

# Freedom of Religion or Belief, Equality, and Secularity

---

April 2026



# Freedom of Religion or Belief, Equality, and Secularity

Monitoring Period: April 2026

Tolerance and Diversity Institute (TDI)

[www.tdi.ge/en](http://www.tdi.ge/en)



The Tolerance and Diversity Institute (TDI) continues to monitor the environment regarding freedom of religion or belief, equality, and secularity. This includes monitoring statements and activities by political parties, politicians, public figures, and clergy.

The present report covers **April 2026**

2024-2025 reports on monitoring the pre-election and post-election environments regarding freedom of religion or belief, equality, and secularity:

**Pre-election period (2024)**

August 25 to September 25

September 25 to October 25

**Post-election period (2024)**

October 26 to November 26, 2024

November 26 to December 26, 2024

**2025**

February, March, April, May, June,  
July, August, September, October,  
November-December;

**2026**

January-February; March

**Cover photo:** Mariam Nikuradze, OC Media



## Contents

Main Trends.....	4
<b>1. Manipulation through Pseudo-Religious Narratives .....</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1. The Narrative of a Fight against the GOC.....	5
Political Opposition .....	5
Civil Society Organizations .....	6
Media Independent of GD .....	7
1.2. GD as a Force Defending the GOC .....	7
<b>2. The Issue of Interference in the Autonomy of the GOC .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3. Media Coverage of the Death of Patriarch Ilia II and the Subsequent Period .....</b>	<b>10</b>
Media Outlets with a Pro-Government Propagandistic Editorial Policy .....	10
Coverage by Media Independent of GD .....	12
<b>4. The EU as a Force Acting against the GOC and Sovereignty .....</b>	<b>12</b>
Statements against the EU Ambassador to Georgia, Paweł Herczyński .....	13
Statements against Poland .....	13
<b>5. GD’s Narrative: The EU and the US Government as Controlled by the “Deep State” ....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>6. Statements by Clergy .....</b>	<b>16</b>
6.1. Statements by Orthodox Clergy Regarding the Election of the Future Patriarch .....	16
Statements in Support of Metropolitan Shio Mujiri.....	16
Statements on Possible External Interference and the Inadmissibility of Coercing Support for Any Candidate .....	16
Statements on Russia’s Interest in the Patriarchal Election.....	18
Statements Aligning with the Narratives of the GD Government .....	19
6.2. Critical Statements by Clergy on Social Problems, Political Justice, and Church–State Relations .....	20
Statements in Support of Children with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy .....	20
Support for Political Prisoners .....	21

## Main Trends

During the April 2026 reporting period, following the death of Patriarch Ilia II, Georgian Dream (GD) and its affiliated political groups and media further bolstered the manipulation of pseudo-religious and anti-Western narratives in the context of the process related to the election of a new Patriarch.

As before, the narrative of a “fight against the Orthodox Church” continued to dominate. Georgian Dream and affiliated media framed critical assessments, journalistic questions, theological discussions, or the expression of a position regarding a particular cleric as an “anti-Church campaign,” a “foreign assignment,” and an attempt to weaken the Georgian Orthodox Church’s (GOC) authority.

In April, pro-government propaganda media played a particularly prominent role in spreading these narratives. Reports by Imedi, Post TV, and Rustavi 2 repeatedly circulated messages about an “attack on the Church,” the “discrediting of the Synod,” “foreign-funded groups,” and an “anti-Church campaign.”

The rhetoric of protecting the GOC’s autonomy became subject to political instrumentalization. GD stated that interference in the process of electing the Patriarch was unacceptable and that the decision should be made solely by the Holy Synod. At the same time, representatives of the Georgian Dream government and pro-government media were themselves actively shaping narratives around the election of the future Patriarch, particularly in support of Metropolitan Shio Mujiri.

Georgian Dream continued its hostile anti-Western rhetoric. The European Union and Western partners were portrayed as forces acting against the Orthodox Church, sovereignty, and national identity. Conspiratorial narratives about the “deep state” and the “global war party” also continued to circulate against the EU and US authorities.

During the same period, the interest of Russian state agencies and the Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church in the election of Georgia’s future Patriarch became publicly visible. The statement by Russia’s Foreign Intelligence Service and the comment by Patriarch Kirill of All Russia indicated that, for the Kremlin, the future course of the Georgian Orthodox Church, particularly in relation to Ukraine, carries significant political importance.

As in previous reporting periods, a small number of clergy condemned Georgian Dream’s repressive policies, spoke about the social and political crisis, the distinction between the superficial and genuine understanding of Christian values, the need for civic unity, and the threat of Russia’s possible destructive influence.

# 1. Manipulation through Pseudo-Religious Narratives

## 1.1. The Narrative of a Fight against the GOC

During the reporting period, the GD government and persons associated with it disseminated messages about an organized and coordinated attack against the GOC. According to this narrative, criticism of the religious institution, the process of electing the future Patriarch, Synod sessions, public statements by clerics, or the expression of a position regarding individual clerics is not part of public discussion, but rather a process supported by external forces, aimed at weakening the authority of the GOC and national identity. These messages became particularly active following the death of Patriarch Ilia II and the election of a new Patriarch.

As in the previous reporting period, the following were identified as enemies of the GOC and the Patriarch: *the political opposition, civil society organizations, and media independent of GD.*

### Political Opposition

GD often used the name of the GOC to portray the political opposition as “anti-Church” and subordinated to a “foreign force.” According to the interpretation of representatives of GD and its satellite party, People’s Power, the political opposition, in the form of the “collective National Movement,” is one of the forces coordinating “externally assigned” attacks on the GOC, the Patriarch, and the Patriarchate. According to them, the aim of these attacks is to create division within the GOC and society. GD statements also emphasized that the GOC supports the policy pursued by the state, while, after the death of Patriarch Ilia II, a large part of the population, by expressing respect and sympathy for the Patriarch, gave an appropriate response to forces driven by “hatred” toward the GOC.

According to GD, the “collective National Movement” has for years deliberately opposed the GOC, the Patriarch, and clerics, attempted to undermine society’s “spiritual pillar,” and is now, for political interests, trying to demonstrate ostensible support for the GOC. However, according to GD, because of its past actions, the opposition will not be able to transform its image or restore public trust.

GD used, for its own propaganda purposes, the [statement](#) of Tina Bokuchava, Chairperson of the United National Movement, made while speaking about the results of the parliamentary elections in Hungary and Péter Magyar’s election campaign. According to Bokuchava, GD monopolizes the GOC’s name through manipulative means, and, in response, the opposition should show Georgian citizens that it is not “godless and faithless,” as Péter Magyar did.

### Examples:

[Shalva Papuashvili](#), Speaker of GD Parliament, 29 April: “I call on society and the media to look at all this calmly. We know what **hatred the radical opposition has toward the Georgian Church**. We know what they did while in power, and we also see what they are trying to do while in opposition. There is nothing new in the fact that the radical opposition has developed hatred toward the Church.”

[Mikheil Kavelashvili](#), GD President, 3 April: "...No one has forgotten how they fought against the Patriarch. Several videos were circulated in which the Patriarch himself speaks about confrontation and the fight against him, about how the forces and government of that time wanted to diminish our Apostolic Church. This was done precisely by those people who are now united in the opposition. During the days of the Patriarch's death, it became clear that the majority of people are loyal to their Church and faith. They could never diminish the authority of our Patriarch and the Patriarchate in any way."

[Guram Macharashvili](#), MP from GD's satellite party People's Power, 20 April: "...What should the satellites of the 'National Movement' offer society? Are they apologizing for insulting the Church or to the families of the victims of the previous government? They are not. Regardless of political preference, on 17–21 March, the **people once again showed their support for the Church and Orthodoxy. In the so-called union, they support legalizing LGBT propaganda.** What will they offer the people? No one believes them; I think not even their voters do."

### *Statements on Tina Bokuchava's comment:*

[Shalva Papuashvili](#), Speaker of GD Parliament, 15 April: "This is strangling through an embrace — as if they want to show closeness, but **in reality to act with hostility toward the Georgian Church.** I do not know whether this is what they intend to do."

[Rati Ionatamishvili](#), GD MP, 15 April: "It is a fact that the 'Natsis' [meaning United National Movement party] admit that they are actually **people without a homeland, without God, and that this issue may only be useful for electoral votes.** However, on the contrary, they are showing their hypocrisy even more, and society sees this very well."

[Nino Tsilosani](#), Deputy Speaker of GD Parliament, 15 April: "For years, the 'National Movement,' with its party members, activists, and those television channels that **they aggressively used against the Church, waged the dirtiest campaign against the Patriarch.** Even during the days of the Patriarch's death, they directly attacked Metropolitan Shio, the Locum Tenens of the Patriarchal Throne. **All of this was aimed at somehow destroying our spiritual pillar and strongest Church, and at bringing disorder and confrontation.**"

[Gia Volski](#), GD MP, 15 April: "I do not think they have any sense of remorse about what they said, how they acted toward the Church, what position they expressed, and whose assignments they were carrying out. [The United National Movement is implied.] There is no remorse whatsoever. **A new wave of attack on the Church is being planned, since this represents a serious foundation for any state...**"

## **Civil Society Organizations**

According to the narrative of GD and its satellite party, People's Power, civil society organizations, like the political opposition, also act on "external assignments" and are hostile toward the GOC and the Patriarch. In their discourse, liberal values are equated with an ideology "worse than fascism."

[Kakha Kaladze](#), Mayor of Tbilisi, 2 April: "Making such statements about the Patriarchate did not start yesterday. **This is an attempt at the targeted discrediting of the Church and the Patriarchate. All of this is externally funded and carried out in accordance with assignments issued from outside.** For years, there have been certain non-governmental organizations that had received assignments from outside to make statements against the Church..."

[Levan Machavariani](#), GD MP, 4 April: "The attacks do not stop; they continue. All of this began many years ago and, by the way, was funded from outside. **Serious attacks on the Patriarchate and on His Holiness began years ago — discrediting campaigns carried out by these radical groups and rich 'NGOs.'**"

[Irakli Kirtskhalia](#), leader of the GD parliamentary majority, 23 April: “So-called non-governmental organizations acting under informal oligarchic influences can no longer inject **Brussels’ black money into Georgian politics and into the establishment of pseudo-liberal ideology** — into the establishment and dissemination of an ideology that, in many respects, may even be considered worse than fascism.”

## Media Independent of GD

According to GD’s narrative, like the opposition and civil society organizations, the media is also involved in the campaign against the GOC. Given the high public interest in the procedures and candidates for the election of the new Patriarch, online and television media covered Synod sessions, information about possible candidates, election procedures, and interviews and public statements by clerics. According to GD, the real reason behind coverage of the process by media with “foreign funding” was “interference” in the work of the Synod, the “maximum damage” of the GOC, causing “reputational harm” to the Synod, and conducting an “electoral campaign” in favor of or against particular clerics.

[Shalva Papuashvili](#), Speaker of GD Parliament, 3 April: “We will observe who will attempt to interfere in Church affairs. We can already say that there are attempts at external interference. We see that **foreign-funded party propaganda groups, Radio Liberty and Tabula, are directly interfering in the work of the Synod**. They have launched a campaign against specific clerics. Radio Liberty, Tabula, Publika, and Netgazeti have **launched a direct election campaign in favor of or against various clerics.**”

[Tornike Cheishvili](#), GD MP, 2 April: “What irritates them is that society united when it came to paying respect to His Holiness and Beatitude, Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia Ilia II. This was a horrifying picture for them. Taking this into account, **they are now trying in every way possible to inflict reputational damage on the Mother Church and the Holy Synod.**”

[Levan Makhashvili](#), GD MP, 1 April: “...These media outlets, which position themselves as if they are reporting the truth, in reality have as **their main goal the maximum damage of the Church and other public institutions through various types of disinformation campaigns.**”

## 1.2. GD as a Force Defending the GOC

During the current reporting period, one of the main themes in GD’s narratives was its portrayal as a force defending the GOC, national identity, traditions, and sovereignty. According to this narrative, the GOC and the value-based order associated with it are allegedly the target of a coordinated attack by political and civic actors operating inside the country, as well as by their “foreign friends”; GD, in turn, is the only political force that restrains this attack and protects both the GOC and the State’s “true” national interests.

In this context, political criticism of the government and differing public positions are presented not as legitimate democratic debate, but as actions directed against the GOC and national identity. The claim to be defending the GOC allows the GD government to present its political course not as a party position, but as a necessary condition for protecting the country’s identity and sovereignty.

## Examples:

[Irakli Kobakhidze](#), GD Prime Minister, 29 April: "...These were not only individual politicians; this was the **entire party spectrum, the media, and NGOs**. Everyone was involved in the **campaign against the Church, and we had to make great efforts to slow down and stop this campaign**. We needed an entire counter-campaign for this and ultimately achieved the goal, but it was extremely difficult. **Their foreign friends were dictating the conduct of such a campaign.**"

[Mikheil Kavelashvili](#), GD President, 3 April: "...For one week, I was in constant contact with clerics, and they, too, were astonished by what was happening in Georgia after the death of the Patriarch. This shows what strength this great person had. In addition, we saw the attitude of the people not only in Georgia, but also beyond its borders. **This is precisely what we are defending.**"

[Mamuka Mdinaradze](#), candidate for State Minister and future Vice Prime Minister, 23 April: "...We can also create PR products, but we do not do that. Democracy built on a solid foundation is stronger, as are the economy, security, and independence, sovereignty, national identity, relations with the Church and society — they are stronger, truer, and more worthy of pride, and this has a positive impact in the long term."

[Kakha Kaladze](#), Mayor of Tbilisi, 21 April "Peace, economic stability, the inviolability of the interests of the state and the population of Georgia, **the protection of the Georgian Church, our traditions, and culture — this is the result of GD's 14-year policy.**"

## 2. The Issue of Interference in the Autonomy of the GOC

After the death of Patriarch Ilia II, the issue of electing the next Patriarch became a major topic of political discourse. During the reporting period, on 3 April, the [Holy Synod of the GOC convened](#) and discussed election-related procedural issues, as set out in the 1995 [Statute](#) on the Governance and Administration of the GOC. At its 28 April [session](#), the Holy Synod selected [three patriarchal candidates](#) to be presented at an expanded meeting.

A number of clerics commented on the electoral procedural issues, the candidates, and the ongoing process, both in sermons and in interviews with various media outlets. Some Orthodox clerics generally emphasized that the election of the Patriarch falls within the authority of the Holy Synod and that no one should interfere in the process. Other clerics publicly spoke about the risks of possible interference and influence in the process of electing the Patriarch. (See clerics' statements in Chapter 6.1. *Statements by Orthodox Clerics Regarding the Election of the Future Patriarch.*)

Against this background, GD presented almost any public discourse concerning the institution of the Patriarch's Locum Tenens, the rules for electing the Patriarch, individual clerics, or Synod decisions as interference in the process of electing the future Patriarch. This included journalistic questions and media interviews with clerics, explanations of ecclesiastical rules, coverage of clerics' statements, and critical opinions expressed by individual persons about specific hierarchs.

One of the main aspects of this narrative was the portrayal of the opposition, independent media, and civil society organizations as forces acting against the GOC. For example, Shalva Papuashvili, Speaker of the GD Parliament, spoke about a "[campaign](#)" that, according to him,

targeted specific bishops and the late Patriarch. In another statement, Papuashvili emphasized that the election of the Patriarch is a matter for the Holy Synod and that “no one should interfere.” At the same time, however, he assessed the process from a political position, including by speaking about “foreign interference” and describing media coverage of the issue as an “[anti-Church campaign](#).”

The same issue was addressed by GD MPs [Zviad Shalamberidze](#), [Giorgi Volski](#), [Giorgi Gabunia](#), and [Davit Matikashvili](#); GD candidate for State Minister and future Vice Prime Minister [Mamuka Mdinardze](#); and [Eka Sepashvili](#), MP from GD’s satellite party People’s Power.

At the same time, the issue of Metropolitan Shio Mujiri occupied a significant place in the rhetoric of GD and its affiliates. As in the previous reporting period, GD and pro-government media platforms presented the fact that Ilia II had selected Metropolitan Shio Mujiri as Locum Tenens during his lifetime as if this implied hereditary succession to the Patriarchal throne<sup>1</sup>. According to their messaging, respect for Ilia II automatically implied support for the locum tenens he had chosen, while any discussion of other candidates for the Patriarchate was framed as a rejection of the Patriarch’s own choice.

[Kakha Kaladze](#), Mayor of Tbilisi, 3 April: “...You see who the criticism is coming from — from **traitors without a homeland and from agents**, from people who directly oppose our Patriarchate...”

[Guram Macharashvili](#), MP from GD’s satellite party People’s Power, 4 April: “My interest is that the direction the Patriarch had continues in the Synod, as in the GOC as a whole. This is not only my interest but also the interest of the congregation and the Patriarch. He voiced this during his lifetime as well. We hear manipulations claiming that the Patriarch did not say this or that. **Around eight years ago, he very clearly said who he wanted to be as a Locum Tenens and, accordingly, over these years, he continued to maintain this position.**”

[Gia Gachechiladze](#), GD propagandist, 7 April: “...**I will tell you directly that, for me, the title of a worthy bishop will end there if this letter of the Patriarch, God forbid, begins not to be fulfilled.** The dignity of any bishop will end there, no matter how much I respect and value them. I think and very much hope that the decision on this letter, call it whatever you want, even a will, will be made unanimously.”

During the reporting period, propagandistic, government-aligned media expressed support for Shio Mujiri. For example, the Rustavi 2’s report, “[Attempt to Discredit the Synod](#),” stated that “unsubstantiated accusations, insulting statements, and attacks” against the Patriarch’s Locum Tenens had begun years earlier, and that after Patriarch Ilia II’s death, the campaign intensified further. In the report [The Patriarch’s Cross](#) by the UK-sanctioned pro-government television Imedi TV, supportive assessments by Georgian and Athonite clerics were presented about Metropolitan Shio as “the continuer of Ilia II’s path and heir.”

In the context of the Patriarchal election process, Russia’s expressed interest in the future Patriarch of the GOC is particularly noteworthy. Alongside the statement issued by [Russia’s](#)

---

<sup>1</sup> The locum tenens is a hierarch who assumes administrative authority in the event of the Patriarch’s death, resignation, or inability to perform his duties. The role of the locum tenens is a temporary function intended to ensure continuity in the governance of the Church. source: <https://tabula.ge/ge/news/746561-ras-nishnavs-ras-ar-nishnavs-mosaqdreoba>

[Foreign Intelligence Service on 31 March](#), Patriarch Kirill of All Russia also [commented](#) on Georgia's future Patriarch and [expressed hope](#) that the future Patriarch of Georgia would not change the existing position regarding Ukraine. These statements show that Russian state and ecclesiastical figures are directly interested in influencing or maintaining influence over the future course of the GOC, which may be assessed as an open external interest and a potential desire to interfere in the process of electing the Patriarch.

It is noteworthy that, for years, the Russian Orthodox Church and its Patriarch Kirill, in a number of official addresses, [did not refer to Ilia II by his full title](#) and omitted the words “*Metropolitan of Bichvinta and Tskhum-Abkhazia*” from his title.

### 3. Media Coverage of the Death of Patriarch Ilia II and the Subsequent Period

#### Media Outlets with a Pro-Government Propagandistic Editorial Policy

During the reporting period, television channels and media platforms supportive of the ruling party disseminated GD's messages about a fight against the GOC. In their reports, opinions about the Patriarchal election process and criticism of the religious institution were presented as part of a process supported by external forces and involving opposition politicians, civil society organizations, activists, media outlets, and some clerics.

Media outlets with a pro-government propagandistic editorial policy launched an active campaign after the funeral of Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia II, which continued throughout the reporting period. The main information narrative was framed around a “targeted campaign against the Church,” with propaganda messages of largely identical content disseminated through special news segments and television programmes. These included, for example, reports by the UK-sanctioned television company Imedi: [Propaganda from Poland](#); [Interference in Church Affairs by Organizations Funded with European Money Will Be Met with an Appropriate Response](#); [Attacks on the Church and the Patriarch by the Opposition Continue](#); [The Attack on the Church Continues](#); [The GOC Is Again at the Epicentre of Attack](#); [Exposing the Enemies of the Church](#); [Anti-Church Campaign](#); and [Attack on the Church – A Targeted Campaign](#). Reports by the UK-sanctioned Post TV included: [Religion for PR](#), [Kviris Posti](#), and [Attack against the Church](#). Rustavi 2 reports included: [Attempt to Discredit the Synod](#); [Discrediting the Georgian Patriarchate on the Polish VOT TAK](#); [The Campaign against the Church Continues – This Time Petre Tsaava Criticizes the Patriarchate and the Late Patriarch of the Country](#); [Attempt to Discredit the Synod – The Synod Session Scheduled for 3 April and Further Manipulations on Church-Related Issues](#); and [Campaign against the Church](#).

The propaganda reports presented public statements by various opposition politicians in a manipulative manner, as well as personal opinions expressed at different times by individual activists, media representatives, and members of civil society on Church–state relations, the Patriarchal election, or the GOC Patriarchate. Reports built around these statements created the impression that all opposition politicians, activists, media outlets, and civil society organizations formed a homogeneous, antagonistic force. On the one hand, GD was presented as defending the GOC and traditional values; on the other, all opponents were portrayed as the “collective UNM,”<sup>2</sup> allegedly seeking, through “foreign funding,” to damage the authority of the Church. Within this narrative, any criticism of the GOC was automatically interpreted as foreign influence and anti-national activity.

Most of the reports were built around statements by GD leaders and members of its satellite party, People’s Power. The central thesis was a “targeted campaign against the Church,” which, according to GD, amounted to an [insult to faith](#), an [immoral](#) and [anti-Church](#) act, and [hostility](#) toward the country. GD referred to an [ordered campaign](#) whose aim, according to its messaging, was to [damage](#) and [discredit](#) the GOC, create [division among clerics](#), and [turn people against one another](#). According to these reports, opposition politicians, activists, certain media outlets, theologians, and clerics were becoming involved, one after another, in a [campaign against the GOC](#) allegedly motivated by hatred.

In some propagandistic, pro-government reports, journalists and TV anchors themselves expressed views aligned with GD’s messaging:

[Irakli Chikhladze](#), Deputy Director General of Imedi TV and host of *Imedis Kvira*: **“Several days after the death of His Holiness, all the hypocrites removed the mask of grief they had temporarily put on.** They want to turn the process of electing the new Patriarch into a show; they discuss a non-existent written will; they used the decision of His Holiness, the factor of the Locum Tenens, and even what the Patriarch said from the pulpit for speculation.”

[Anuki Gumberidze](#), journalist of Imedi TV’s programme *Imedis Kvira*: **“After the death of the Patriarch, the Georgian people gave an answer to foreign-funded NGOs and local domestic political actors engaged in insulting the Church and discrediting clerics.** These are people for whom national values are rooted in the defense of homeland, language, and faith, and whom they failed to mislead despite numerous anti-Georgian campaigns.”

[Natia Lazashvili](#), host of Rustavi 2’s programme *Kurier*: **“...Since the day of Ilia II’s death, laypersons have been interfering in ecclesiastical affairs and continue to manipulate the process through various rumors. The main aim is to gain influence over an influential institution, and to do this, they use familiar methods: discrediting the process and creating division within the Church.** They believe that the more scandal and confrontation there is within the Synod, the more the Church will be damaged and the less trust the congregation will have.”

---

<sup>2</sup> By the “collective UNM,” the Georgian Dream party and its leaders refer not only to the United National Movement (UNM) party itself, but also to almost the entire remaining pro-Western and opposition spectrum, critical civil society organizations, media and in general, opponents. In addition, members of the Georgian Dream Parliament, 89 MPs in total, have filed a [constitutional claim](#) with the Constitutional Court concerning the constitutionality of the activities of the political parties **“Unity – National Movement,” “Coalition for Change – Gvaramia, Melia, Girchi, Droa,” “Strong Georgia – Lelo, For the People, For Freedom!”** and the **“Federalist Party,”** as well as the issue of their [possible banning](#).

[Ana Shordia](#), host of Post TV's main news programme: "...As the Holy Synod prepares to elect the Patriarch, **the attack on an authoritative institution still does not stop**. Anti-national groups insult the late Patriarch and also criticize the Synod, which yesterday selected three candidates for Patriarch. **The aim of the campaign is to influence the process of electing the Patriarch and to discredit the Church**. Representatives of the opposition, media outlets connected to them, and so-called experts on religion are active."

## Coverage by Media Independent of GD

Following the death of the Catholicos-Patriarch, independent and critical media outlets not aligned with GD covered the procedures for electing the future Patriarch, possible candidates, and the institution of the Locum Tenens, given the high level of public interest. At the same time, they published clerics' public comments and opinions regarding the Patriarchal election, including in the form of exclusive interviews<sup>3</sup>.

Based on statements by Russia's intelligence service and by clerics, the media discussed possible interference by the "GD government" and "Russia" in the affairs of the Patriarchate and in the process of electing the future Patriarch.<sup>4</sup>

## 4. The EU as a Force Acting against the GOC and Sovereignty

During the reporting period, GD and affiliated actors continued their aggressive anti-Western campaign, portraying the European Union and the West as hostile to Georgia's [sovereignty](#), religious identity, traditions, and national values, while GD presented itself as a defender of traditions and Orthodoxy. GD also manipulatively used the death of the Catholicos-Patriarch and the process of electing the future Patriarch to reinforce its anti-Western rhetoric. According to GD, it is Western institutions and organizations that [incite, fund, and support the "campaign against the GOC."](#) Shalva Papuashvili, Speaker of the GD Parliament, also [accused](#) EU representatives of interfering in the GOC's internal affairs.

At the same time, during the reporting period, GD repeatedly attacked Georgia's partners and representatives of the EU and its member states in Georgia.

---

<sup>3</sup> Reports by Formula TV included: [How Two Hierarchs Dropped Out of the Race for the Patriarchate](#); [Three Candidates for Patriarch, The Synod Named Three Candidates for Patriarch](#); [Elections to the Patriarchal Throne](#); [Patriarchal Elections](#); ["Tomorrow Is a Fateful Day, One That Will Determine Future Life" — Metropolitan Grigol](#); and [Election Campaigning from the Pulpit](#). Reports by TV Pirveli included: [A Series of Controversial Sermons from the Pulpit](#); [The Rule for Electing the Patriarch | By What Criteria Should the New Patriarch Be Chosen?](#); [Whose Candidacies Are Emerging in the Patriarchal Election?](#); [Patriarchal Elections | The Main Messages of Clerics](#); [How Did Today's Synod Session Proceed?](#); [Bishop Saba Intskirveli Speaks about the Details](#); and [An Exclusive Interview with Bishop Dositheos of Belgium and the Netherlands](#).

<sup>4</sup> Reports by Formula TV included: [Discussion on the Future Patriarch](#); [Patriarchal Elections — Bishop Iakob Calls on Everyone Not to Interfere in the Affairs of the Hierarchs and to Stop Giving Instructions](#); and [Russian Intelligence Does Not Hide Its Interest in the Election Process of the Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia](#). Reports by TV Pirveli included: [GD Became Confused in Its Own Versions | Ivanishvili's Team Advised the Bishops to Reread Ilia II's Will](#); [Bishops' Criticism of GD | What Ivanishvili's Team Is Saying](#); [The Government Will Certainly Try to Interfere \[in the Election of the Patriarch\]](#); [Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service Has Already Interfered](#); and [Holy Synod Session, Europe Is Again GD's Target](#).

## Statements against the EU Ambassador to Georgia, Paweł Herczyński

On 23 April, EU Ambassador to Georgia Paweł Herczyński [spoke](#) at the European External Action Service (EEAS), where the documentary photo exhibition *Georgia in Focus* was opened. He discussed the challenges Georgia faces on its path to European integration and noted that the EU was ready to support the Georgian people. In the remarks, obtained by *Netgazeti*, he also added:

*“Georgia’s future has not yet been written, but what will be decided in the coming weeks and months will determine whether Georgia belongs to the European family of nations, based on democracy, the rule of law, and human rights, or, unfortunately, returns to its dark past.”*

This statement was followed by criticism from GD and a campaign to discredit the EU and Ambassador Herczyński. The Ambassador was also summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. GD Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze [accused the Ambassador](#) of threatening civil war and impoverishment. Following the Ambassador’s [summons](#), GD Foreign Minister [Maka Bochorishvili](#) stated that *“Brussels’ current policy toward Georgia, the steps taken and statements made with regard to Georgia, undermine trust between the parties and damage the Georgia–EU partnership.”*

The UK-sanctioned television company Imedi also [prepared](#) a report on the Ambassador’s statement, titled *Threat of Civil War*, claiming that the “EU representative once again crossed all red lines and grossly interfered in the internal affairs of a sovereign state.”

GD and representatives of its satellite parties used Paweł Herczyński’s statement to discredit the EU and the Ambassador. According to them, the EU, whose Ambassador they described as an agent of the “deep state,” is hostile to the GOC and, more broadly, to religious identity and traditions.

[Shalva Papuashvili](#), Speaker of GD Parliament, 23 April: “...We are being warned about civil war by those whose funding supports groups attacking the GOC, the state, and human dignity... We saw the people in the 2024 elections. We saw the people during the days of farewell to the Patriarch. And we will see the people once again in a few days, on 17 May — united, firm, and grounded in their faith and identity...”

[Irakli Kirtskhalia](#), leader of the GD parliamentary majority, 23 April: “...How else can one explain the fact that you call it a return to the dark past when we protect traditions in Georgia, respect the sanctity of the family, our religion, and identity? You call it the dark past that we recognize only two sexes, and that same-sex marriage is unacceptable to us, as is LGBTQ+ propaganda, especially among children...”

[United Neutral Georgia](#), GD’s satellite party, 27 April: “...These examples confirm that the ‘diplomats’ act according to one strategy and that their signature is identical. [...] **European ambassadors operating in Georgia are also obedient agents of the ‘deep state,’ that is, the global war party...**”

## Statements against Poland

Because of an opinion expressed by a guest invited to the Georgian-language news service of the Polish public broadcaster, Shalva Papuashvili, Speaker of GD Parliament, [accused Poland’s foreign ministry](#) of creating a propaganda tool and engaging in “propaganda of hatred in Georgia.”

In a [segment](#) concerning the Patriarchal election, respondent and commentator Gocha Mirtskhulava spoke about the 28 April Synod session and expressed his own assumption about Russian influence within the GOC.

The UK-sanctioned television channel Imedi prepared a special report on this issue, titled [Propaganda from Poland](#), and [addressed](#) the Polish Embassy with a question about “what response they have to the attack on the GOC and whether we should expect any reaction from them.”

[Kakha Kaladze](#), Mayor of Tbilisi, 30 April: “...In this case, in Georgia, which is a friendly country to Poland, **there is a direct attack on the Georgian GOC**. They have been noticed engaging in hostile activity, and all of this is regrettable.”

[Nino Tsilosani](#), Deputy Speaker of GD Parliament, 29 April: “Unfortunately, Poland’s decision responds to the **demand of Georgian radicals that a new source of disinformation and harmful propaganda should emerge, which is anti-state.**”

GD MPs [Irakli Kirtskhalia](#), [Giorgi Volski](#), and [Levan Makhashvili](#) made statements with similar content.

## 5. GD's Narrative: The EU and the US Government as Controlled by the "Deep State"

GD and affiliated propagandists systematically repeat the conspiratorial narrative of the "deep state" and the "global war party," according to which the European Union and Western institutions are controlled by a shadowy force, the "deep state." Within this narrative, *"Euro-bureaucracy is subject to informal oligarchic influence,"*<sup>5</sup> and the West's broader aim is to drag Georgia into war, bring about a change of government, strip the country of its Georgian identity, and ultimately weaken the GOC.

One of the disseminators of conspiracy theories about the "deep state" is GD propagandist **Zaza Shatirishvili**, who remained active during the reporting period. According to him, *"both the President [Donald Trump] and his team are, from beginning to end, service staff for oligarchic families."* He also stated that Viktor Orbán's political defeat in the elections was linked to Donald Trump and forces associated with the "deep state," which, he claimed, act in line with the interests of the "global war party." According to Shatirishvili, the main goal of oligarchic groups is for *"the country to be governed by puppets, by pawns subordinated to them, and for both Georgia and its people to serve the interests of oligarchic families."* Against this backdrop, he claimed, Georgia has a government *"imbued with a patriotic spirit."* Conspiracy theories about the "deep state" were also disseminated by GD's satellite party, **United Neutral Georgia**. According to its representatives, *"just like the vast majority of the European bureaucracy, European ambassadors operating in Georgia are also obedient agents of the 'deep state,' also known as the global war party."* In the case of the United States, they argued that the "deep state" is undergoing a process of rebranding, in which *"Donald Trump himself is the direct embodiment of 'deep state' rule."*

---

<sup>5</sup> It is noteworthy that since the launch of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, the Georgian Dream Government has systematically developed a propagandistic discourse about the "Global War Party" and "Global Ideology," allegedly fighting Georgia's sovereignty, religious identity, and traditions. In their rhetoric, the "Deep State" has become the main term designating a collective Western hostile force. In reality, Georgian Dream relies on Kremlin narratives, in which "secret elites," the "U.S. Deep State," and "Nazi Ukraine" are conspiratorially waging war against Russia, its allies, and the Orthodox world. The Kremlin also manipulatively uses narratives emphasizing claims about President Volodymyr Zelensky's Jewish background to blame ethnic Jews for the war. After the start of the Israel-Iran war, Georgian Dream propagandists began to specify whom they mean by the "Deep State" and "Global War Party." According to their anti-Semitic statements, behind all wars and negative developments in the world stand the so-called "oligarchic families," **meaning Jews**.

For more see TDI reports: [https://tdi.ge/sites/default/files/freedom\\_of\\_religion\\_or\\_belief\\_equality\\_and\\_secularity\\_june2025.pdf](https://tdi.ge/sites/default/files/freedom_of_religion_or_belief_equality_and_secularity_june2025.pdf); [https://tdi.ge/sites/default/files/tdi\\_monitoring\\_report\\_forb\\_equality\\_and\\_secularity\\_august\\_2025.pdf](https://tdi.ge/sites/default/files/tdi_monitoring_report_forb_equality_and_secularity_august_2025.pdf)

## 6. Statements by Clergy

### 6.1. Statements by Orthodox Clergy Regarding the Election of the Future Patriarch

Some Orthodox clerics expressed their views on the election of the future Patriarch in sermons and in interviews with the media. During the reporting period, on 3 April, the Holy Synod of the GOC [convened](#) to discuss electoral and procedural matters developed in accordance with the 1995 Statute on the Governance and Administration of the GOC. At its 28 April [session](#), the Holy Synod selected three patriarchal candidates who were to be presented as candidates for Patriarch at an expanded meeting.

#### Statements in Support of Metropolitan Shio Mujiri

Some Orthodox clergy maintained a neutral tone, stating that the Patriarch would be elected by the Synod. Others openly or indirectly expressed support for the Metropolitan Shio Mujiri, Locum Tenens of the Patriarch Ilia II.

Archbishop [Spiridon Abuladze](#) of Skhalta, 20 April: “My full support goes to Bishop Shio. His Holiness selected him, and it would be a great joy for His Holiness if he became Patriarch.”

Metropolitan [Ioane Gamrekeli](#) of Kutaisi-Gaenati, 15 April: “...We are facing such a choice: to share the Patriarch’s proposal and agree with it as his blessing and his will, or to disregard the Patriarch’s will... His Holiness, in order to preserve peace, offered us his choice. His Holiness chose this way.”

Metropolitan [Saba Gigiberia](#) of Samtredia and Khoni, 7 April: “For me, **the condition is the will left by the Patriarch, the part concerning Bishop Shio.** There are certain details that many do not know and many do know, but should not know.”

Metropolitan [Stephane Kalaijshvili](#) of Tsageri and Lentekhi, 28 April: “...**I said from the very beginning [that I supported Shio Mujiri]**, based on the Patriarch’s trust. I have always considered, and still consider, that following the Patriarch’s path is the right way. As long as we are still following his path, all this must be protected, and later, when our path continues, the situation will also change.”

[Andria Jaghmaidze](#), Head of the Public Relations Service of the Georgian Patriarchate, 30 April: “...**We expect the number of votes in favor of Bishop Shio to increase.** Everyone should forgive me, I am biased, because I saw the Patriarch’s attitude; the process of selecting the Locum Tenens took place before my eyes.”

#### Statements on Possible External Interference and the Inadmissibility of Coercing Support for Any Candidate

Some Orthodox clergy voiced secular calls for non-interference in the GOC's internal affairs and the inadmissibility of external pressure; some drew attention to the risk of the government's possible interference in the process of electing the new Patriarch, while others stated that, based

on their personal experience, they did not see interference by the authorities or other external forces in the Patriarchal election.

Regarding the process of electing the future Patriarch, some bishops addressed the state authorities in [sermons](#) and asked them not to interfere in the Patriarchal election.

Bishop [Iakob Iakobashvili](#) of Bodbe stated that the GOC would not allow the authorities or any other forces to interfere in the Patriarchal election, that the Patriarch would be chosen by the GOC itself, and that he would not be “appointed from outside.” However, it should be noted that in 2019, Patriarchal Chorbishop Iakob Iakobashvili [accused](#) Georgia’s Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia, former Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili, and the Minister of Internal Affairs, acting on Bidzina Ivanishvili’s orders, of attempting to remove the Patriarch. Two days after this statement, he resigned from the position of Chorbishop at his own request.

Bishop [Giorgi Jamdaliani](#) of Marneuli and Hujabi, 19 April: “I want to address the authorities and ask them: **do not interfere in the Patriarchal election in favor of anyone!** On the contrary, ensure the security of the upcoming expanded ecclesiastical council so that we can gather in a peaceful environment and, with God’s help, make a choice.”

Bishop [Iakob Iakobashvili](#) of Bodbe, 19 April: “When you are in government, you may be able to ban what is or is not allowed in the street, you may not even allow me to stand on the sidewalk, if you have force, you can do it. **But who comes to the Church, what business is that of yours?**”

Bishop [Dositheos Bogveradze](#) of Belgium and the Netherlands, 3 April: “A view has developed that the state has always tried to have such a relationship with the Church that it would be controlled to some degree, sometimes more, sometimes less. But this is not only today’s problem; it has been a very serious problem for centuries, and especially since Russia entered Georgia. **I think something else may also be voiced, it may be voiced indirectly, even through coverage, or as a form of influence — this is possible, I do not rule it out.**”

Archbishop [Zenon Iarajuli](#) of Dmanisi and Agarak-Tashir, 3 April: “**I do not see external interference in the process of electing the Patriarch. If you mean the authorities, I cannot confirm this.** As for society, society is always on someone’s side, and in such moments, not everyone observes ethical norms. I would not assess this as interference, but if certain groups act against someone, then, of course.”

Bishop [Saba Intskirveli](#) of North America, 25 April: “...**There has been no interference with me; there is no interference of any kind. Personally, I have not heard of interference with anyone else either.** The Holy Synod will be held, it will make a decision. Wait, and there will be a decision. As for the candidates, this is a secret ballot, and I will not say anything in advance.”

Metropolitan [Stephane Kalajishvili](#) of Tsageri and Lentekhi, 28 April: “Someone may have feared that the authorities would interfere [in the Patriarchal election] and that things would not go as they wanted. **I have not noticed any such fact; no one has communicated with me. There has been no interference from any side.**”

Metropolitan [Anton Bulukhia](#) of Vani and Baghdati, 23 April: “...Everyone, everyone, everyone — all hierarchs call on you to calm down, do not create a storm in a teacup. **None of us will allow interference from outside.** And if such a fact is noticed, I promise you that we will not participate in the election procedure!”

Some clergy members expressed concerns about violating the secrecy of the vote and coercing individuals into voting for a specific candidate<sup>6</sup>.

Metropolitan [Grigol Berbichashvili](#) of Poti and Khobi, 27 April: “When we talk about interference, when a statement is made that ‘I support this candidate, you must support this candidate, and if you do not do so, you are traitors, or God will punish you’ — **this is not merely a greater violation of secrecy; this is violence, and it does not fit within any canon law.**”

Bishop [Giorgi Jamdeliani](#) of Marneuli and Hujabi, 7 April: “...**It is also unacceptable to threaten your brothers with ‘repentance and punishment in the future’ if they do not vote for the Locum Tenens**, who is also a deeply respected brother in Christ for me. I consider this a form of pressure and an imposition of subjective opinions on Synod members. It was stated that the Patriarch allegedly spoke about a direct successor, of which at least 35 hierarchs knew nothing.”

Metropolitan [Ilarion Kitaishvili](#) of Mestia and Upper Svaneti, 8 April: “...I also fully share the view that it is unacceptable to make a statement suggesting that, in the event of a particular choice, God will not accept a person, since this does not correspond to the teaching of the Church. I believe that calmness, wisdom, and love in Christ should be our common foundation.”

Bishop [Saba Intskirveli](#) of North America, 7 April: “**The assertion that not voting for a particular hierarch may be assessed as ‘betrayal’ contradicts both the canonical nature of the Church and its spiritual order.** In the Church, there is no coercion of conscience; on the contrary, it protects personal freedom, which must be purified through prayer and responsibility.”

## Statements on Russia’s Interest in the Patriarchal Election

During the reporting period, the interest of Russian state agencies and the ecclesiastical hierarchy in the election of Georgia’s future Patriarch also became publicly visible. On 22 April, Patriarch Kirill of All Russia [spoke](#) about Georgia’s future Patriarch and expressed hope that he would not change the existing position regarding Ukraine. Earlier, on 31 March, Russia’s Foreign Intelligence Service [accused](#) Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of interfering in the GOC’s internal affairs. These statements indicate that Russian state and ecclesiastical institutions closely followed the Patriarchal election process and were interested in the GOC’s future external ecclesiastical course.

The issue of Russia’s interest in and potential interference prompted different reactions among Orthodox clerics. In the context of relations with the Russian Orthodox Church, Archbishop Zenon of Dmanisi and Agarak-Tashir emphasized the importance of recognizing the full title of the Patriarch of All Georgia, including the correct reference to the title of *Metropolitan of Bichvinta and Tskhum-Abkhazia*. His [statement](#) indicated that relations with the Russian Patriarchate

---

<sup>6</sup> On 7 April, in a sermon supporting Locum Tenens Shio Mujiri, Metropolitan Saba Gigiberia of Khoni and Samtredia [criticized](#) Metropolitan Iob Akiashvili of Mroveli-Urbanisi over a statement he had made in his 4 April [sermon](#). In that sermon, Metropolitan Iob Akiashvili, who was later selected by the Synod as a candidate for Patriarch, stated: “*The era of Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia II has ended, and a new era is beginning.*” In the same [sermon](#), Metropolitan Saba suggested that a choice contrary to God’s will, understood as a choice against Locum Tenens Shio, could in the future end in repentance or punishment. Several bishops responded to Metropolitan Saba’s statement, assessing it as an attempt to exert pressure on members of the Synod.

cannot be neutral or merely formal, because they carry political and symbolic significance for the recognition of the GOC's autocephaly, territorial integrity, and ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

Other Orthodox clerics either denied the issue of possible Russian interference or downplayed its significance. Metropolitan Anton of Vani and Baghdati [responded](#) ironically to talk of interference by Russian intelligence, saying that he had heard nothing about it. Metropolitan Stephane of Tsageri and Lentekhi [stated](#) that Russia had never been able to act in Georgia "as it wished," and that there was no evidence that Russia was forcing the GOC to do anything. According to him, Russia's position may coincide with the GOC's on certain issues, but this does not amount to coercion.

Archbishop [Zenon Iarajuli](#) of Dmanisi and Agarak-Tashir, 28 April: "They have their own interests and views regarding Georgia. When the Moscow Patriarchate sends a letter and writes in that letter: 'Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia, Archbishop of Mtskheta-Tbilisi, Metropolitan of Bichvinta and Tskhum-Abkhazia'... this necessary rule must be observed, and only then can one speak with them seriously."

Metropolitan [Anton Bulukhia](#) of Vani and Baghdati, 28 April: "No, man, this is the first I have heard of it — what Russian intelligence? I listen to your channels, more or less, and I have not heard it even from television. Probably, people think about whatever they dream of, I do not know."

Metropolitan [Stephane Kalaijshvili](#) of Tsageri and Lentekhi, 28 April: "When we look at the issue politically, we think that the Russians can do something to us as they themselves wish. This has never happened. When we look at the situation realistically, Russia's position may coincide with ours on some issues, but there is no basis for the claim that Russia can force us to do anything. Regarding the war, we did not take Russia's position, but neither did we decide that we, as a small country, should do anything more regarding Ukraine beyond humanitarian and moral support."

## Statements Aligning with the Narratives of the GD Government

In some statements, the positions of Orthodox clerics aligned with political narratives are disseminated by representatives of the GD government. These included assessments concerning the ongoing protests and the alleged "campaign against the GOC." Such statements contained rhetoric similar to that heard in public speeches by GD representatives.

Metropolitan [Anton Bulukhia](#) of Vani and Baghdati, 28 April: "When you are a revolutionary, you have to accept what comes with it. You want to be a revolutionary, then they arrest you and I should get you out, and then you rush back into the revolution, then I get you out again, and you rush back into the revolution again. If you want to be a revolutionary, you have to be a revolutionary! That is how Fidel Castro was, that is how those who carried out revolutions were, right? They devoted their energy to it. Of course, the Church will stand by them, strengthen them spiritually, give them a spiritual impulse, but not provide them with earthly means... Let the people standing at the rally come to the churches, let them stand with us every day at liturgy, let us fast and pray, and then they will see whether it brings results; after that, we can act differently."

Archpriest [Andria Jaghmaidze](#), Head of the Public Relations Service of the Georgian Patriarchate, 30 April: "Can you imagine that, from those well-known media outlets, more than 5,000 negative programmes were made over ten years? They were made personally about me, about Bishop Shio, not to mention how many were made about the Patriarch. If we are talking about influence, then let us start from there. If this is the kind of influence we mean, when someone expresses their opinion, or someone slanders another person. Five

thousand programmes! What does that mean? Three programmes every two days. They worked this much in order to damage the Church.”

Archpriest [Andria Jaghmaidze](#), Head of the Public Relations Service of the Georgian Patriarchate, 5 April: “Low-quality reports are being produced; some people are called theologians, experts, and it does not matter if this expert is wrong every day. They announced that there would now be a scandal at the Synod, that war would break out here, and that bishops would confront one another; they bought popcorn and prepared to watch. There is nothing to watch. The bishops continue their work with calmness and a great sense of unity, with great love for the Patriarch; they continue their activity in the life of the Church.”

## 6.2. Critical Statements by Clergy on Social Problems, Political Justice, and Church–State Relations

### Statements in Support of Children with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy

Children with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD), a rare and progressive genetic muscle-wasting disorder, and their parents [have been demanding state funding for modern medicines](#) for more than a year<sup>7</sup>. Since March 2026, they have held several protests outside the Government Administration. The parents say that the authorities have failed to ensure the import of the necessary medicines, placing their children’s lives at risk. They also [appealed](#) to the Patriarchate of the Georgian Orthodox Church, calling on it to support them. From 20 April, they [began](#) a 24-hour protest outside the Government Administration. Parents have been spending nights there and accusing the authorities of indifference.

Georgian Dream [justified its refusal](#) to meet the demands by citing the alleged “risks” of the medicines and questions regarding their “safety” and “effectiveness.” In parallel with this process, a social media campaign emerged targeting modern medicines to treat Duchenne syndrome. According to [Myth Detector](#), in addition to media outlets with pro-government editorial policies and representatives of Georgian Dream, fake AI accounts were also actively involved in the campaign. Facebook pages discrediting the opposition and pro-government Facebook accounts spread [disinformation and manipulative claims](#) about modern medicines for DMD.

Several solidarity actions were held, and public statements of support were issued. Some Orthodox clergy members responded to the issue, criticizing the authorities’ inaction and calling on them to fund the medicines.

Archpriest [Giorgi Tserodze](#), 23 April: “We may debate the budget, the safety of medicines, or bureaucratic procedures, but the mothers standing outside the Government Administration to help their children deserve not a wall of silence and a formal refusal, but a direct and sincere conversation. When a child’s life and future are at stake, humanity must stand alongside protocol.”

---

<sup>7</sup> [Around 100 children in Georgia are reported](#) to live with DMD. Primarily affecting boys, symptoms usually appear between ages 2 and 5, leading to loss of mobility by age 10, and early mortality, typically besocial media campaign emerged tween ages 25 and 30.

Archimandrite [Dorothe Kurashvili](#), 18 April: “Children were cared for more in Soviet Georgia than under the Russian Dream. Not everything can be allowed to pass; we cannot remain silent about everything; we cannot sit at home when the country is collapsing and the nation is on the verge of extinction. Come out!”

Archpriest [Tamaz Lomidze](#), 18 April: “If the state does not help them, what should these children do? Quoting: “We are simply asking for help. We also want to be very healthy people. We also want to study, receive an education, and have a healthy life”- Saba Gvaramia.

Archimandrite [Iliia Toloraia](#), 17 April: “Give the children the medicine! When children ask for medicine to live, and the authorities are indifferent, this is a hardening of the heart. Such a government is dangerous. A person who remains silent, who does not feel the pain of children, is also dangerous.”

Archpriest [Zaza Tevzadze](#), 18 April: “One hundred children are begging a millionaire government for life-saving medicine!”

## Support for Political Prisoners

As in previous reporting periods, a small number of Orthodox clerics continued to criticize and condemn the persecution and detention of activists and opposition figures, as well as the use of political justice against them.

During the reporting period, the enforcement of another [anti-constitutional](#) and [repressive legislative](#) amendment continued. Under this amendment, a protest participant may face up to 15 days of administrative detention for standing on a pedestrian path or sidewalk. Under the tightened law, common courts have been hearing a [large number](#) of cases based on standing on a sidewalk and have imposed administrative detention on dozens of people. Against this backdrop, a small number of clerics publicly responded to GD’s actions, expressed [solidarity](#) with political prisoners, and called for their [release](#). Archpriest [Zaza Tevzadze](#) and Archimandrites [Iliia Toloraia](#), [Shio Kvaratskhelia](#), and [Dorothe Kurashvili](#) spoke with these demands and in this spirit.

Some clergy expressed concern about the severe social, political, and ecclesiastical polarization in Georgia. They emphasized the moral crisis, the distinction between the superficial and genuine understanding of Christian values, the need for reconciliation, and the threat of Russia’s possible destructive influence. Their common message was that society needs internal spiritual renewal, unity, and the prevention of further deepening confrontation.

Metropolitan [Grigol Berbichashvili](#) of Poti and Khobi, 13 April: “The reality of life is this: before our eyes, both the martyrs of a new era and the executioners of a new era are being born. Some carry the cross secretly in their hearts, while others publicly pride themselves on external signs expressing belonging to Christianity.”

Metropolitan [Ioseb Kikvadze](#) of the Shemokmedi Diocese, 5 April: “There has never been such a difficult time in Georgia as there is today. The Georgian people are divided politically, religiously, ecclesiastically, and in every way. This reconciliation must happen. And reconciliation will happen only when God dwells in a person’s heart. Without God, people cannot reconcile with one another...”

Archpriest [Zaza Tevzadze](#), 27 April: “Our GOC and society face major challenges - Russia must not be allowed to muddy the waters.”