

# Freedom of Religion or Belief, Equality, and Secularity



November-December 2025



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November - December 2025

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 November-December 2025**

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**

[December 26, 2024- January 31](#)

[February, March, April, May, June,](#)

[July, August, September, October](#)

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## Trends

During the reporting period, Georgian Dream (GD) and its affiliated actors continued an aggressive anti-Western campaign portraying the European Union and the West as forces hostile to Georgia's sovereignty, religious identity, traditions, and national values, while presenting GD as the defender of traditions and faith.

According to GD's propagandistic messaging, EU countries are allegedly losing their religious and ethnic identities, while Georgian citizens are portrayed as facing a forced choice between EU integration and the preservation of Orthodox religion and traditions.

Narratives about the "Deep State" and an alleged conspiracy by the EU institutions against Georgia remain prominent. It should be noted that GD's rhetoric toward U.S. President Donald Trump and his administration gradually changed over time: initially, GD claimed that Trump was fighting and exposing the "Deep State," whereas in more recent statements by GD propagandists, Trump and his administration are portrayed as carrying out the "Deep State's" instructions.

GD continued to discredit the non-governmental sector, once again manipulatively invoking the name of the Orthodox Church for this purpose. At the same time, it continued enforcing repressive and restrictive legislation against civil society through the Anti-Corruption Bureau, the Prosecutor's Office, and the judicial system.

The propagandistic campaign against Orthodox cleric Archimandrite Dorothe Kurashvili also continued. In addition, the Patriarchate of the Georgian Orthodox Church sanctioned two additional Orthodox clerics for criticizing the Orthodox institution and supporting the pro-European movement.

A positive trend persisted, as some clergy members continued to express support for the pro-European movement in sermons, public statements, and at protest rallies.

# 1. Propaganda Against the European Union and Manipulation Through Pseudo-Religious Narratives

During the reporting period, Georgian Dream (GD) continued to manipulate fears of religious identity loss and pursued an aggressive anti-Western campaign against the European Union and diplomats from EU member states.

According to GD and its satellite actors, the EU, allegedly composed of bureaucrats and agents, acts not in the interests of its own peoples but under the dictates of the “Deep State.” They claim that EU countries are losing their religious and ethnic identities, and that Georgian citizens are forced to choose between EU integration and the preservation of national sovereignty and traditions. In their assessment, European bureaucracy demands obedience from Georgia rather than partnership.

GD also frequently compares the European Union to the Soviet Union. For example, the [GD Prime Minister](#) and the [GD Parliament Speaker](#) refer to the EU as a “union authority.” At the same time, in their narratives, the EU is associated with “[extremism](#),” “LGBT propaganda,” and “opaque funding.” GD calls on Brussels to “return to European values.”

## “The European Union Against Religious and National Identity”

GD continues to manipulate religious and identity-related issues. In public statements, GD portrays the European Union as a force hostile to the Orthodox Church and, more broadly, to religious identities, traditions, and “national values.”

Examples include:

[Shalva Papuashvili](#), GD Parliament Speaker, 28 November: “...Of course, we see relations with the European Union and value alignment when there are national interests, patriotism, Christian values, not necessarily in a strictly ecclesiastical sense, but in a value-based sense, when Brussels and, in general, the EU’s political leadership return to these values.”

[Irakli Kobakhidze](#), GD Prime Minister, 21 November: “Any radical, corrupt ideology has this characteristic: it opposes fundamental values. The same is happening in this case. In reality, the main lines are no different from Bolshevik ideology. Here too, the same thing happens—you should not love your country, you should not respect your Church, and you should sow hatred.”

[Davit Kartvelishvili](#), member of GD satellite party People’s Power, 10 November: “Creating unrealistic fears among the population is called ‘selling fears’ in the language of special services—this is a method tested in the West and Great Britain... Imagine what is happening globally: the cultivation of distrust toward God among people... the incitement of hatred toward God, a fight against God, they want to expel the last hope from the human soul.”

[Guram Macharashvili](#), 11 December: “...When they wrote in resolutions what laws Georgia should adopt or repeal, when they sent foreign ministers to anti-government rallies, when they called on young people to forget the Church and promote LGBT propaganda, to illegally change the government, and when the EU Ambassador was engaged in ‘United National Movement’ propaganda, was that not interference?”

## On the European Commission's Enlargement Report

On 4 November, the European Commission published its annual EU Enlargement [Report](#). The Commission [stated](#) that Georgia has “only the name of a candidate country” and that it has experienced “serious democratic backsliding” due to violations of fundamental human rights, the “undermining” of judicial independence, the subordination of institutions to partisan interests, and shifts in foreign policy priorities.

According to the GD [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#), the report was used to voice “groundless negative assessments and further political speculation” regarding Georgia. GD Parliament Speaker Shalva Papuashvili [stated](#) that “worn-out political accusations, lies, hostile rhetoric, and deliberate sabotage are organically intertwined in the report.”

[Iliia Injia](#), GD Member of Parliament, 11 November: “...Europe today: under the banner of pseudo-democracy, laws have been adopted that contradict all traditional religions existing on Earth, especially Christianity; encouragement of actions against fundamental family values and principles...”

[Levan Machavariani](#), GD Member of Parliament, 6 November: “In this case, we are talking about an identity problem. This uncontrolled migration, the LGBT topics, and they reproach us for adopting a law against LGBT propaganda, claiming that this is an invented issue.”

[Nana Kakabadze](#), founder of GD satellite party United Neutral Georgia, 6 November: “...This is our appeal to the government. We say that we want a democratic Europe, but we reject a fascist Europe, a Bolshevik Europe...”

## Instrumentalization of Homophobia

GD and its satellite actors continue to employ propagandistic reductionism, attempting to reduce the requirements for EU integration primarily to the issue of supporting LGBT rights. During the reporting period, they manipulatively and misleadingly interpreted the 25 November [decision](#) of the Court of Justice of the European Union, [presenting](#) it as if the EU Court “obliges all member states to legally recognize same-sex marriage.” In reality, [the decision calls](#) on EU member states to respect and recognize the legal status of couples married in another member state, without obliging them to legalize same-sex marriage domestically.

[Giorgi Kakhiani](#), GD Member of Parliament, 25 November: “This decision of the EU Court already speaks volumes. I do not rule out that, gradually, very soon, the issue may be placed on the agenda in such a way that EU member states will also be obliged, in some form, to recognize same-sex marriage as a normal phenomenon.”

[Guram Macharashvili](#), member of GD satellite party People's Power, 26 November: “...They used to tell us: Who is forcing you to legalize same-sex marriage? What will they say now, when Euro-bureaucracy and the judiciary have directly instructed member states to recognize the marriage of same-sex individuals as a family? This is exactly the reality that we will never accept in Georgia...”

[Dimitri Khundadze](#), GD Member of Parliament, 25 November: “...That the population should be emptied of morality, ethics, family values, and traditions: this is precisely the method of struggle that, unfortunately, is being proposed today by the West...”

## Attacks on German Ambassador Peter Fischer

GD consistently attacks representatives of the European Union and its member states in Georgia. In this regard, the German Ambassador to Georgia, **Peter Fischer**, has repeatedly been [targeted](#) by attacks from GD.

During the reporting period, a campaign against him was launched following the publication of a [photo](#) by citizen Mamuka Tsutskiridze showing him with Ambassador Fischer. Tsutskiridze [wrote](#) that the Ambassador unexpectedly arrived at a protest rally on Rustaveli Avenue and expressed solidarity with demonstrators.

Pro-government propagandistic media [disseminated](#) Tsutskiridze's public Facebook posts, in which he refers to the Patriarchal Locum Tenens, Shio Mujiri, as an *exarch*<sup>1</sup>, citing his active participation in pro-European rallies and his criticism of the clergy, as well as the prohibition imposed on Archimandrites Dorothe Kurashvili and Ilia Toloraia from performing priestly duties. GD leaders used this episode to personally discredit both the Ambassador and the European Union.

GD Parliament Speaker [Shalva Papuashvili](#) called on the German Foreign Ministry to “clarify” whether it seeks to “build bridges with the Georgian people or burn those bridges.”

[Davit Matikashvili](#), member of GD satellite party *People's Power*, 14 November: “This was a disgraceful attitude toward the Georgian Church, the Georgian people, and Georgia... It is important to understand what the German Foreign Ministry thinks when Fischer, in violation of the Vienna Convention, goes to Rustaveli Avenue, takes photos with people involved in domestic terrorism and with those who insult the Church and call the Patriarch an exarch. It will be interesting to hear their answers about what they discussed with the Ambassador when he was recalled from Georgia.”

[Levan Machavariani](#), GD Member of Parliament, 27 November: “...He returned and couldn't even wait two days; he rushed to the rally, took a photo again with the same radical individual who is engaged in insulting our Church. Such photos are characteristic of him...”

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<sup>1</sup> Implying Russian influence: After Imperial Russia annexed Georgia in the 19th century, the ancient Georgian Orthodox Church was reorganized into the Georgian Exarchate, and the newly appointed Exarch of Georgia sat in the Russian Holy Synod.

## 2. The “Deep State” and the Global Conspiracy Narrative<sup>2</sup>

During the reporting period, as in previous months, Georgian Dream (GD) and its affiliated propagandists systematically promoted conspiracy narratives about the “**Deep State**” and the so-called “**global war party**.” These narratives are rooted in an anti-liberal and anti-democratic paradigm that is widely entrenched in Russian propaganda.

According to this narrative, the West is portrayed as a unified group of “oligarchic families” or a single “global ideology” whose alleged goals include **dragging Georgia into war, changing the government in Georgia, stripping the country of its identity, dismantling “authorities,” fighting against “Christian values,” and “sowing hatred against the Orthodox Church.”** Against this backdrop, GD positions itself as the sole defender of faith, traditions, and national identity. The purpose of this narrative is to foster distrust toward Western institutions and to discredit domestic opponents of the government as “servants of foreign powers.”

[Zaza Shatirishvili](#), GD propagandist, 17 November: “...**Oligarchic families**, through their agents appointed both in EU governance structures and in the governments of leading countries, have brought Europe to the brink of bankruptcy... Through the use of artificial stigmas such as fake religious tolerance, as well as by introducing hundreds of new religious movements equated with sects, respect for Christian values and accordingly their significance has been reduced to a minimum.”

[Dimitri Samkharadze](#), GD Member of Parliament, 22 November: “Where are those people who were shouting ‘Slava Ukraini’ (Glory to Ukraine)? A term created by the enemies of the Church, by the global war party, ‘Glory to the Lord’—they removed the name of the Lord and replaced it with Ukraine...”

[United Neutral Georgia](#), GD satellite political grouping, 5 November: “...Euro-bureaucracy has received instructions from oligarchic families, the same ‘Deep State,’ to achieve a change of power in Georgia at any cost and to return agents to governance...”

GD leaders, members of satellite parties, propagandists, and GD’s founder and Honorary Chair, Oligarch **Bidzina Ivanishvili**, link the dispute between Ivanishvili and the private Swiss bank Credit Suisse to the notions of “informal governance” and the “Deep State.” According to their [narrative](#), the “Deep State” allegedly uses these funds to “**blackmail**” Ivanishvili and to force him into making “[decisions contrary to Georgia’s interests](#).”

It should be noted that GD’s rhetoric toward U.S. President Donald Trump and his administration has gradually changed. Initially, GD claimed that Trump was fighting and exposing the “Deep State.” However, in [a letter published on 15 December](#), GD propagandist **Zaza Shatirishvili** stated that the current **U.S. President Donald Trump and his administration are, in fact, carrying out the “Deep State’s” instructions:**

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<sup>2</sup> Over the last years, GD’s disinformation messages gradually [transformed into a coordinated, long-term propaganda](#) campaign that now directly shapes government policy and public rhetoric. Senior GD officials increasingly rely on notorious conspiracy-laden terminology, most notably the “[global war party](#)” and the “[deep state](#)”, as euphemisms for the collective West. One aspect that has received far less scrutiny is the **antisemitic underpinnings of this campaign**. [TDI highlighted](#) in its monthly monitoring reports that Georgian Dream propagandists started naming “**oligarchic Jewish families**” who allegedly stand behind all wars and other adverse global developments.

“With regard to the current U.S. President, Donald Trump, and his administration, I have also demonstrated at the level of evidence that they are not fighting oligarchic forces at all, but are directly fulfilling their instructions and playing one of the key roles in the so-called rebranding process.”

Similarly, according to GD Member of Parliament [Mariam Lashkhi](#), “the main thing is that the Deep State is not rebranded,” while GD MP [Irakli Zarkua](#) stated that “Trump is having a difficult time [fighting the ‘Deep State’].”

In the same context, accusations have been advanced that these forces are fighting the Orthodox Church in Georgia through “agents” and other “technologies,” while GD portrays itself as the defender of faith and national identity in this “confrontation”.

[Irakli Kobakhidze](#), GD Prime Minister, 22 December: “In addition to fighting foreign agents in this country, we must also fight the methods through which, by means of foreign agents, hatred is being sown in Georgia toward everything, including social institutions, including the Church. **It took us an entire campaign to stop the assault on the Orthodox Church carried out through NGOs and opposition parties.**”

[Mikheil Kavelashvili](#), GD President, 25 December: “...This is a deliberate, planned process; it is one of the technologies used to make the authorities be hated. Because the majority of society supports Georgia’s authorities, there is peace and stability. **The role of the [Orthodox] Church must also be mentioned, for which they have developed a separate technology on how to undermine it...**”

### 3. Persecution of Georgian Non-Governmental Organizations

During the reporting period, Georgian Dream (GD) continued to enforce repressive and restrictive legislation against civil society through the Anti-Corruption Bureau, the Prosecutor’s Office, and the judicial system.

GD also continued to discredit the non-governmental sector, once again manipulating the name of the Orthodox Church for this purpose.

Online media outlets also became targets of GD and [pro-government propaganda](#). For example, Imedi TV aired an extensive report against independent online media, [labeling](#) them as “agents” and “anti-Georgian” outlets.

According to GD’s satellite actors, the so-called “Transparency Law” [Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence, also known as the Russian Law on “foreign agents”] was adopted precisely to expose those allegedly opposing the Orthodox Church within society.

[Irakli Kobakhidze](#), GD Prime Minister, 17 December: “...There are no such things as non-governmental organizations; there are only specific organizations funded by foreign governments to intervene in Georgia. There is no such thing as civil society.”

[Irakli Zarkua](#), GD Member of Parliament, 12 November: “...Because then the Georgian people would have understood even more clearly who is fighting against the Church, Orthodoxy, and the Georgian state, who are demanding LGBT propaganda, and they did not want that. That is why it was concealed, and this led to all this bargaining with Euro-bureaucrats.”

[Levan Makhashvili](#), GD Member of Parliament, 25 December: "...This money was used to encourage processes that this country has been actively fighting for the past year and a half, by which I mean undermining state institutions, the Church, and so on."

[Zurab Kadagidze](#), member of GD satellite party People's Power, 25 November: "...We are not restricting the media—yes, free media is the foundation of democracy, but shadow governance, pseudo-values, and information terrorism hiding behind free media - yes, information terrorism - is a classic manifestation of liberal fascism..."

## 4. Propagandistic Campaign Against an Orthodox Cleric

The discrediting and defamatory campaign by GD and its propagandists against Archimandrite Dorothe Kurashvili continued during the reporting period. At the same time, the Patriarchate sanctioned two additional Orthodox clerics for their criticism of the institution and their support for the pro-European movement.

On 15 December, the Georgian Patriarchate [published](#) an order issued in the name of the Patriarch, stating that Archimandrite Dorothe Kurashvili had been suspended from performing priestly duties. The Patriarchate cited repeated violations of ecclesiastical canons, despite prior warnings, as the reason for the decision. Notably, Archimandrite Dorothe was summoned before the Patriarchate's commission for the third time.

Based on the conclusion of the Mtskheta–Tbilisi Eparchial Commission dated [12 November](#), the Commission petitioned the Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia to suspend the priestly duties of Archimandrite Dorothe's associate, Archimandrite **Ilia Toloraia**<sup>3</sup>. According to Archimandrite Ilia Toloraia, he was never [summoned](#) to appear before the commission and was sanctioned in absentia. Moreover, he stated that the [reason](#) for the punishment was not "defamatory or insulting statements against clergy," but rather his criticism of the government's pro-Russian policies: "*I exposed this government as a Russian government and said about Bishop Shio that he is an exarch, which means a bishop aligned with Russia.*"

On 29 December, Archimandrite **Shio Kvaratskhelia** [wrote](#) on social media that he had received a "warning" letter from one of the members of the Eparchial Commission, Archpriest **Mikheil Botkoveli**. In the letter, Botkoveli characterized Shio's statements as "defamatory" and "insulting", while the Eparchial Commission urged him to reconsider, cease making similar statements, and repent.

On 8 November, the Head of Public Relations of the Patriarchate, Archpriest **Andria Jaghmaidze**, [stated](#) that the clergy's comments were not reviewed as political statements, but rather in terms of "why they make insulting assessments and why they insult the Church, the Patriarch, the Patriarchal Locum Tenens, the Patriarchate administration, and other clergy."

In parallel with the commission hearings and the publication of the Patriarchate's decision, members of GD satellite parties and propagandists disseminated various misleading, discrediting, and defamatory

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<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that on 29 October, based on the conclusion of the same commission, the Patriarchate imposed an additional disciplinary measure on Archimandrite Dorothe Kurashvili, relieving him of his position as rector of the Nativity of the Savior Church in Lower Bethlehem and reassigning him as a cleric to the Holy Trinity Patriarchal Lavra. Both clerics are known for their statements in support of the pro-European movement and political prisoners. At the same time, from a Christian perspective, they have frequently criticized Georgian Dream (GD) for its unconstitutional and anti-Western discourse and policies.

statements against Archimandrite **Dorothe Kurashvili**. On 9 November, pro-government propaganda broadcaster **Imedi TV** [aired](#) a special story titled “*Dorothe’s Anti-Church Rebellion*,” portraying him as an internal enemy of the Church. In a report [aired](#) on 21 December, pro-government propaganda labeled him a “heretic”. Notably, even the Georgian Patriarchate did not level such an accusation against the Archimandrite.

[Irakli Chikhladze](#), Deputy Director General of Imedi TV, 9 November: “...We are witnessing yet another attack on the Church, unfortunately led by an archimandrite—now a former one... And yet, one question remains that I would ask directly, without any false modesty: why did a monk, in the name of faith and the Church, become a weapon in the hands of radicals against peace?”

[Davit Matikashvili](#), GD Member of Parliament, 21 December: “We see that a cleric who has practically lost all the rights granted by this status behaved like an ordinary, radical, foreign-funded member of the United National Movement.”

[Irakli Kadagishvili](#), GD Member of Parliament, 21 December: “Whenever a person appears in the Church who, due to personal incompatibility or subjective reasons, opposes the Church, that person is immediately brought to the forefront and fully instrumentalized in order to cause maximum harm to society by discrediting the Church.”

## 5. Anti-Western Propaganda by Orthodox Clergy

During the reporting period, a segment of Orthodox clergy continued to promote rhetoric in sermons and public statements that simultaneously supported the Georgian Dream (GD) government and opposed civil society, human rights, and the European Union.

The sermons delivered on [23](#) and [30](#) November by the Archbishop of Bodbe, **Iakob Iakobashvili**, were traditionally grounded in anti-Western rhetoric. One of the central messages was that “foreign actors” were interfering in Georgia’s internal affairs and that **Article 78 of the Georgian Constitution (which enshrines Georgia’s aspirations toward NATO and the EU)** was allegedly “**forcibly imposed**” by external actors.

“What do we want and what are we striving for? It was not long ago since the 2020 elections. I said it then, and I say it now: it was wrong that something was forced into the Constitution. When something is imposed by force, you should think that something lies behind it. NATO and the EU were written in, and our country indeed followed that path—but we even have a word for it: ‘foreign’...”

The Metropolitan of Chkondidi, Tsageri, and Lentekhi, **Stephane Kalajishvili**, continued anti-Western propaganda and disinformation in sermons delivered on [1](#), [2](#), [23](#), [29](#), and [30](#) November, as well as on [20](#) and [21](#) December. Among the recurring messages was the claim that the **European Union is pressuring Georgia to grant children the “right to change their sex,”** and that Georgia is being punished for refusing to repeal laws allegedly protecting families and traditional marriage.

Another recurring narrative portrayed the protest and **resistance movement as anti-Christian and hostile to the Church**, accusing demonstrators of attempting to undermine both the Orthodox Church and the state through “anti-Christian” and “revolutionary” actions.

In parallel, Metropolitan Stephane Kalajishvili continued to actively support the discrediting campaign against Archimandrite **Dorothe Kurashvili**, referring to him as a “heretic,” accusing him of “distorting the Gospel,” criticizing his participation in ongoing protests, and spreading disinformation against protesters by labeling them “anti-Christian” and participants in “satanic rituals.”

Archimandrite **Dorothe Kurashvili** responded to these repeated defamatory statements with a [Facebook post](#) and formally [requested](#) that accusations of heresy and the alleged distortion of his statements be reviewed by a Synodal Commission.

Hostile rhetoric against Archimandrite Dorothe Kurashvili was also [continued](#) by Archpriest **Aleksandre Galdava**, a frequent guest commentator on pro-government media outlets. In his statements, Galdava accused supporters of Archimandrite Dorothe of being “sorcerers,” “blasphemers,” or “LGBT flag-bearers,” framing them as morally deviant and socially dangerous.

Anti-Western and GD-supportive statements were also disseminated by the Bishop of the Skhalta Eparchy, **Spiridon Abuladze**, in sermons delivered on [2](#), [16](#), [21](#), [23](#), and [30](#) November, as well as on [7](#), [13](#), and [19](#) December. Bishop Spiridon repeated GD propaganda narratives and publicly thanked the **GD government for resisting “LGBT pressure” and alleged attempts to “drag Georgia into war,”** claiming that the government had thereby “saved Georgia.” He also spread disinformation alleging that in Europe and the United States, **parents are imprisoned if they refuse to allow their children to undergo “sex reassignment.”**

## Religious Racism and Xenophobia

Bishop **Spiridon Abuladze** actively [opposed](#) the GD-announced Arab investment project in Georgia, which envisages the construction of large multifunctional complexes near Tbilisi and in the Black Sea coastal area of Gonio by the UAE-based developer **Eagle Hills**. While the project raises legitimate questions regarding transparency and the protection of citizens’ interests, the Bishop’s criticism focused instead on xenophobic and religiously exclusionary narratives, framing the project as a “second front opened by migrants” and portraying non-Orthodox individuals as “enemies.”

“...The Antichrist has invaded us. The goal is to erase national identity, to throw everything in Georgia into chaos, and then to establish the Antichrist in Georgia...”

Notably, Bishop Spiridon also described the project as **“financed” and “encouraged” by the West**. Other clergy [opposing](#) the project likewise relied primarily on xenophobic and religiously exclusionary arguments rather than on substantive concerns related to governance, transparency, or public interest.

## 6. Statements by Clergy on Political Repression and Intolerance

A positive trend persisted during the reporting period, as a small number of Orthodox clerics continued to critically address Georgian Dream's (GD) anti-democratic, anti-European course and its propagandistic narratives.

Since 28 November 2024, pro-European protests have continued in Tbilisi and other cities, demanding new parliamentary elections and the release of political prisoners. During this period, the GD Parliament adopted a range of repressive, anti-democratic, and unconstitutional legislative measures, while law enforcement bodies and courts began enforcing them. As a result, hundreds of individuals were subjected to administrative liability for various alleged "offenses," and more than one hundred people were arrested under criminal charges. In this context, a small number of clerics have publicly opposed GD's propaganda.

During the reporting period, their key messages included:

### Calls for Justice and Active Citizenship Based on Christian Teaching

Some clerics openly opposed passivity and silence within the clergy in the face of injustice, arguing that silence amounts to complicity with evil and that faith and civic responsibility are inseparable.

[Shio Kvaratskhelia](#), Archimandrite, 23 November: "...For example, Bishop Shio [the Patriarch's Locum Tenens] saw these beaten people, these robbed people, and remained silent; he turned away. His deacons saw beaten people, robbed people, people forced into emigration by poverty, looked down from the Patriarchate, and turned away. This silence is precisely turning away."

[Dorothe Kurashvili](#), Archimandrite, 20 November: "...If you, the deacons, had done even one thing well, I would not have spoken out. But you have ruined the Church, turned it into an appendage of the Dream, abandoned the people, labeled as satanists anyone who spoke out against governmental injustice, failed to defend beaten and unjustly imprisoned young men and women, called victims aggressors, remained silent about the sale of Georgian land, rejoiced as the country changed course and moved toward Moscow..."

[Iliia Jinjolava](#), Archimandrite, 6 November: "Shame on education and theology and even more so on priesthood, if they remain words and are not translated into action; if, instead of courage inspired by Christianity and humanity, one becomes cowardly and weak."

[Zenon Iarajuli](#), Archbishop, 6 December: "It is deeply repulsive to see clergy who whisper privately yet do not dare raise their voices against any injustice, as if the others [the ones who speak up against injustice] neither loved themselves nor wished to protect their own dignity."

[Iliia Toloraia](#), Archimandrite, 18 December: "If a priest abandons a beaten and tortured person, he is no longer a shepherd—he is a hireling."

[Leon Gelovani](#), Priest, 15 December: "For decades, this Patriarchate and its leadership have stood alongside various regimes, almost always alongside those evil regimes that have nothing in common with Christ's true faith: freedom, love, and justice."

## Exposing and Criticizing the Anti-European Course

Some clerics emphasized that Christian values are compatible with European culture and political traditions, while clearly distinguishing GD's actions, often likened to those of Russia, from genuine Orthodoxy.

[Shio Kvaratskhelia](#), 9 November: "I cannot call the Russian Church a fellow believer—what Russia does is not Orthodoxy. What our government does is not either."

[Zaza Tevzadze](#), Archpriest, 28 November: "Georgia is part of European and democratic civilization!"

[Dorothe Kurashvili](#), 27 December: "The current government has changed the country's foreign policy course and is steering Georgia toward Russia instead of Europe—yet this choice, Georgia's European path, belongs neither to this government nor to previous ones. Georgia's European path is a historical choice made by our ancestors."

[Ilia Toloraia](#), 12 December: "I will be on Rustaveli avenue today, prison and even death are preferable to Russian servitude and betrayal of the nation. Today, they ban standing on the sidewalk; tomorrow, they will ban criticizing the government on Facebook; the day after, they will force us to praise Russia and a Russia-subordinate government."

[Tamaz Lomidze](#), Archpriest, 10 December: "Imagine the level of victimhood and Russian propaganda in this unprotected Georgia, where people who Russia deprived of independence and expelled from their homes in Abkhazia and South Ossetia are convinced by Russia that Europe and the West are their enemies."

## Statements on the Judiciary and Law Enforcement

Some clerics continued to express support for prisoners of conscience while condemning GD's repression and selective justice. They reacted to the detention of protest participants following [legislative amendments](#) restricting freedom of assembly and expression, which were adopted and enforced in the second half of October 2025.

[Aleksi Kshutashvili](#), Archpriest, 1 November: "People are being arrested here... I consider it my duty to stand here alongside them."

[Giorgi Tserodze](#), Archpriest, 23 November: "Once again, it must be stated loudly: banditry in the name of the police—especially under the emblem of Saint George—is unacceptable. States exist for justice, not for enslavement."

[Zenon Iarajuli](#), 3 November: "Mr. Parliament Speaker, even if the entire world were guilty before your government, your government would still be guilty before this elderly woman, displaced from Abkhazia<sup>4</sup>, without resources or a home."

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<sup>4</sup> Aza Chilachava, a 71-year-old woman displaced from Abkhazia, was found administratively liable by a court on 22 October on the basis of a police administrative offense report for wearing a face covering at a protest rally and was issued a verbal warning. On 2 November, she was detained by the police, and on 3 November the court again found her administratively liable, this time for wearing a face covering and standing on the roadway and sentenced her to one day of administrative detention.

[Iliia Toloraia](#), 2 November: "Freedom for prisoners of conscience! From prison come the voices of lions whom the system could not break. Had I not spoken in defense of these young men, shame would have killed me—and life itself would have lost all value."

[Dorothe Kurashvili](#), 21 November: "As long as there is one law for officials and another for everyone else, nothing will change in this state."

[Iakob Akiashvili](#), Metropolitan, 9 November: "Saint Augustine said that if a government does not serve justice and truth, it is a gang of robbers. Accordingly, if this government does not serve justice and truth, it is a gang of robbers."

## Restriction of Voting Rights for Citizens Abroad

Some clerics responded critically to GD's [initiative](#) prohibiting Georgian citizens residing abroad from voting in elections. On 17 December, the GD Parliament [adopted](#) amendments to the Electoral Code in the third reading. GD cited alleged "informational and political pressure" from abroad as one of the main reasons. Clerics argued that this constitutes an extreme restriction of citizens' constitutional rights.

[Saba Intskirveli](#), Bishop of North America, 18 November: "...I had hoped that more opportunities would be created, additional polling stations opened, and procedures simplified so that Georgians abroad could truly exercise their right to vote. Instead, participation in elections has become almost impossible for emigrants."

[Shio Kvaratskhelia](#), 23 November: "The criminal Georgian Dream robbed the Georgian people and the country, beat citizens, forced many into emigration in Europe, and now is stripping them of civic rights and the right to vote."

[Konstantine Paichadze](#), Archpriest, 19 November: "First, polling stations were not opened where they were needed... they lost. Then they held elections on a weekday, saying people could not come because of work... they lost again. Now they have abolished it altogether."

[Irineos Shengelia](#), Hieromonk, 18 November: "This is unacceptable and insulting to every citizen whose blood, sweat, and labor have sustained this country to this day."

[Hieronymus Katamadze](#), Hieromonk, 18 November: "...We are part of Georgia regardless of where we live. Our passport is not just a document; it is an identity that connects us to our homeland. Our vote is not a threat. Our vote is not 'external pressure.' Our vote is Georgian, simply from another street, another city, another country."

## Statements on the BBC Investigative Report

On 1 December, the **BBC** [published](#) an investigative report alleging that during the first week of the protest rallies that began on 28 November 2024, the Georgian authorities may have used a toxic substance, particularly harmful to human health, against demonstrators. Shortly after the publication, **Georgian Dream (GD)** dismissed the investigation's findings as "absurd" and [announced](#) its intention to sue the BBC in an international court.

On the same day, the State Security Service of Georgia (SSSG) launched an "[investigation](#)" into information disseminated by the BBC regarding an alleged crime in a public space, under Articles 333 (abuse of official authority) and 319 (assisting a foreign organization in hostile activities) of the Criminal Code. As a result, individuals who had given interviews for the BBC investigative documentary or whose work had been used as sources were [summoned](#) to the SSSG. On 6 December, the SSSG [terminated](#) the investigation under Article 333, stating that, according to its own "investigation," neither "kamite" nor any other prohibited chemical substance had been used at the protests. At the same time, the investigation continues under the charge of "assisting a foreign organization in hostile activities."

A number of clerics condemned the alleged poisoning of citizens with prohibited substances and called for the disclosure of objective information.

[Konstantine Paichadze](#), Archpriest, 5 December: "You could mix a hundred different puzzle pieces from different sets and still match them more easily than the statements coming from the government sector align with the BBC film."

[Tamaz Lomidze](#), Archpriest, 5 December: "Even the Soviet Russians, after 9 April, could not hide what chemical agent had been used against demonstrators and admitted it was CS gas. These people tell poisoned and health-damaged citizens not to worry, claiming even water is 'chemistry.' Say what substance was mixed into the water so that people can at least receive appropriate treatment. At least imitate the Soviet Russian government!"

[Iliia Jinjolava](#), Archimandrite, 3 December: "As if beating people in the cold winter was not enough, they used water cannons mixed with chemicals, and a year later, when the BBC exposed it, they now say they will find out what substance it was... If you trust and support this system of evil, what are you yourself? Your name is legion!"

[Shio Kvaratskhelia](#), Archimandrite, 2 December: "Georgia today has a fascist government that poisons its people. Georgian Dream should not merely resign; it should be put on trial for the genocide of the Georgian people. A government that poisons its own youth with chemical weapons is cursed and abandoned by God."

[Iliia Toloraia](#), Archimandrite, 3 December: "Kobakhidze [GD Prime Minister] says that prohibited chemical substances were purchased during the time of the National Movement. If that is so, why were you keeping this poison? If you find poison planted in your home, why would you keep it? Are you planning to poison your family?"

[Dorothe Kurashvili](#), Archimandrite, 6 December: "A government that poisons its own people has no right to remain a government. People who are being poisoned, whose children are being poisoned, have no right to remain silent or stay at home; both are crimes. A cleric who remains silent in the face of such evil is an accomplice to that evil."

## Statements by Clergy from Different Denominations

**The Bishop of the Evangelical Baptist Church of Georgia**, Rusudan Gotsiridze, actively spoke out on social media and in the media, sharing and endorsing statements in [support](#) of political prisoners. She also critically assessed the legislative reforms initiated by the Georgian Dream party in the fields of [education](#) and [mental health](#).

**The Metropolitan of the Evangelical Baptist Church of Georgia**, Malkhaz Songhulashvili, addressed the ongoing peaceful protests in the country in his Christmas message. [He stated](#):

“In Georgia, where people stand every night on guard for justice and truth, the arrival of Christmas resembles a quiet yet unbreakable promise. It reminds us that light does not need permission to shine, and that no challenge can erase the truth.”