

Georgia: Independent media face new wave of repression as new laws come into effect.

Laws on foreign funding and broadcast content empower authorities to censor, prosecute and close media which provide vital sources of news and information to the public

As the ruling Georgian Dream party intensifies efforts to consolidate authoritarian rule, independent media face unprecedented pressure and are now on the brink of survival. Journalists are increasingly subjected to detentions, physical attacks, arbitrary fines, censorship, as well as financial and institutional repression.

We, the undersigned international media freedom, journalists', and human rights organisations, renew our call on the international community, especially the European Union (EU), to exert effective pressure on the Georgian Dream ruling party to end the suppression of independent journalism and to uphold democratic principles and media freedom. We further reiterate our full solidarity with Georgian journalists, who, despite mounting pressure, refuse to be silenced.

In recent months, the Georgian Dream party has enacted several repressive pieces of legislation, including the new [Foreign Agents Registration Act](#), as well as amendments to the [Law on Grants](#) and the [Law of Broadcasting](#).

As a result, directors of media and CSOs now risk criminal prosecution if the state alleges they acted on behalf of “foreign principals”¹ and deliberately failed to register. Furthermore, NGOs and media organisations are required to obtain “the consent of the government or an authorised person/body designated by the government” before receiving any grants from outside Georgia. Even the provision of free training to journalists by international organisations is expected to be [ruled](#) a breach of the law.

Independent media in Georgia may only have months left before they are forced to close, depriving the public of independent news.

¹ The list of those who can qualify as “foreign principals” ranges from foreign governments, organisations, and companies to foreign individuals or Georgian citizens who are not permanently residing in Georgia.

Using the new amendments to the law on broadcasting, the authorities have already [filed](#) complaints against Formula TV and TV Pirveli with the Georgian National Communications Commission (GNCC).

These complaints object to the broadcasters' use of terms such as "illegitimate Parliament," "illegitimate government," "oligarchic regime," or "regime prisoners". Formula TV and TV Pirveli now face possible sanctions ranging from public or written warnings and content correction, to imposing fines or ultimately removing licences.

This represents a clear attempt by the Georgian Dream party to impose strict censorship and silence independent media.

Additionally, journalists covering protests have been subjected to heavy fines in recent months. Mapping Media Freedom data records [28 journalists](#) fined 5,000 Lari (approximately EUR 1,600) for "blocking the road" since November 28, while covering pro-European rallies in Tbilisi. Some journalists have been fined multiple times.

The Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) has long served as an instrument of the Georgian Dream government, suppressing efforts by journalists seeking to report free of political control. Recently, the GPB management [fired](#) journalists Vasil Ivanov Chikovani and Nino Zautashvili after they spoke out about political interference at the broadcaster, and subsequently shut down "The Real Space," the talk show hosted by Zautashvili.

Meanwhile, Mzia Amaglobeli, a veteran Georgian journalist and the founder and director of two of the country's most prominent independent media organisations, [has been unjustly held in pre-trial detention](#) since her arrest in early January. According to Mapping Media Freedom data, at least 13 journalists have been detained since November 28 on various charges. Since that date, 246 journalists have been [subjected to attacks](#) including physical harassment, smear campaigns, obstruction of work, legal harassment, and fines.

The crackdown on media freedom is unfolding against the backdrop of a [rapid and systematic](#) dismantling of the rule of law and democratic freedoms.

Without sustained international pressure on both Georgian Dream officials and the leaders of institutions responsible for the media crackdown, independent journalism in Georgia cannot survive.

This dismantling of media freedom, democratic freedoms and journalists rights in Georgia, amid rising authoritarianism and a shift in Georgia's geopolitical direction has wider implications for democracy in the region. We urge the international community to place effective pressure on Georgia and to support independent journalism in the country. We call on the Georgian Dream ruling party to end its assault on the media, repeal repressive legislation and immediately release Mzia Amaglobeli.

Signed:

International Press Institute (IPI)
European Federation of Journalists (EFJ)
European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF)
Osservatorio Balcani Caucaso Transeuropa
Article 19 Europe
Index on Censorship
Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP)
Society of Journalists (Warsaw)
South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO)
Media Diversity Institute
Media Diversity Institute Global
Justice for Journalists Foundation
RNW Media
[Ossigeno.info](https://www.ossigeno.info)
Reporters Without Borders (RSF)
IFEX
Association of European Journalists in Belgium (AEJ Belgium)
IMS (International Media Support)
Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD)
Democracy Reporting International (DRI)
Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety (IRFS)
PEN International
Public Media Alliance (PMA)
Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)

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