights" Court Practice M.J. Case, A.Q. Case.

the needs of a child with disabilities who has experienced violence, including sexual violence, in everyday relationships, communication, prevention of trauma, etc.¹⁰²

Recommendations

- Ensure that domestic violence is systematically and substantively considered in custody and visitation decisions, including by requiring courts and relevant authorities to assess the history and risk of violence before granting any contact rights to a parent or caregiver.
- Protect child victims and ensure that child safety is not contingent on survivors' or guardians' capacity to initiate further legal proceedings.
- Revise state foster care programmes and guidelines to ensure caregivers receive adequate information about the child's experiences of violence and specific support needs, subject to appropriate confidentiality safeguards.
- Provide ongoing professional support and supervision for foster families, including access to psychosocial services

Chapter VI – Investigation, prosecution, procedural law and protective measures

Article 51 - Risk Assessment and Risk Management

The standardized and mandatory risk assessment tool developed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs constitutes a prerequisite for the issuance of a restraining order and for the application of the related electronic monitoring measure. The procedure and format for applying this tool are approved by Order No. 81 of the Minister of Internal Affairs of 13 July 2018, "On the Approval of the Forms of the Restraining Order and the Restraining Order Protocol, and on the Designation of Authorized Officials." The form approved under this Order represents a hybrid risk assessment instrument addressing intimate partner violence and gender-based and domestic violence; however, a number of risk factors are addressed only partially and/or in a fragmented manner.

Pursuant to paragraph 2 of the Order, specific positions within the Ministry of Internal Affairs are designated as competent to issue restraining orders and to carry out individual risk assessments. A particular challenge arises in cases of domestic/gender-based violence perpetrated by police officers, where both the risk assessment and the decision on the imposition of protective measures, including electronic monitoring, are taken by representatives of the same institution. Given that information is stored in unified internal

¹⁰²A dispute is ongoing in the Tbilisi City Court, with the organization "Partnership for Human Rights" demanding that the state program be adapted to the needs of a child with disabilities, a victim of sexual violence, administrative case N3/9786-24

databases and that institutional loyalty may result in tolerance towards a perpetrator who is a police officer, this practice poses a serious risk to the safety of victims. Such an approach may also undermine victims' trust in law enforcement authorities and deter them from reporting violence.¹⁰³ Beyond the designation of the Ministry of Internal Affairs as the sole competent authority, the risk assessment mechanism itself presents additional structural deficiencies.

The risk assessment tool consists of 23 questions, of which 18 are answered directly by the victim, while information for five questions is obtained through police databases. At present, the questionnaire covers risk factors such as stalking; prior acts of violence; domestic violence; risk of femicide or lethal outcome; severity and escalation of violence; risk of repetition; pregnancy; possession of or access to firearms by the perpetrator; attempts by the victim to initiate divorce or terminate the relationship; previous incidents of violence; the existence of prior restraining or prohibitory measures; neglect of the needs of minors; sexual violence; threats of killing the victim or her children; threats of suicide; coercive and controlling behaviour; and previous incidents of non-lethal strangulation. The questionnaire also includes scored indicators related to the harmful use of alcohol and drugs, gambling addiction, and the presence of mental health conditions.

However, the questionnaire does not include a specific and clearly formulated question regarding the initiation of divorce proceedings by the victim or the definitive termination of the relationship with the perpetrator. In the current instrument, this critical risk factor is only indirectly and fragmentarily addressed, leaving its identification dependent on the diligence and good faith of the police officer completing the assessment. This undermines the requirement under Article 51 of the Istanbul Convention for an effective and structured assessment of the risk of repetition, escalation, and lethal violence.

Furthermore, while the questionnaire contains certain elements relevant to violence committed in the context of so-called "honour" (such as coercive control and restriction of autonomy), it does not adequately reflect the specific dynamics, indicators, and patterns of honour-based violence. As a result, there is a substantial risk that such forms of violence will not be properly identified, assessed, or addressed within the existing risk assessment framework.

Although the current risk assessment tool broadly addresses several factors relevant to the objectives of Article 51 of the Istanbul Convention, a number of key vulnerability factors remain outside the scope of assessment. These include, inter alia, disability, advanced age, social isolation, dependency, and rigid hierarchical power structures within families or communities. The absence of these factors from the assessment process may significantly impair the victim's ability to protect herself, leave the perpetrator, or seek assistance, thereby increasing the risk of serious harm or lethal violence.

Despite the structural shortcomings of the questionnaire, where it is completed comprehensively and accurately, the likelihood of imposing protective measures, including restraining orders and electronic monitoring, is generally high. However, in practice,

¹⁰³ For the purpose of ensuring the objective and effective investigation of crimes committed by law enforcement officials, the need for an independent investigative mechanism has been repeatedly emphasized. In this context, the State Inspector's Service was established in 2019, and, following its subsequent abolition, the Special Investigative Service was created. Among other offences, the mandate of this body extended to the investigation of crimes committed by police officers in non-professional (private or domestic) contexts, explicitly grounded in the requirements of independence and impartiality of investigations.

significant deficiencies have been identified in its implementation. Numerous victims report that not all questions were asked, or that the purpose and implications of the questions were not adequately explained. In some cases, authorized officials arbitrarily recorded zero-risk responses, despite the presence of positive indicators that should have automatically precluded such scoring. In addition, information concerning the perpetrator was, in several cases, not properly verified or documented through police databases, which subsequently led to the revocation of restraining orders or the termination of electronic monitoring measures.

The practical application of electronic monitoring as a risk management measure also raises serious concerns. The low rate of its use indicates that law enforcement officials frequently fail to adequately inform victims about the purpose, protective function, and operational aspects of electronic monitoring.¹⁰⁴ Consequently, victims either decline the measure themselves or are informed by officials that it is unnecessary. In multiple cases documented by non-governmental organizations, electronic monitoring was imposed only following persistent advocacy by legal representatives. Furthermore, the application of multiple electronic monitoring devices in cases involving a single perpetrator and multiple victims remains problematic.

Equally problematic is the practice of risk re-assessment by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Existing procedures do not incorporate comprehensive risk management strategies aimed at ensuring the ongoing safety of victims throughout the duration of protective measures, as required by Article 51 of the Istanbul Convention. Order No. 100 of the Minister of Internal Affairs of 11 December 2019 establishes supervision procedures for compliance with restraining, protective, and firearms-related restriction orders, including mandatory personal visits and interviews based on assessed risk levels. However, cases documented by non-governmental organizations demonstrate that such contacts are often formalistic in nature and are not substantively oriented towards dynamic risk re-assessment or the prevention of escalation.

Accordingly, the existing framework for risk assessment and risk management remains fragmented and insufficient. It does not ensure a comprehensive, victim-centred, and dynamic assessment of risks, nor does it provide effective risk management measures in line with the due diligence obligations and substantive requirements set out in Article 51 of the Istanbul Convention.

Emerging trends on violence against women and domestic violence

Since November 2024, during the November–December 2024 protests and again in February 2025, the State repeatedly used violent and excessive force to disperse peaceful

¹⁰⁴ According to research conducted in 2024 by the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, and based on data provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, electronic monitoring was imposed on: 6 individuals in 2020; 15 individuals in 2021; 18 individuals in 2022; and 104 individuals in 2023. This information is confirmed by the letter of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia dated 7 March 2024 (Ref. No. MIA 7 24 00707921). See Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, *State Response to Gender-Motivated Violence in Georgia*, 2024. pp. 95-96

demonstrations.¹⁰⁵ These involved tactics amounting to torture and other forms of ill-treatment, the disproportionate use of chemical irritants, as well as arbitrary detentions, physical force, and widespread intimidation of protesters.¹⁰⁶

A particularly alarming emerging trend is the use of gender-based violence and gender-motivated hostility against women protesters, manifesting in sexist, misogynistic, and sexually explicit attacks. Interviews with female detainees from the November–December 2024 demonstrations show a pattern of gender-based harassment, degrading comments, and threats of sexual violence, including threats of rape.¹⁰⁷ Women reported being dragged by police, forced onto their knees in a police van, subjected to humiliating verbal assaults.¹⁰⁸

Gender-based targeting during protests also intersected with other forms of hate motivated hostility. During the 2024 dispersals, gender stereotypes and gendered hostility were especially visible through frequent use of homophobic language and subjecting men perceived as LGBTQI+ to intensified violence, illustrating how gender and sexuality-based prejudice informed the misconduct of law enforcement.¹⁰⁹

On 2 February 2025, during another large protest rally, police behavior toward women was particularly aggressive. Officers repeatedly used sexist and misogynistic language, pushed and hit women.¹¹⁰

investigations into these cases of police violence remain ineffective.¹¹¹ As a result, police violence, including gender-based violence perpetrated by law enforcement, continues to go unaddressed, leaving such abuses without accountability.

In 2025, additionally, cases emerged in which individuals detained under administrative or criminal law, including women, reported being forced to completely undress for personal searches or examinations.¹¹² Reports indicate that such forced full-body strip searches have

¹⁰⁵ GYLA et al.; HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS IN GEORGIA FOLLOWING THE 2024 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, 28 November 2024 – 28 February 2025, <https://www.gyla.ge/en/post/adamianis-uplebata-krizisi-dokumentirebis-angarishi>, [10.12.2025].

¹⁰⁶ Ibid; see also BBC, Did Georgian police use a chemical weapon against protesters? - BBC World Service Documentaries, 01.11.2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4-koO916Gk&t=133s>, [10.12.2025].

¹⁰⁷ GYLA et al.; HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS IN GEORGIA FOLLOWING THE 2024 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, 28 November 2024 – 28 February 2025, pg. 51-52, <https://www.gyla.ge/en/post/adamianis-uplebata-krizisi-dokumentirebis-angarishi>, [10.12.2025]; GYLA, On March 8, 2025, Georgia faces a sharply deteriorating situation regarding women's rights, 08.03.2025, <https://www.gyla.ge/en/post/2025-8-marti-qalta-uflbebi-saia>, [10.12.2025]; Amnesty International, FROM INSULTS TO ASSAULTS: WEAPONIZING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN PROTESTORS IN GEORGIA, 2025, <https://eurasia.amnesty.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/from-insults-to-assaults-police-violence-towards-women-protestors-in-georgia.pdf>, [10.12.2025].

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ GYLA et al.; HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS IN GEORGIA FOLLOWING THE 2024 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, 28 November 2024 – 28 February 2025, pg. 51, <https://www.gyla.ge/en/post/adamianis-uplebata-krizisi-dokumentirebis-angarishi>, [10.12.2025];

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 51-52; see also GYLA, On March 8, 2025, Georgia faces a sharply deteriorating situation regarding women's rights, 08.03.2025, <https://www.gyla.ge/en/post/2025-8-marti-qalta-uflbebi-saia>, [10.12.2025].

¹¹¹ Report of the Public Defender of Georgia on the Situation of Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia 2024, pg. 62, <https://ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2025091211433999093.pdf>, [10.12.2025].

¹¹² GYLA responds to the unacceptable practice of stripping detainees, 29.03.2025, <https://www.gyla.ge/en/post/saia-exmianeba-dakavebulta-gashishvleblis-dausjvebel%20praqtikas>, [10.12.2025]; Amnesty International, FROM INSULTS TO ASSAULTS: WEAPONIZING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN PROTESTORS IN GEORGIA, 2025, <https://eurasia.amnesty.org/wp->

also occurred in the context of a house search of a woman activist.¹¹³ This degrading and unjustified practice serves no legitimate purpose, serves as a mean of humiliation, control, and punishment, violates CPT standards¹¹⁴, and places detainees, especially women, in extremely vulnerable situations.

Overall, a deeply concerning picture emerges: the police, who are obligated to protect people from gender-based violence and are expected to demonstrate heightened awareness and sensitivity, show not only to lack such awareness but to actively participate in and perpetuate gender-based violence, discrimination, and harmful stereotypes. This evolving trend risks severely undermining trust in law enforcement, discouraging women from seeking help or reporting violence, and further supporting a culture of impunity. It signals a grave deterioration in human rights guarantees and urgent need for accountability.

Recommendations:

- Standardise and enforce proper completion of risk assessments, including mandatory asking and explanation of all questions to victims; prohibition of arbitrary zero-risk scoring where risk indicators are present; compulsory verification and documentation of perpetrator-related information through relevant databases.
- Improve the effective use of electronic monitoring as a protective measure, by ensuring victims are fully informed, in a clear and accessible manner, about its purpose, operation, and protective function; preventing discouragement or informal refusal of electronic monitoring by officials; enabling the use of multiple monitoring devices in cases involving one perpetrator and multiple victims.
- Strengthen risk management and re-assessment procedures, ensuring that supervision visits and interviews are substantive, dynamic, and aimed at preventing escalation rather than formal compliance only.
- Introduce mandatory, specialised training for authorised officials, focusing on risk identification and management under Article 51; dynamics of coercive control, honour-based violence, and post-separation violence; communication with victims in a trauma-informed and disability-inclusive manner.
- Establish independent oversight and accountability mechanisms to monitor the quality, consistency, and outcomes of risk assessments, restraining orders, and electronic monitoring decisions, including effective remedies where failures place victims at risk.
- **Ensure effective, independent, and prompt investigations** into all allegations of police violence, including gender-based and sexually motivated abuse, with clear procedures for victim protection, evidence preservation, and prosecution of perpetrators.

[content/uploads/2025/05/from-insults-to-assaults-police-violence-towards-women-protesters-in-georgia.pdf](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/GEA25/05/2025/01/01/content/uploads/2025/05/from-insults-to-assaults-police-violence-towards-women-protesters-in-georgia.pdf), [10.12.2025].

¹¹³ Amnesty International, FROM INSULTS TO ASSAULTS: WEAPONIZING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN PROTESTORS IN GEORGIA, 2025, <https://eurasia.amnesty.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/from-insults-to-assaults-police-violence-towards-women-protesters-in-georgia.pdf>, [10.12.2025].

¹¹⁴ According to the Council of Europe's Committee against Torture (CPT), state should ensure that resort to a strip-search is always based on an individual risk assessment and that detained persons who are searched are not required to remove all their clothes at the same time; that is, a person should be allowed to remove clothing above the waist and get dressed before removing further clothing. Police officers should be instructed accordingly. See CPT/Inf (2025) 11, pg. 21, <https://rm.coe.int/1680b4e6af>, [14.11.2025].

- **Ban humiliating and/or degrading practices**, including forced full-body strip searches or any forms of sexualised abuse, ensuring privacy, dignity, and informed consent during searches.
- **Collect, analyse, and publish sex- and gender-disaggregated data** on police interactions with the public, use of force, and complaints, to identify patterns of discrimination and inform policy reform.