



# Legal Status of Foreigners and Racism in Georgia

## REPORT

2024-2025 (January-May)



Tolerance and Diversity Institute (TDI)



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# INTRODUCTION

This report reflects the legal status of foreign nationals in Georgia and instances of racial discrimination during 2024 and from January to May 2025. This period was marked by the deterioration of human rights protection and a regression in democracy, as well as the rise of anti-Western rhetoric and policies by the Georgian Dream party.

The sharp overall decline in the state of human rights protection in the country has affected the legal status of foreigners living in Georgia.

In this regard, the reporting period is notable for the mass denial of entry into Georgia of foreign (mostly Western European) journalists and human rights defenders interested in Georgian politics. International students returning from summer holidays to resume their studies were also denied entry into the country.

The state policy has become more repressive toward international students from African and Asian countries enrolled in Georgian universities, whose residence permits were revoked under the pretext of protecting national security interests, and they were not allowed to complete their studies.

The state policy also tightened with regard to the expulsion of foreigners from Georgia. This mechanism has been used by the Georgian Dream against politically undesirable citizens of foreign countries as well.

# 1. THE STATE BORDER CROSSING POLICY

The anti-Western rhetoric and policies of the Georgian Dream government, along with its authoritarian drift, have negatively impacted the practice of allowing foreign nationals into Georgia.

Cases of denial of entry for international students have increased, often accompanied by the revocation of their residence permits for study purposes. The majority of these students come from African and Asian countries. They link such treatment to their ethnic origin and/or religious affiliation.

A part of the Georgian Dream's anti-democratic and anti-Western policies also includes the trend of denying entry to foreign journalists and representatives of NGOs (mainly from the EU and Western European countries), which has intensified since the pre-election period of the 2024 parliamentary elections. In all such cases, the Ministry of Internal Affairs' decisions to deny entry are formulaic and unsubstantiated.

## 1.1. LEGALITY OF BORDER CROSSING MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

A complete evaluation of the legality of state border crossing management practices is difficult because the Ministry of Internal Affairs claims it does not maintain comprehensive statistics on border crossings.<sup>1</sup> As in previous years, in 2024, TDI requested information on the number of foreigners denied entry into Georgia and the countries

1 Letter MIA 1 25 00098066 of January 15, 2024 from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia.

from which they were denied entry, along with the grounds for denial. This time again, the Ministry only referred to the statistical data published on its website.<sup>2</sup> However, the data published on this webpage does not include the number of foreigners denied entry, nor does it indicate their nationality or legal grounds for the denials.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the Ministry explicitly stated in its letter that “statistics on reasons for refusal of entry into Georgia are not maintained.”<sup>4</sup> The lack of such statistical data has also been identified as problematic by the Public Defender of Georgia.<sup>5</sup>

Nonetheless, it is still possible to form an understanding of the legality of the state border crossing management practices based on TDI’s administrative and court cases and publicly available information. In all known cases, the refusal of entry is based on Article 11, paragraph 1, subparagraph “I” of Georgia’s Law on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons, which allows the refusal of a visa or entry into Georgia to a foreign national in other cases provided for by the legislation of Georgia, different from those explicitly listed in the same article. However, the Patrol Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which makes these decisions, does not indicate what specific legal grounds were used to deny entry, nor do they verbally explain the reason for denial to the individual.<sup>6</sup> This practice has been criticized by the Public Defender as well.<sup>7</sup>

Foreigners arriving by air who have been denied entry are returned free of charge on the same flight they arrived on.<sup>8</sup> However, if they wish to leave on a different flight, they must cover the cost themselves.

2 Letter MIA 1 25 00098066 of January 15, 2024 from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia.

3 Statistical data of persons and transport crossing the state border of Georgia for 2024, [https://info.police.ge/page?id=862&parent\\_id=94](https://info.police.ge/page?id=862&parent_id=94).

4 Ibid.

5 The Report of the Public Defender of Georgia on the “Situation of Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia, 2024,” pg. 295. Available at: <https://ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2025052310222648365.pdf>

6 For a more detailed discussion of this norm, see the Tolerance and Diversity Institute’s (TDI) report “Legal Status of Foreigners and Racism in Georgia, 2022,” pp. 13-14. Available at: [https://tdi.ge/sites/default/files/tdi\\_legal\\_status\\_of\\_foreigners\\_and\\_racism\\_in\\_georgia\\_2022\\_report.pdf](https://tdi.ge/sites/default/files/tdi_legal_status_of_foreigners_and_racism_in_georgia_2022_report.pdf), See also <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/33123243.html>

7 The Report of the Public Defender of Georgia on the “Situation of Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia, 2024,” pg. 295. Available at: <https://ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2025052310222648365.pdf>

8 Letter MIA 3 25 00318306 of February 4, 2025 from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia

Before boarding the return flight, foreigners who have been denied entry are held in a designated waiting room. This holding period may last several hours or more than a day. It is during this time that legislation is grossly violated, with foreigners having their personal belongings confiscated until they board their return flight. Although such action has no legal grounds, the Patrol Police Department often does this,<sup>9</sup> presumably to prevent the foreign national from communicating with relatives, spreading information about the denial of entry, or contacting a lawyer before being deported.

This assumption is supported by publicly known cases, including that of a Czech journalist.<sup>10</sup> He managed to inform a friend and spread news of his denial of entry before his phone was confiscated. As a result, TDI was made aware of the situation, and a TDI lawyer, at the request of the journalist's friends, got involved. However, when the lawyer went to meet the journalist at Tbilisi International Airport, the Patrol Police did not allow the meeting - another act that was completely unlawful and without legal justification.

The Public Defender, based on the complaints received by the office and the media reports, also underlined the problem of the illegal confiscation of personal belongings during the holding period.<sup>11</sup> He states that the Ministry of Internal Affairs simply denies the allegations without providing any evidence.<sup>12</sup>

## 1.2. THE PROBLEM OF DENYING ENTRY TO INTERNATIONAL JOURNALISTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Since September 2024, a noticeable trend has emerged of denying entry to journalists from the EU and other Western European countries, as well as representatives of European non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It is worth noting that many of the journalists denied entry had been actively covering political events (including protest

9 See: Civil.ge, "Czech Journalist Denied Entry to Georgia," October 23, 2024, <https://civil.ge/archives/629784>, also, Civil.ge, "RSF Condemns Georgia's Entry Bans for French Journalists as Deliberate Strategy to Intimidate Reporters," April 11, 2025, accessed June 9, 2025, <https://civil.ge/archives/675303>.

10 See: "Czech Journalist Denied Entry to Georgia - State Agencies Decline to Comment," Radio Liberty, 23.10.2024, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/33170100.html>

11 The Report of the Public Defender of Georgia on the "Situation of Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia, 2024," pg. 295. Available at: <https://ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2025052310222648365.pdf>

12 Ibid.



demonstrations) in Georgia. Notably, some of them had lived in Georgia for over a decade, were married to Georgian citizens, and had underage children in the country. The Georgian Dream government has disregarded these facts entirely.

Below are selected cases of journalists, human rights defenders, and public figures who were denied entry to Georgia. In all cases, the justification for the refusal of entry was the vague legal provision - "other cases provided for by the legislation of Georgia." TDI is representing some of these individuals.

On September 17, 2024, **Arsen Kharatyan, founder of the Georgian-Armenian media** outlet Aliq Media, was detained at the Georgian border for four hours, had his phone confiscated, and was sent back. Kharatyan had lived and worked in Georgia for years. He believes his denial of entry was a political decision by the Georgian Dream ahead of the 2024 elections.<sup>13</sup>

**Czech journalist Ray Baseley** was denied entry to Georgia on October 23, 2024, i.e., days before the parliamentary elections.<sup>14</sup> He was held in a waiting room for 34 hours, during which his belongings, including his phone, were confiscated without legal grounds.<sup>15</sup> TDI's lawyer, based on a warrant, went to visit him and provide legal consultation; however, officers of the Patrol Police Department did not allow them to meet, which is also completely unlawful.

On October 26, 2024, **Swiss journalist and photographer Stephan Goss** was denied entry to Georgia. He said that he had come to Georgia to cover the elections. He had visited Georgia several times but had never before encountered problems at the border. According to Radio Liberty, Goss is a conflict photographer - in addition to covering mass protests in Georgia, he consistently reports from along the front line in Ukraine.<sup>16</sup>

13 Arshaluys Barseghyan, "Founder of Georgian-Armenian Media Outlet Barred from Entering Georgia," OC Media, September 17, 2024, accessed June 9, 2025, <https://oc-media.org/founder-of-georgian-armenian-media-outlet-barred-from-entering-georgia/>

14 Nate Ostiller, "Czech Journalist 'Detained' in Airport Ahead of Georgian Elections," OC Media, October 22, 2024, accessed June 9, 2025, <https://oc-media.org/czech-journalist-detained-in-airport-ahead-of-georgian-elections/>

15 Ibid.

16 OC Media (X/@OCMediaorg), "Stephan Goss, a Swiss journalist, reported that he had been denied entry into Georgia. X, November 6, 2024, <https://x.com/OCMediaorg/status/1850116914908951009>



On December 30, 2024, **Belgian journalist Wietse de Geyter** was denied entry to Georgia. He had been living in Georgia for three years prior to the incident.<sup>17</sup> Earlier, on December 7, during the mass break-up of protests and violence against demonstrators by the Georgian Dream's law enforcement, de Geyter was unlawfully and groundlessly detained near Rustaveli Avenue and released 48 hours later.<sup>18</sup>

On February 12, 2025, **French journalist Clément Girardot** was denied entry.<sup>19</sup> Girardot has been living and working in Georgia for over ten years. He held a permanent residence permit in Georgia, has a Georgian citizen wife and a minor child. Girardot actively covered political developments and protest rallies in Georgia.<sup>20</sup> Clément Girardot was attempting to enter Georgia with his wife and underage child when he was turned back, while his wife and child, as Georgian citizens, were allowed to enter the country. Girardot appealed to the Public Defender, requesting recognition of the violation of his rights. The Public Defender concluded that by denying him entry into Georgia, his right to respect for private and family life had been violated, and the best interests of the child had been disregarded. The Public Defender also issued a relevant recommendation to the Ministry of Internal Affairs.<sup>21</sup>

On March 20, 2025, that is, after the parliamentary elections and during protest rallies, entry to Georgia was denied to **Lithuanian human rights defender Regina Jegorova-Askerova**,<sup>22</sup> the Regional Director for the South Caucasus and Eastern Europe at the Swedish women's rights organization "Women for Women" (The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation).<sup>23</sup> She is a former journalist who has been living in Georgia for 15 years.<sup>24</sup>

17 "‘There are blacklists’ – How European journalists are being turned back at the border," Radio Liberty, March 24, 2025, available at: <https://shorturl.at/9IWpY>

18 Jarron Kamphorst, post and video, November 7, 2024 <https://x.com/JarronKamphorst/status/1865356894711251058>

19 Reporters Without Borders, "Georgia: Two French Journalists Turned Away at the Border as Authoritarianism Hardens," Reporters Without Borders, April 11, 2025, accessed June 9, 2025. TDI is representing Clément Girardot's interests.

20 "Georgia: two French journalists turned away at the border as authoritarianism hardens", Reporters Without Borders, available at: <https://rsf.org/en/georgia-two-french-journalists-turned-away-border-authoritarianism-hardens>

21 Recommendation No. 25/2208 of the Public Defender of Georgia, dated March 18, 2025.

22 TDI is representing Regina Yegorova-Askerova's interests.

23 JAMnews, "Lithuanian Human Rights Activist Denied Entry to Georgia after 15 Years of Residency," JAMnews, March 20, 2025, accessed June 9, 2025. <https://jam-news.net/lithuanian-human-rights-activist-denied-entry-to-georgia-after-15-years-of-residency/>

24 Ibidem.

Her husband and two underage children are Georgian citizens and permanently reside in Georgia, while Regina Jegorova-Askeroval held a permanent residence permit in the country. Despite this, the Ministry of Internal Affairs decided to separate the family and endanger the best interests of the children.

TDI also appealed to the Public Defender of Georgia, requesting recognition of the violation of Regina Yegorova-Askeroval's right to respect for private and family life, as well as the best interests of her children. The Public Defender accepted the applicant's arguments, established a violation of her right to respect for private and family life, and determined that the best interests of the children had been disregarded. The Public Defender issued a relevant recommendation to the Ministry of Internal Affairs.<sup>25</sup>

On March 30, 2025, another **French photojournalist, Jérôme Chobeaux**, was denied entry to Georgia.<sup>26</sup> In recent months, he had been covering the ongoing protests in the country.<sup>27</sup> He was also denied the right to make a phone call, which has no legal basis and is unlawful.

**On May 20, 2025, British journalist Will Neal was denied entry to Georgia.**<sup>28</sup> He had been living in Georgia since 2022. Will Neal was stopped at the Armenia-Georgia border for 45 minutes and denied entry into the country without any explanation, citing only a vague legal provision - "other cases provided for by Georgian legislation." He has no access to his personal belongings left behind in Tbilisi. According to Neal, when he temporarily left Georgia in April, he was also held up at the Tbilisi airport during departure and was asked a series of unusual questions, including about his views on the political situation in Georgia.

It is noteworthy that Will Neal's denial of entry was preceded by the publication of his investigative report concerning figures connected to Georgia's ruling circles.<sup>29</sup> Following its release, government-affiliated media launched a coordinated propaganda attack

25 Recommendation No. 25/4110 of the Public Defender of Georgia, dated May 27, 2025.

26 TDI is representing Jérôme Chobeaux's interests.

27 "Georgia: two French journalists turned away at the border as authoritarianism hardens", Reporters Without Borders, available at: <https://rsf.org/en/georgia-two-french-journalists-turned-away-border-authoritarianism-hardens>

28 TDI is representing Will Neal's interests.

29 „Moscow's Ties to the Georgian Regime Ran Through Kensington and Chelsea," Will Neal, Byline Times, March 31, 2025, available at: <https://bylinetimes.com/2025/03/31/moscows-ties-to-the-georgian-regime-ran-through-kensington-and-chelsea/>

against the journalist. Neal's investigative article detailed business ties between the UK-based private investment group Hunnewell Partners and EU-sanctioned Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich. According to the report, Hunnewell Partners, co-founded by Irakli Rukhadze, owner of TV Imedi, is a partner of Bidzina Ivanishvili, founder of the Georgian Dream, and owns the pro-government propaganda outlet TV Imedi.<sup>30</sup>

As of April 2025, an **EU human rights defender** was denied entry twice in five months. No explanation was provided on either occasion. As reported by Radio Liberty, the individual chose to remain anonymous for now.<sup>31</sup>

On February 3, 2025, renowned **Orthodox theologian and philosopher Andrey Kuraev** was denied entry to Georgia. Kuraev had been invited by Sulkhani-Saba Orbeliani University and was scheduled to deliver a lecture on February 5 titled "The Secret History of the Russian Orthodox Church - 100 Years in Schism." According to the Formula TV channel, at the Georgian border, he was handed a document banning him from entering the country for three years.<sup>32</sup> Kuraev is a public critic of the Russian Orthodox Church and its Patriarch Kirill's policies. He also condemned Russia for the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the invasion of Ukraine in 2022.<sup>33</sup> After Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Kuraev left Russia and moved to the Patriarchate of Constantinople.<sup>34</sup>

On April 29, 2025, **Romanian stand-up comedian Victor Patrascu** was denied entry to Georgia. He had shows scheduled in Tbilisi for April 29 and 30. Patrascu links the denial of his entry to the country to the Georgian Dream government. The comedian stands out for political and social themes and anti-Russian attitudes.<sup>35</sup>

30 British journalist Will Neal denied entry to Georgia – Reporters Without Borders. Between harassment and expulsion, Georgia is bent on silencing British journalist Will Neal, available at: <https://rsf.org/en/between-harassment-and-expulsion-georgia-bent-silencing-british-journalist-will-neal>

31 "‘I was turned back’ – Another EU citizen denied entry to Georgia," Radio Liberty, April 10, 2025, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/33381097.html>

32 Formula NEWS | English (X/@FormulaGe), "According to TV Formula, renowned Orthodox theologian and philosopher Andrei Kuraev has been denied entry to Georgia," X, February 4, 2025, <https://x.com/FormuGe/status/1886637529614405647>

33 JAMnews, "Russian Theologian Andrey Kuraev Denied Entry to Georgia," February 4, 2025, accessed June 9, 2025, <https://jam-news.net/russian-theologian-andrey-kuraev-denied-entry-to-georgia/>

34 Formula NEWS | English (X/@FormulaGe), "According to TV Formula, renowned Orthodox theologian and philosopher Andrei Kuraev has been denied entry to Georgia," X, February 4, 2025, <https://x.com/FormuGe/status/1886637529614405647>

35 Yousef Bardouka, "Romanian Comedian Victor Patrascu ‘Denied Entry to Georgia’ ahead of Show," OC Media, April 29, 2025, accessed June 9, 2025, <https://oc-media.org/romanian-comedian-denied-entry-to-georgia-ahead-of-show/>

### 1.3. THE PROBLEM OF DENYING ENTRY TO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Since August 2024, international students enrolled at universities in Georgia have encountered obstacles entering the country. These students are primarily from Asian and African countries. Some of them were also citizens of Western European states, although based on various identifying data, they may have been associated with African or Asian countries. Many students had traveled to their home countries during the summer holidays and, upon returning, faced problems entering Georgia. All of them were denied entry on the vague and unsubstantiated grounds of “other cases provided for by the legislation of Georgia.”<sup>36</sup> It is worth noting that in August 2024, residence permits were revoked for some of the students who were denied entry (some of these permits had been issued only a few months prior).

Also noteworthy is the fact that these students have been studying in Georgia for several years, with some of them already in their final academic year or semester. They and their families have invested time and significant financial resources in their education. In this context, the state’s decision to deprive them of the opportunity to complete their studies and obtain an academic degree cannot in any way meet the principle of proportionality in restricting rights, especially when the Patrol Police Department has not provided any specific reason for the refusal of entry and has unjustifiably applied subparagraph “i” of paragraph 1 of Article 11 of the Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons (“in other cases provided for by the legislation of Georgia”).

For example, in September 2024, two Jordanian students were denied entry into Georgia. One was about to enter the 7th semester of medical school, and the other the 9th semester (5th year) of the same faculty. In October, an Egyptian citizen who was transitioning to the 6th and final year of medical studies was also denied entry. As a result, the students were forced to terminate their studies in Georgia and, in the event of such a possibility, continue their education in other countries.

36 In 2024–2025, TDI has been representing the interests of two foreign students in a case concerning unjustified denial of entry to Georgia.

## 2. POLICY ON THE ISSUANCE, REFUSAL, AND REVOCATION OF RESIDENCE PERMITS IN GEORGIA

For years, TDI has monitored the practice of issuing and denying residence permits in Georgia and provided legal assistance to foreign nationals who were denied residence permits without justification. While in previous years the main issue was the unjustified denial of residence permits or their extension (especially in the case of citizens from Asian and African countries), in 2024 a new problematic trend emerged: the sudden and unsubstantiated revocation of valid residence permits for foreign nationals.

Since the summer of 2024, many international students have approached TDI for assistance after their valid student residence permits were suddenly revoked, leaving them unable to continue their studies in Georgia. During the reporting period, namely since August 2024, TDI provided legal representation in eight such cases (in seven of which the residence permits were revoked on the same day - August 14, 2024), and offered legal consultations to several other students facing similar problems (according to information provided by beneficiaries, other international students also had their residence permits revoked). In all cases, the legal basis cited for the revocation was subparagraph “b” of Article 21 of the Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons, which allows for the termination of a foreigner’s stay in Georgia if they are engaged in activities that pose a threat to national security. The individuals whose residence permits were revoked and who sought TDI’s help are citizens of countries in the Middle East and Northwest Africa. It is likely that representatives of other African and Asian countries also faced problems regarding residence permits, as the state’s

approach to denying such permits to individuals from these regions has long been discriminatory and lacking in justification.<sup>37</sup>

TDI sought to determine the scale of residence permit revocations in 2024 and requested relevant public information from the LEPL Public Service Development Agency. However, as of May 2025, TDI had not received a response. As noted, the revoked residence permits had been issued to students. The majority had been studying in Georgia for several years, with some nearing the end of their studies. With their permits revoked, these students no longer have a legal basis to reside in Georgia to complete their studies and obtain an academic degree.

It is also worth noting that in all eight lawsuits filed in 2024, TDI requested the suspension of the decisions declaring the residence permits invalid. In three cases, the courts granted the motions, which temporarily reinstated the residence permits (however, later, based on appeals by the Public Service Development Agency, the Tbilisi Court of Appeals annulled the rulings that had suspended the contested decisions, leading to the re-cancellation of the previously reinstated permits). Two of the three students whose permits had been temporarily reinstated attempted to re-enter Georgia, but despite holding active residence permits, they were denied entry. The official reason cited was “failure to meet other requirements defined by Georgian legislation.”

As for the overall trends in residence permit issuance, assessment is difficult because the Public Service Development Agency did not respond to TDI’s public information request in this case either.<sup>38</sup> TDI requested data on the number of applications for residence permits, the number of approved applications, and the number of refusals by the state, all broken down by citizenship. Additionally, TDI requested information on how many of the refusals were based on a negative conclusion or recommendation from the State Security Service of Georgia (under subparagraphs “a” and/or “c” of paragraph 1, Article 18 of the Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons), also broken down by country.

37 See the Tolerance and Diversity Institute’s (TDI) report “Legal Status of Foreigners and Racism in Georgia, 2022,” pp. 21-24. Available at: [https://tdi.ge/sites/default/files/tdi\\_legal\\_status\\_of\\_foreigners\\_and\\_racism\\_in\\_georgia\\_2022\\_report.pdf](https://tdi.ge/sites/default/files/tdi_legal_status_of_foreigners_and_racism_in_georgia_2022_report.pdf).

38 Letter No. 06/01/2025 of January 9, 2025 of Tolerance and Diversity Institute (TDI).

Therefore, the information provided in this report is based on legal cases and individual consultations conducted by TDI. Analysis of these cases reveals that the unjustified denial of residence permits or their extension, based in all cases on negative assessments from the State Security Service, remains a serious issue. During the reporting period, TDI handled three such new cases, in all of which the denial of student residence permits was justified by claims of incompatibility with the interests of national security. In one case, due to the refusal to extend a residence permit, a student faced the threat of deportation from Georgia, even though only three months remained before completing his studies.



### 3. THE PRACTICE OF EXPELLING FOREIGN NATIONALS FROM GEORGIA

According to statistics published by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia on the “enforcement of decisions regarding the expulsion of foreign nationals,” a total of 363 foreign nationals were expelled from Georgia in 2024.<sup>39</sup> This number is nearly double compared to 2023 (when 190 foreign nationals were expelled).<sup>40</sup> Official statistics from 2024 indicate that the individuals most frequently expelled from Georgia were citizens of Azerbaijan, Iran, India, Turkey, and Nigeria. Particularly noteworthy is the sharp increase in expulsions during the first quarter of 2025. During this period, 219 foreign nationals were expelled. This trend aligns with the undemocratic and authoritarian-leaning policies of the ruling Georgian Dream government.<sup>41</sup>

#### **The Case of the “Flagbearer of Batumi,” Temur Katamadze**

The legal proceedings against Temur Katamadze, including his administrative detention, repeated denials of residence permits and citizenship, and the initiation of expulsion procedures, clearly indicate the politically motivated use of legal mechanisms by the Georgian Dream government to persecute individuals whose civic activism or public criticism is deemed unacceptable.

Temur Katamadze (also known as Gaffar Yilmaz) is an ethnic Georgian citizen of Turkey. He identifies as a descendant of Muhajirs<sup>42</sup> and is an active member and leader of “Chveneburebi,” an organization founded by ethnic Georgians in Turkey. He arrived in Georgia in 2012 to reintegrate into his historical homeland and establish permanent

39 Ministry of Internal Affairs, Public Information, 2024, available at: [https://info.police.ge/page?id=863&parent\\_id=258](https://info.police.ge/page?id=863&parent_id=258)

40 Ministry of Internal Affairs, Public Information, 2023, available at: [https://info.police.ge/page?id=768&parent\\_id=258](https://info.police.ge/page?id=768&parent_id=258)

41 Ministry of Internal Affairs, Public Information, Q1, 2025, available at: [https://info.police.ge/page?id=957&parent\\_id=956](https://info.police.ge/page?id=957&parent_id=956)

42 Muhajir is an Arabic word meaning “immigrant.”

residence. Katamadze applied for Georgian citizenship several times (in 2012, 2015, and 2019) to the Public Service Development Agency, successfully passing the required Georgian language and history exams. Nevertheless, he was denied citizenship on all three occasions. Until 2019, Katamadze resided in Georgia with a work-based residence permit, but in 2020, his application for permit extension was denied as well.<sup>43</sup>

The issue of his expulsion emerged after he actively participated in anti-government protests criticizing Georgian Dream's anti-democratic and anti-Western policies. At ongoing protest rallies in Batumi, Katamadze was always standing with a Georgian flag in hand, which earned him the nickname "Flagbearer of Batumi." It was due to this public dissent that, on January 11, 2025, the Ministry of Internal Affairs detained him under administrative proceedings, and a court sentenced him to five days of administrative detention.<sup>44</sup>

On January 16, immediately upon his release from administrative custody, the Georgian Dream government detained him again, this time under immigration laws to expel him from the country. On January 18, based on an order from the Samtredia District Court and pending a decision on his expulsion, Katamadze was transferred to the Temporary Accommodation Center of the Migration Department.<sup>45</sup> Following his detention, he went on a hunger strike for 48 days, and as of May 2025, he remains in custody.<sup>46</sup>

On April 30, the Migration Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs issued a decision to expel Temur Katamadze from Georgia.<sup>47</sup> However, on May 13, the Tbilisi City Court suspended the enforcement of the expulsion decision pending a final court ruling.<sup>48</sup> It is important to note that, according to Katamadze, his expulsion to Turkey would pose a serious threat to his right to liberty and life.

43 Civil.ge, "Protester Temur Katamadze Ends 48-Day Hunger Strike As He Awaits Refugee Status Decision," March 5, 2025, <https://civil.ge/archives/667176>

44 OC Media Caucasus (Instagram/@ocmedia\_caucasus), "Activist Temur Katamadze, who is detained in Batumi, said that after his arrest, he was physically assaulted ...," February 2025. [https://www.instagram.com/ocmedia\\_caucasus/p/DFNt\\_1YvJj0/?locale=my&hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/ocmedia_caucasus/p/DFNt_1YvJj0/?locale=my&hl=en)

45 Temur Katamadze is represented in court by the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association.

46 1TV, "GYLA: Hunger-Striker Temur Katamadze Transferred to Vivamedi Clinic," March 5, 2025, accessed June 9, 2025, <https://1tv.ge/lang/en/news/gyla-hunger-striker-temur-katamadze-transferred-to-vivamedi-clinic/> [interpressnews.ge+6](https://interpressnews.ge+6)

47 Mariam Razmadze, "GYLA Demands Halt to Expulsion of Activist Temur Katamadze," Georgia Today, May 6, 2025. <https://georgiatoday.ge/gyla-demands-halt-to-expulsion-of-activist-temur-katamadze/>

48 Civil.ge, "Liveblog: Resistance | Tbilisi City Court Halts Deportation of Katamadze Pending Final Ruling," May 30, 2025, <https://civil.ge/archives/666987>

## 4. RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND CRIMES

### 4.1. STATISTICS ON CRIMES COMMITTED ON GROUNDS OF RACIAL INTOLERANCE

To study statistics on crimes motivated by racial intolerance, TDI analyzed data published through public sources and letters received in response to requests for information sent to various state agencies.

In the joint report on crimes committed on grounds of intolerance with discrimination, published by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, the Special Investigation Service, the Prosecutor's Office, and the Supreme Court, the concept of "race" remained problematic during the reporting period. Under the term "race," these agencies include "race," skin color, language, citizenship, national and ethnic origin, and descent,<sup>49</sup> which prevents the precise recording of which specific ground and against which group the hate crime was committed. From this perspective, the statistics produced by the state agencies are flawed and require refinement.

According to the joint report on the 2024 statistics of crimes committed with discriminatory motives, during the reporting period:

- The Ministry of Internal Affairs launched investigations into a total of 51 criminal cases that contained signs of racial discrimination. Of these, 43 concerned discrimination solely on the grounds of "race," four on the grounds of "race" in conjunction with gender,

49 Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, Special Investigation Service, Prosecution Service of Georgia, the Supreme Court of Georgia. 2024. In the joint report on joint Report of Data on Crimes Committed on Grounds of Intolerance with Discrimination", Table N3.  
[https://www.geostat.ge/media/68728/Hate\\_2024.pdf](https://www.geostat.ge/media/68728/Hate_2024.pdf)

three on the grounds of “race” in conjunction with sexual orientation, and one on the grounds of “race” and religion.<sup>50</sup>

- According to the data from the Prosecutor’s Office of Georgia, in 2024, criminal prosecution was initiated against 15 individuals for crimes motivated by racial intolerance (among these cases, in addition to racial intolerance, two involved religious intolerance, three involved sexual orientation, and three involved gender).<sup>51</sup> Prosecution was terminated in one case.<sup>52</sup> In total, 17 individuals were recognized as victims in this category of crimes.<sup>53</sup>
- During the reporting period, the courts convicted 10 individuals for crimes committed with racial intolerance (nine of these cases were investigated during the reporting period).

TDI also requested statistical information on crimes committed with racial intolerance and violations of equality on the grounds of “race,” citizenship, or origin from the State Security Service<sup>54</sup> (as the investigation of crimes committed through racial discrimination falls under its authority<sup>55</sup>). However, no response was received from the agency.

It should also be noted that assigning the investigation of crimes committed on the grounds of discrimination to the State Security Service is fundamentally unjustified due to the incompatibility between the State Security Service’s core mission and the specific approaches required for effectively investigating crimes committed with discriminatory motives. In particular, crimes committed with discriminatory motives fall within the category of cases requiring a special and sensitive approach, a competence that only a specialized unit can possess. Besides, due to the nature of its operations, the State Security Service is one of the most closed, non-transparent, and secretive agencies.

50 Ibid. Chart N3.

51 Ibid., Chart N12;

52 Ibid., Chart N23;

53 Ibid., Chart N15;

54 Letter No. 07/01/2025 of January 9, 2025 of Tolerance and Diversity Institute (TDI).

55 See Article 4 of the “Investigative and Territorial Jurisdiction of Criminal Cases,” approved by Order No. 3 of the Prosecutor General of Georgia dated August 23, 2019.

This contradicts the specific requirements for investigating discrimination-motivated crimes, which should be approached from a human rights perspective and require not only specialized competence of the investigative body but also a high level of oversight. Instead, investigation of such crimes by the State Security Service may aim to examine and monitor certain minority groups or regions from a security standpoint.<sup>56</sup>

## 4.2. OTHER CASES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

A private university operating in Tbilisi, New Vision University, which enrolls many international students, had in recent years supported Muslim students in exercising their freedom of religion or belief. This was manifested by allowing students to perform Friday prayers (Jum'ah) at a specific time in an open area allocated by the university.

On January 24, 2025, a Facebook user posted a video with the caption “Meanwhile in Dighomi...” which showed a segment of the aforementioned Friday prayer.<sup>57</sup> Below the video, numerous xenophobic and Islamophobic comments were written. The next day, on January 25, 2025, the pro-Russian, violent group Alt-Info (which later formed a political party under the name Conservatives for Georgia) published a discussion of the same video on its YouTube channel, which was also characterized by xenophobic and Islamophobic content.<sup>58</sup> Some of the comments on the video were of a similar nature.

Shortly after, in February 2025, students received a notification from the university that it would no longer be able to provide the open space for Muslim students to conduct Friday prayers. It is noteworthy that many Muslim students from various universities in Tbilisi participated in these Friday prayers. By allocating space for this, the university had significantly supported students' ability to practice their religion freely. The withdrawal of this opportunity coincides chronologically with the online dissemination of the aforementioned video.

56 For more detailed information, see the report by the Tolerance and Diversity Institute (TDI), “The Legal Status of Foreign Nationals in Georgia (Amid and Beyond the COVID Pandemic), 2020–2021 (June),” 2021, pp. 22–24.  
[https://tdi.ge/sites/default/files/migrants\\_rights\\_2020-2021-eng.pdf](https://tdi.ge/sites/default/files/migrants_rights_2020-2021-eng.pdf)

57 Video available at: <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/162xrL458N/>

58 Conservatives GEO (YouTube channel), “რა შედეგები მოიტანა უკონტროლო მიგრაციამ საქართველოში” [What Were the Effects of Uncontrolled Migration in Georgia], January 25, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CG-ovrQaBpw>

A significant development is that between August and the end of 2024, at least eight students who had used the university's space for Friday prayers had their residence permits revoked on the basis of conclusions issued by the State Security Service.<sup>59</sup> Communication between TDI and these students, as well as with their friends, revealed that the majority associate the revocation of their residence permits directly with their religious identity and practice.

During the reporting period, some citizens from African and Asian countries shared with TDI their experiences of racist hatred and threats in public spaces. It is worth noting that in many cases, such incidents go unaddressed by the police. A general distrust of the police is also observed among foreign nationals. They report a growing lack of confidence in state institutions and, in cases of need, often choose not to contact the police.

■ 59 TDI represents the interests of these students.



