

Freedom of Religion or Belief, Equality, and Secularity

May 2025

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Tolerance and Diversity Institute (TDI)

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 **May 2025**

You can also access the 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](#)

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Key Trends

During the reporting period, the ruling party, *Georgian Dream (GD)*, continued to rely heavily on anti-Western, anti-democratic, and pseudo-religious propaganda as one of the main pillars of its political discourse. The GD government persisted in instrumentalizing the Georgian Orthodox Church and the concept of Orthodoxy, while campaigns against Western partners were frequently accompanied by language veiled in pseudo-religious rhetoric.

Main trends include:

- **Pseudo-religious manipulation and anti-Western rhetoric by *Georgian Dream*** – The ruling party's discourse continues to focus on demonizing the West under the guise of defending Orthodoxy and so-called traditional values. Through the use of pseudo-religious narratives, the *Georgian Dream (GD)* government¹ legitimizes its anti-democratic agenda and contributes to the polarization of society. Its rhetoric is rooted in the concept of the "Russian World" (*Russkiy Mir*), which in turn reflects an anti-liberal and anti-democratic worldview. The discourse emphasizes the protection of faith and national identity, while its actual aim is the creation and dissemination of enemy images, primarily of the West. Criticism from partner countries of the government's anti-democratic and unconstitutional actions is portrayed as a threat to national identity, Orthodoxy, traditions, and sovereignty. Moreover, *Georgian Dream*, along with its satellite actors and propagandists, frequently misuses historical facts out of context to depict contemporary liberal democracies as potential successors to authoritarian and repressive ideologies. Drawing parallels with Bolshevism and fascism is a deliberate attempt to sow skepticism toward the European Union and the broader Western alliance.
- **Discrediting the NGO sector and donors** – The *Georgian Dream* government is increasingly promoting an aggressive counter-narrative targeting foreign funding, particularly programs supported by the U.S. and the EU. Discourses around the so-called "deep state," "liberal fascism," and "hostile influences" form the basis of coordinated attacks against Western donor institutions and governments, civil society organizations, and human rights activists.

¹ TDI uses terms such as *Georgian Dream government* and *Georgian Dream parliament* to highlight that the ruling party is not a legitimate political force representing the Georgian people. Oligarch Bidzina Ivanishvili's Georgian Dream (GD) party, which has been in power since 2012, is facing harsh criticism for its growing authoritarian tendencies, state capture and democratic backsliding. The parliamentary elections of [26 October 2024](#) were the culmination of the anti-human rights policies and the capture of the democratic institutions. [International](#) and [domestic](#) observers, including respected monitoring missions, reported grave irregularities such as ballot manipulation, vote-buying, intimidation of opposition members and voters, pressure on public sector employees, and the abuse of administrative resources. Furthermore, the unconstitutional government, through the [repressive legislation](#), targeted NGOs, human rights defenders, and journalists, and eroded judicial independence by political interference and centralized control. The regime has physically abused and [systematically tortured](#) hundreds of demonstrators and imprisoned (as of May 2025) around 60 political dissidents, among them pro-European demonstrators, civil activists, journalists, actors, political opposition leaders.

- **Political homophobia** – May 17, the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia, continues to be exploited by *Georgian Dream* to reinforce pseudo-religious narratives. The celebration of the so-called “Day of Family Purity,” the involvement of public officials in the event, and accompanying statements reflect the government's legitimization of a homophobic agenda.
- **Positive development: dissenting voices among Orthodox clergy** – Some Orthodox clergy continue to criticize *Georgian Dream*'s repressive and anti-democratic policies publicly. They express clear positions on political prisoners, manipulation through pseudo-religious narratives, and intolerance. These statements help create space for alternative viewpoints within the Orthodox Church.
- **Ecclesiastical legitimization of anti-democratic discourse** – At the same time, a segment of the Orthodox clergy uses sermons and public appearances to promote rhetoric that supports the *Georgian Dream* government and opposes civil society, human rights, and the European Union.

1. Political Manipulation through Religion and Identity by *Georgian Dream*

During the reporting period, *Georgian Dream* continued to exploit pseudo-religious narratives, presenting itself as the sole political force defending Christianity and traditions. In this context, the party's statements depicted so-called “external forces,” the “deep state,” and “liberal fascism” as enemies of the Orthodox Church in Georgia, allegedly aiming to erase the country's national and religious identity. Furthermore, *Georgian Dream* leaders frame Georgia in an isolated context, suggesting that national interests are incompatible with those of its Western partners.

Key themes underpinning *Georgian Dream*'s anti-Western propaganda during the reporting period included the celebration of the so-called “Day of Family Purity,” Georgia's Independence Day, and the funding of NGOs by international organizations and donors. The fifth President of Georgia, [Salome Zourabichvili](#), commented on the ruling party's manipulation of pseudo-religious narratives and political repression:

“This is unacceptable for our society, for our traditions. They go to church, hold enormous candles, and at the same time engage in barbarity against completely innocent women.”

1.1 Georgian Dream's Pseudo-Religious Narrative on Christianity and “Traditional Values”

According to *Georgian Dream*'s discourse, NGOs, critical media, and opposition parties are portrayed as adversaries of Georgian traditions, the Orthodox Church, the Patriarch, and national values. The party positions itself as the protector of faith and national identity. Criticism from partner countries regarding *Georgian Dream*'s anti-democratic and unconstitutional actions is depicted as a threat to national identity, values, traditions, and sovereignty.

[Irakli Kobakhidze](#), *Georgian Dream* Prime Minister, at the 9th Congress of *Georgian Dream*, May 7:

“Naturally, Georgia could not remain untouched by these unhealthy global political processes. For the past 13 years, we have been engaged in and continuing a relentless struggle: for Georgia's sovereignty, for the welfare of the Georgian people, for democracy and the rule of law; we are fighting to defend Christianity, to preserve peace, to strengthen traditional values and public morality. This is an unequal battle, and the only advantage we have is the truth.”

Nino Tsilosani, Member of the Georgian Dream Parliament, May 16:

“We restored and protected our faith just in time, our moral and spiritual backbone. If you recall, the Church and the Patriarchate went through tremendous battles. There were campaign after campaign, TV show after TV show, aimed at discrediting them. Unfortunately, the former Ombudswoman, Ms. Nino [Lomjaria], was directly involved in the campaign against the Church and the Patriarch, and from within, many individuals were provoked to dismantle the Church from the inside...”

Irakli Kobakhidze, Georgian Dream Prime Minister, addressing the public at Holy Trinity Cathedral during the prayer service for the “Day of Family Purity and Parental Respect,” May 17:

“The struggle for traditional values continues. It is not an easy battle. Powerful forces are confronting these values, creating false ideologies and values. It is our duty and responsibility to stand with the Mother Church in defending our national values.”

Gia Abashidze, Georgian Dream propagandist and analyst, May 17:

“Where does Georgian society stand? With dignity, love of freedom, the reinforcement of sovereignty, and the Mother Church. This year’s Family Purity Day reaffirmed that. Hundreds of thousands of people of various social classes, ages, and denominations gathered in Tbilisi alone to declare: the homeland is one, like the Lord! Any pseudo-values and brazen instructions imposed from abroad will be washed away...”

1.1.1. Georgia’s Independence Day

May 26 marked the 107th anniversary of the adoption of Georgia’s Act of Independence². The day was [commemorated](#) amid increasing international isolation, democratic backsliding, and the consolidation of authoritarian governance in the country.

Representatives of *Georgian Dream* held an official ceremony at Freedom Square in Tbilisi and addressed the public. Their rhetoric was once again saturated with pseudo-religious and anti-Western narratives.

² On May 26, 1918, the National Council of Georgia, chaired by Noe Zhordania, adopted the Act of Independence of Georgia, which laid the foundation for the first Georgian republic, independent from the Russian Empire. The Democratic Republic of Georgia ceased to exist in February 1921, as a result of the armed invasion and occupation by Bolshevik Russia. After decades of Soviet rule, on April 9, 1991, the Republic of Georgia regained its independence, this time from the Soviet Union.

Mikheil Kavelashvili, Georgian Dream president, May 26:

“It was precisely for this idea that our ancestors fought, preserving for us three sacred treasures: homeland, language, and faith—each of which we are duty-bound to protect. If even one is lost, we will lose the essence of what we call Georgia. [...] Once and for all, we must understand how futile it is to wait for some foreign power to come and save us, to do what we must do ourselves, to supposedly know better than we do what our people and our country need.”

Shalva Papuashvili, Speaker of the Georgian Dream Parliament, May 26:

“Even today, our main point of orientation remains those three divine treasures handed down to us by our ancestors—our homeland, our language, and our faith. We are a people faithful to our religion. Our national vitality flows from the faith and devotion of every person, regardless of religious denomination or ethnicity. A godless, indifferent, mocking admirer of foreign values can never become a progressive and constructive force for our homeland.”

Irakli Kobakhidze, Georgian Dream Prime Minister, May 26:

“Our pride lies in every beautiful corner of our homeland—with its stunning nature and wonderful people; our pride is our unique language and script; our pride is the Georgian Orthodox Church, which has always been, and remains today, one of the main pillars of Georgia’s national independence and identity. On this day, I would like once again to express my deepest gratitude to our Holy Church and to His Holiness, the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia, Ilia II, whose wisdom and half-century of service have made an invaluable contribution to preserving and strengthening Georgia’s national identity.”

1.1.2. Anti-Secular, Populist Statements

In addition to manipulating pseudo-religious narratives for populist purposes, *Georgian Dream* also disseminated anti-secular statements. For instance, the Speaker of the GD Parliament declared that *“Georgia and its Apostolic Autocephalous Church are intergrown and inseparable.”*

It is important to note that Article 8 of the Constitution of Georgia, which delineates the relationship between the state and the Orthodox Church, recognizes *“the special role of the Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia in the history of Georgia”* while also affirming its *“independence from the state.”*

Nevertheless, ahead of the 2024 parliamentary elections, *Georgian Dream* [announced a populist initiative](#) proposing a constitutional amendment that would have risked undermining the Church’s independence and subordinating it to state control.

Shalva Papuashvili, Speaker of Georgian Dream Parliament, May 30 — during a speech at a conference marking the 1,700th anniversary of the First Council of Nicaea:

“Our Church is the oldest institution of our state, inseparably intertwined with the fate of our nation. The Georgian people, their homeland, Georgia, and its Apostolic Autocephalous Church are intergrown and inseparable. No enemy has ever succeeded in separating or tearing them apart. It is precisely in this unity that our true strength lies.”

1.2. Anti-Western Messaging

Georgian Dream continues to systematically promote a propagandistic discourse centered around the notion of a “global ideology” that allegedly threatens Georgia’s sovereignty, Orthodoxy, and family values. Within this conceptual framework, the ruling party persistently uses terms such as “deep state,” “liberal fascism,” “influential forces,” and “external actors.” In reality, *Georgian Dream* seeks to construct an enemy image, portraying these forces as aiming to erase Georgia’s national and religious identity.

The party’s rhetoric draws heavily from the concept of the “Russian World” (*Russkiy Mir*), which itself is grounded in an anti-liberal and anti-democratic worldview. While the narrative foregrounds the protection of faith and national identity, its actual purpose is to construct and disseminate images of the West as a hostile threat.

The following thematic narratives characterize *Georgian Dream*’s anti-Western messaging:

1.2.1. Demonization of the West

In *Georgian Dream*’s rhetoric, the West is portrayed as an enemy from which the government must protect the country. At times, even the Soviet regime is framed more favorably by comparison. According to the *Georgian Dream* Prime Minister, “*Even things the Soviet Communist Party wouldn’t have dared in the 1980s, we now hear from specific officials in America and Europe.*”

Additionally, *Georgian Dream*, its satellite actors, and affiliated propagandists often invoke historical facts out of context to depict today’s liberal democracies as potential successors to authoritarian and repressive ideologies. Drawing parallels with Bolshevism and fascism is a deliberate attempt to sow skepticism toward the European Union and the broader Western alliance.

Irakli Kobakhidze, Georgian Dream Prime Minister, May 14:

“What the Soviet Communist Party would not have dared in the 1980s—perhaps even in the 1930s—we now hear from specific officials in America and Europe.”

Maia Bitadze, Georgian Dream MP, May 10:

“In a world shaped by the struggle among great powers, it is critical not only to preserve our identity, history, and religion, but our very survival is at stake. Georgian citizens do not support EU membership so that the country can be ruled from afar. For them, it makes no difference whether the directives come from Brussels, Moscow, or any other capital.”

Tamar Chiburdanidze, representative of People’s Power, a satellite party of Georgian Dream, May 2:

“Politicians like Rasa Juknevičienė remind us that Bolshevism, fascism, and aggressive liberalism were all born in Europe. We might want to forget this fact, but unfortunately, they won’t let us.”

Nana Kakabadze, representative of United Neutral Georgia, another Georgian Dream satellite party, May 9:

“Some modern Georgians who call themselves pro-Western patriots urge unconditional submission to Europe. Yet blindly embracing everything from Europe means forgetting that fascism was also born there—and no one is immune to the return of such ideologies, no matter how attractively packaged they may be.”

1.2.2. Accusations Against the United States

During the reporting period, *Georgian Dream* openly accused both the Biden and Trump administrations, as well as the United States more broadly, of supporting violent groups and promoting so-called LGBT “propaganda,” attempting to overthrow the Georgian government and “undermine its foundations,” attacking the Georgian Orthodox Church and “traditional values,” and pursuing a hostile policy toward Georgia or of failing to take effective measures against the so-called “deep state.”

Concerning the Trump administration, *Georgian Dream* Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze sent [an open letter](#) to the U.S. President and Vice President in which [he noted](#) that a recent letter expressing *Georgian Dream*’s willingness to restart bilateral relations “from a clean slate” had gone unanswered. He characterized this as surprising, given what he described as a “value-based alignment” between *Georgian Dream* and the current U.S. administration. Referring to “recent developments,” Kobakhidze argued that the Trump administration’s claims about defeating the “deep state” were merely a rebranding effort by that very entity.

Shalva Papuashvili, Speaker of the *Georgian Dream* Parliament, May 8:

“The former U.S. administration [referring to the Biden administration] damaged the relationship through its own actions, attempting to change the government in Georgia and undermine it from within. It funded violent groups, propaganda, disinformation, and attacks on the Georgian Church. It directly financed groups that attack our Church, groups spreading false ideologies in Georgia.”

Irakli Zarkua, *Georgian Dream* MP, May 15:

“When Donald Trump’s administration came into power, we were pleased because it exposed everything. We had long claimed that NGOs were funding attacks on the Church and LGBT propaganda. The new administration unmasked these foundations. However, recently it became clear that the ‘deep state’ is still active. The so-called ‘Georgia Support Act’ they endorsed is a harmful and hostile act against Georgia. [...] During the Biden administration, not a single day went by without the White House Press Secretary defaming Georgia’s government, the country, and the Church. That is no longer happening—and I am grateful for it. We have even found common ground on several issues, such as banning LGBT propaganda and supporting family values. Unfortunately, progress hasn’t gone beyond that.”

Zurab Kadagidze, member of *People’s Power*, a *Georgian Dream* satellite party, May 6:

“We need to show them that Joe Wilson and his sectarian subordinates—led by Zurabishvili—have nothing to stir up in Georgia.”

1.2.3. Defending Christianity, “Traditional Values,” and Sovereignty Against “Foreign Influence”

According to the conspiratorial statements of *Georgian Dream*’s Prime Minister, so-called “influential forces” aim to undermine Georgia’s sovereignty, economy, and national identity; to impose hatred toward the Georgian state, the Orthodox Church, and among Georgians themselves; and to weaken societal cohesion by manipulating history and rejecting traditional values. Some GD officials have described current developments as a “religious war” in which ultra-liberal and “fascist” ideologies, portrayed as new forms of religion, are allegedly waging a coordinated attack on Christianity both in Georgia and across Europe.

Irakli Kobakhidze, *Georgian Dream* Prime Minister, May 7:

“Today, the world is facing unprecedented challenges: we see how influential forces are trying to force even the most powerful states to surrender their sovereignty; we see how they are destroying the economies of many countries; we see how they trample on the basic principles of democracy and the rule of law—even in those

countries that are considered their cradle; we see how they attempt to erase national and religious identities from countries with ancient cultures; we see how they are fighting against Christianity and other traditional religious beliefs.”

Irakli Kobakhidze, Georgian Dream Prime Minister, May 7:

“We see how there is an attempt to impose hatred upon Georgians—hatred toward one another, hatred toward the Georgian state, and hatred toward our Mother Church. After the radicals are removed from Georgian politics, which will happen very soon, we will defeat hatred, bring back those citizens who have gone astray, and unify our society.”

Nino Tsilosani, Georgian Dream MP, May 7:

“We know well that eras change, times rule—not kings—but truth remains unchanged. That truth is the Christian values upon which both we and the West are founded. And let me tell you, this is no longer a political struggle—this has evolved into a religious war. Christianity, our faith, our values are being attacked by ideologies that have turned into religions themselves—ultra-liberalism and fascism. And as always in history, I believe the right choice will ultimately prevail.”

Guram Macharashvili, MP, People’s Power, May 5:

“Unfortunately, we must note that in recent years, there was pressure exerted by the deep state to adopt ultra-liberal approaches, including through legislation. All of this was aimed at undermining national and Georgian identity. Thank God, things will now be corrected.”

1.2.4. Western Donors, Civil Society Activity, and NGO Funding

According to *Georgian Dream* and its satellite parties, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) promote a false, anti-Christian ideology, serve foreign interests, and act as conduits for importing Western fascist tendencies into Georgia.

Georgian Dream continues to manipulate the name of the Georgian Orthodox Church to discredit the civil sector. The central narrative is that a “deep state” and “foreign funding” are being used to undermine Georgia’s independence, the Church, traditions, and values. This work, they claim, is carried out by NGOs portrayed as “agents.” According to *Georgian Dream*’s unsubstantiated claims, past and current funding from USAID, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), and the European Union has aimed to fuel radicalism and hatred, instigate revolutions, and promote hostility toward the Orthodox clergy and the Patriarch.

Irakli Kobakhidze, Georgian Dream Prime Minister, May 14:

“Let me repeat: since the activities of the KGB in Georgia 30 years ago, no one has sown more hatred in this country than USAID, NED, and other such actors over the past 30 years. It’s plain as day—USAID and NED funded organizations directly engaged in spreading hatred against the Orthodox Church. [...] Imagine—specific NGOs, political parties, and media outlets were funded and given the task of sowing hatred toward the Orthodox Church, including the Patriarch.”

Sozar Subari, Deputy Speaker of the Georgian Dream Parliament, Chair of People’s Power, May 8:

“These people and NGOs, directed by foreign powers, are ready to sell out Georgia, drag it into war, and impose harmful sanctions on the country, on command from any foreign capital. Homeland, God, and faith have all been replaced for them by whatever an embassy says.”

Furthermore, [an open letter](#) published by the GD Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze, addressing the U.S. President and Vice President, referenced hopes for a “clean slate” in U.S.–Georgia relations and included critical remarks about the “deep state,” the so-called “Friends of Georgia Act,” and U.S. funding. Kobakhidze referred to the “Friends of Georgia Act,” [endorsed](#) by the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee on March 27, as an “absurd and hostile” piece of legislation, which he described as “infused with hostility toward the Georgian people and their elected government.” The GD Parliament also issued [a statement](#) condemning the Act and referencing U.S. financial assistance.

Irakli Kobakhidze, May 13 – Open Letter:

“Just through our participation in missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, our small country saved the U.S. \$2.5 billion—an amount that far exceeds the actual (!) assistance the U.S. has provided to Georgia from its budget. (By ‘actual assistance’ I do not include the funds allocated in 2008–2011 to rescue ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili’s regime after he started a war with Russia on the ‘deep state’s’ orders; nor do I count the funds channeled through the U.S. Embassy, USAID, NED, the Soros Foundation, and other channels, aimed at inciting radicalism and hatred, staging revolutions, damaging the image of the Georgian Orthodox Church, encouraging religious extremism, weakening state institutions, promoting gender and LGBT propaganda, and other such goals).”

Resolution of the Georgian Dream Parliament, May 14:

“The ‘deep state’ and its institutions have attempted to undermine democracy in Georgia. Notably, in 2023–2024, the main line of attack on democracy was tied to the laws passed by the Georgian Parliament, which sought to ensure transparency of funding from USAID, NED, and similar foundations, and to restrict LGBT propaganda.”

1.3. Manipulation through Homophobia and “Family Purity”

1.3.1. May 17

May 17, the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia (IDAHOT), which aims to raise visibility for the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals and condemn violence and discrimination, has been symbolically replaced in Georgia since 2014 by the “Day of Family Purity and Parental Respect.” This substitution was initiated by the Patriarch of the Georgian Orthodox Church. The year before this change, in 2013, violent groups and some Orthodox clergy [physically assaulted](#) peaceful demonstrators gathered on Rustaveli Avenue to mark the day against homophobia.

In 2024, Georgian Dream officially [declared](#) May 17 a public holiday. As in previous years, in 2025 the Georgian Orthodox Church [marked](#) the day with a large-scale public procession. The event was attended by high-ranking representatives of the *Georgian Dream* government, including *Georgian Dream* Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze, Speaker of Georgian Dream Parliament Shalva Papuashvili, and Mayor of Tbilisi Kakha Kaladze.

[Reportedly](#), *Georgian Dream* ensured significant mobilization for the event, including gathering teachers and other public servants to participate in the procession.

The rhetoric of both government officials and clergy emphasized an ongoing so-called “global struggle against traditional values.”

[Shalva Papuashvili](#), Speaker of the *Georgian Dream* Parliament, May 17:

“For years, there have been efforts to divide our society with invented ideologies. Thanks to the initiative of our Patriarch, this day has been redefined not as a day of division, hostility, or confrontation, but as a day of unity and love. It is essential that we base ourselves not on artificial, foreign, and unnatural ideologies, but on what has been tested through time—family, respect for parents, and all the traditions surrounding the family. These are what made us Georgian, and, indeed, what shaped European civilization itself. Therefore, today, through its actions, Georgia is defending European civilization from artificial ideologies and reminding it of what a true civilizational choice means.”

[Kakha Kaladze](#), Mayor of Tbilisi, May 17:

“We are not targeting anyone, nor are we in opposition to anyone, but the propaganda that has been imposed from the outside for years and funded with massive resources is categorically unacceptable.”

Tamar Chiburdanidze, representative of People’s Power, a Georgian Dream satellite party, May 17:

“Georgia was the first—and stood alone—to break through the front line in the battle of values, a front where the liberal world was destroying and annihilating every form of sanctity.”

Vladimer Bozhadze, Georgian Dream MP, May 19:

“The opposition’s attempts to distance themselves from the Church, from the faithful, and Christian values only confirm that their only concern is narrow political and partisan interests. No value connects them to the Georgian people.”

Irakli Chikhladze, host of Imedi Week, a pro-government propaganda program, May 18:

“[Radical activists and media] made an explicit declaration of anti-state, anti-Orthodox, and anti-Georgian politics. We saw a handful of radicals in despair trying once again to gain attention through expressions of liberal fascism. These same people spent the whole day insulting the religious sentiments of hundreds of thousands of Georgians, verbally attacking His Holiness, the Patriarchal Locum Tenens, and everyone who marked May 17 with reverence and participated in the holiday established by His Holiness.”

1.3.2. Discrediting Civil Society Activists

On May 6, the pro-government broadcaster [Imedi TV](#) aired covertly recorded footage from a performance of the play *Liberté* by director Data Tavadze. According to Imedi, the segment contained “obscene language, LGBT propaganda, and insults to religious sentiment.” The broadcaster also publicly named actors participating in the play.

On May 8, the Public Relations Department of the Georgian Orthodox Patriarchate issued [a response](#), describing the performance as “blasphemous and sacrilegious,” and threatening the “creators of the event” with excommunication.

The performance in question, held at the Royal District Theatre, included excerpts from the 18th-century French writer Marquis de Sade’s *Philosophy in the Bedroom*, or *Immoral Mentors*. The performance restricted attendance to individuals over the age of 18 and prohibited photo or video recording.

Director Data Tavadze is known for his public criticism of *Georgian Dream*’s anti-democratic policies and authoritarian tendencies, and is actively involved in pro-European demonstrations.

Georgian Dream representatives exploited the incident manipulatively, using generalization tactics to portray the political opposition and civil society activists as “anti-Church forces.”

Statements on the matter were issued by *Georgian Dream* officials, including [Vladimer Bozhadze](#), [Levan Makhashvili](#), and [Irakli Kirtzkhalia](#).

1.4. *Georgian Dream*'s Propaganda Toward the Georgian Diaspora

On May 27, 2025, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia hosted [a forum](#) dedicated to the Day of the Diaspora titled “*Diaspora for the Homeland – Tradition, Unity, Development.*” During the event, the *Georgian Dream* Prime Minister, the *Georgian Dream* President, and the *Georgian Dream* Minister of Foreign Affairs emphasized the significance of the Orthodox Church in strengthening and preserving the Georgian diaspora’s ties with their homeland.

The Georgian Dream party positions itself as the primary connector between the diaspora and Georgia, despite one of the main challenges during the 2024 parliamentary elections being the diaspora’s limited access to voting. Ahead of the elections, Georgian citizens living abroad, along with opposition parties and civil society organizations, repeatedly petitioned the Central Election Commission to open additional polling stations. The vast majority of these requests were rejected, resulting in a number and distribution of polling stations that [failed to meet the growing needs](#) of Georgian voters living outside the country.

[Irakli Kobakhidze](#), *Georgian Dream* Prime Minister, May 27:

“Special recognition must be given to the Orthodox Church’s role in deepening and preserving our diaspora’s connection with the homeland. I would like to thank the Church’s representatives—our eparchies abroad and every clergyman serving this important mission.”

[Mikheil Kavelashvili](#), *Georgian Dream* President, May 27:

“I express heartfelt gratitude to Church leaders and clergy, who do an immense amount of work. It is powerful and meaningful when our citizens abroad can visit an Orthodox church and pray. Special thanks to His Holiness and Beatitude, and to our Holy Synod, for this decision—it truly brings great relief to our fellow citizens.”

[Maka Bochorishvili](#), *Georgian Dream* Minister of Foreign Affairs, May 27:

“Every step the state takes is aimed at one goal—to preserve our compatriots’ Georgian identity and the threads that connect them to their homeland and culture. The emotions of those far from home are especially strong—love is sharper, and longing is soul-crushing. In sharing this emotional burden, the Church plays a unique role. The contribution of Georgian parishes in preserving language and faith among those far from their homeland is invaluable.”

2. Statements by Orthodox Clergy on Political Repression and Intolerance

The positive trend continued during the reporting period, with some clergy of the Georgian Orthodox Church maintaining a critical stance toward the Georgian Dream party's anti-democratic, anti-European trajectory and propaganda rhetoric.

2.1. Statements on Political Repression and Prisoners

Ilia Jinjolava, Archimandrite, 23 May:

“For centuries, the fight for truth has been accompanied by sacrifice. Even our Savior, innocent and immaculate, became a victim of injustice, and yet, through His crucifixion, He granted us new, true, and eternal life. That is why every such struggle, one that serves not revenge, but truth, dignity, and freedom, always carries profound meaning and Christ-like power. I firmly believe that the pain and sacrifice of today’s prisoners of conscience will not be in vain. The path of truth is long, but its end is resurrection. And those who, through oppression, injustice, and violence, consider themselves ‘victorious’ today, live only in the false glory of temporary darkness. History does not forget those who trample justice will ultimately be cast into the garbage heap of history.”

Dorothe Kurashvili, Archimandrite, 24 May:

“Persecution for the sake of truth brings the greatest joy to a person. For a human being, especially a Christian, victory is found in being right. When you are right, even if beaten, whether in the street, at home, or anywhere else, you remain victorious. That is why they [the prisoners] are right...”

Bishop Giorgi Jamdeliani of Marneuli and Hujabi addressed the court case of political prisoner and journalist Mzia Amaghlobeli.

Giorgi Jamdeliani, Bishop of Marneuli and Hujabi, 28 May:

“The plaintiff stated in court that the law must be enforced, and under this law, slapping a woman carries a sentence of 4 to 7 years. I understand that violence against state institutions is entirely unacceptable and should always be met with an appropriate response. However, I consider such a harsh sentence disproportionate, even though, as a clergyman and an ordinary citizen, I do not share this woman’s political views. My brother and child in Christ, were you not raised by a Georgian mother? Do you not have a sister or a wife? Are the moral laws of forgiveness and mercy foreign to you, which often surpass written laws? ‘With the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.’ Forgive, and you will be forgiven.”

Zenon Iarajuli, Archbishop of Dmanisi, Agarak-Tashir, Great Britain and Ireland, Facebook post, 6 May:

“Happy St. George’s Day, dear people. Congratulations to all who refuse to passively observe from the sidelines the greatest enemy of our people and country—one that seeks to cripple our minds and seize our land. I congratulate those who, on the day of St. George’s martyrdom, reject compromise and submission for the sake of their love for the homeland, their organic bond with the land, and their chivalrous spirit. I salute those who have been oppressed, imprisoned, or whose health and lives have been endangered because of their love for the homeland.”

Tamaz Lomidze, Priest, Facebook post, 23 May:

“Arrest this one, arrest that one, arrest them all, silence them all, expel them from the country! What kind of disaster is happening in Georgia?! When the country resembles the prison of Qvarqvare Tutaberi, shouldn’t the rulers realize that the country is headed toward ruin? The people you’ve unjustly thrown in jail have wives and children, parents, relatives, and friends. Do you think you’ll silence everyone and make them forget? Then you’ll have to arrest those who are still outside, and then their relatives, and their relatives’ relatives—and so on endlessly. Is this what you plan for the people and the country? The more people you beat, oppress, and unjustly imprison, the more explosives you lay under your own feet. How do you not understand this? Solidarity with all prisoners of conscience.”

Giorgi Tserodze, Priest, Facebook post, 23 May:

“Today, a politician who dedicated his life to Georgia’s freedom was arrested on fabricated charges. He is neither the first nor the last in this struggle. One powerful emotional gesture touched many hearts and reminded me, with teary eyes, of the primary principle of priesthood: before being handcuffed, he handed his wedding ring to his wife—a symbol of loyalty and sacrifice. After ordination, we clergy no longer wear wedding rings, as a sign of our commitment to a larger family—the Church. By giving that ring, Zurab Girchi Japaridze called us to remain loyal to our country and to the truth. Accepting injustice, oppression, and lies leads to the decay of the soul and destruction of the self. Our struggle continues unwaveringly. This ring, this gesture, is a symbol of our unity and resistance. As a priest, I stand with you for truth.”

Maksime Chkheidze, Priest, Facebook post, 23 May:

“Freedom is the highest divine seal upon the individual. Therefore, regardless of the abuser’s status, to restrict or steal another’s free choice for any subjective reason (especially of the nation) is a denial of God, a step toward blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. And that is nothing but the inability to ask the Lord for forgiveness, when no

goodness remains in the oppressor's heart, turning them into a demon-like being, a child of perdition."

2.2. Statements on the "Family Purity" and Homophobia

Some Orthodox clergy responded to the celebration of the "Day of the Purity of the Family." For example, Archimandrite Ilia Jinjolava spoke extensively from a Christian perspective about the theological invalidity of this day.

He criticized the establishment of May 17 as the "Day of the Family Purity," emphasizing that it is theologically unacceptable to define the sanctity of the family through the designation of a particular day. In his view, a family becomes sacred not through formal rituals, but through daily spiritual life, a close relationship with Christ, mutual respect, and love.

Ilia Jinjolava, Archimandrite, Facebook post, 17 May, "The Theological Invalidity of the 'Day of the Sanctity of the Family':

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). ...The Church, as an institution founded by God and adorned with the grace of Christ, independently determines feast days and distinguishes what carries spiritual value. The establishment of a 'Day of the Sanctity of the Family' distorts the tradition of the Church, as it represents an attempt by humans to add a new formal ritual to the calendar of holy days—something that contradicts the Church's spiritual heritage. The Church's spiritual concern lies in ensuring that the family lives in unity with Christ daily, not merely by symbolically celebrating a specific day, but through genuine spiritual communion. The sanctity of the family is realized in love, mutual respect, and participation in the sacraments of the Church. This is what grants it eternal holiness."

Priest Leon Gelovani also emphasized that homophobia and any form of hatred are a sin.

Leon Gelovani, Facebook post, 17 May:

"...Therefore, regardless of how churches may debate or dispute what constitutes sin and what does not, regardless of which side any Christian takes, one thing remains clear and true: homophobia and any form of hatred toward others, especially those who are different, is a sin. It is a sin from which every believer must distance themselves. The sanctity of a family can only be genuine if hatred does not prevail, neither toward oneself nor toward others."

3. Homophobic and Anti-Western Statements by Some Orthodox Clergy

Some clergy of the Georgian Orthodox Church continued to deliver sermons and public speeches that supported the ruling party and promoted rhetoric hostile to civil society, human rights, and the European Union.

For example, [Metropolitan Shio Mujiri](#) of Senaki and Chkhorotsku, Patriarchal Locum Tenens, made statements aligned with Georgian Dream propaganda during his sermon on the “Day of Family Purity and Respect for Parents.” He claimed that “evil forces” are waging a deliberate battle against the family and national sovereignty through technologies and theories. At the same time, he expressed gratitude to Georgian Dream for adopting laws “against the propaganda of sodomite sin” and for removing the concept of “gender identity” from legislation:

“As I’ve already said, there is a deliberate fight being waged against the family by evil forces through various harmful technologies and theories. These forces are not only targeting the Church and church-going families but also the traditional family in general.

I also want to state that they are fighting against the very concept of national sovereignty because, as I said, the family is a small church and part of the larger Church...

It is very important that our government has taken significant, effective, and bold steps toward the protection of traditional values. I mean last year’s law against the propaganda of sodomite sin and the removal of the concept of gender identity from legislation.

Today, representatives of our government are here. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and bless you for these decisions.”

Archbishop Jakob Iakobashvili of Bodbe delivered sermons on [6](#) and [29](#) May containing anti-Western messages and discrediting the opposition of the Georgian Dream.

[Message: Relations with partner countries and aspirations toward the EU undermine national independence.](#)

“Should we trade our independence for anything? For Russia, Europe, or anyone else? We are free people. We want to have just and equal relations with everyone.

What does it mean to have a ‘big brother’ or ‘big sister’? Why should we be the ‘little brother’ to anyone? Is there any nation older than us? No matter what obstacles they create, no one can take God from the Georgian, and no one can take the Georgian from God—let that be clear. Some look to the Baltic, others to various European states, some this way, some that way, and we end up harming each other. They try to crash the economy, to block and restrict, and who suffers? It’s me. Come talk to me instead.”

Message: Georgian youth are manipulated by foreigners, and Europe interferes in Georgia's affairs.

"...We have very talented youth, but unfortunately, many cannot analyze; they believe whatever foreigners shout at them. Worse still, they wouldn't even believe us if we told them something. People must develop critical thinking. When I know elections were held in my country and you tell me they're not valid, do you think I'm Moldova, Romania, or Kyiv?! They brought Saakashvili to power; look what they made him do. Georgians must wake up and somehow unite. The youth who are now in prison—who brought them there? Isn't it the people who led them to the protests? Thou shalt not kill, says the Lord, and now they sponsor war. Whether it was the Persian, Russian, Mongol, or Arab conquerors, now should a European come and change me?!"

Bishop Spiridon Abuladze of the Skhalta Diocese also spread anti-Western messages in his public address on [15 May](#) and sermon on [6 May](#). He repeated Georgian Dream propaganda and expressed gratitude to the party for not involving Georgia in war and for banning "gay propaganda":

"We see an invasion of countless godless people; Europe has been overrun by them and turned into a Tower of Babel. They want the same for Georgia. We must stand firmly against it and pray that our government is granted the strength to continue protecting peace in Georgia, as it has by not involving the country in war. Just as it banned gay propaganda and categorically rejected gay parades, may the devil be shamed, may it resolve this issue as well, to protect us from the terrible Turkishization and what is happening in Europe... All forces are now being thrown at Georgia to shake our foundations, our morality, and our faith. They finance this through NGOs and satanic forces from abroad, through people who have lost their sense of homeland and have grown up without God..."

Metropolitan Stephane Kalaijishvili of Tskhondidi, Tsageri, and Lentekhi continued anti-Western rhetoric and statements aligned with Georgian Dream narratives during sermons on [11](#) and [18](#) May, similar to his earlier sermons:

"They adopt so-called friendly acts, which in reality are hostile; they publish so-called decisions. If they want to cooperate with us, why threaten us? We don't threaten them, so why do they threaten us?"