

Press Freedom and Journalist Safety in Peril, Rising Polarisation and a Climate of Fear – Findings of the Press Freedom Mission to Georgia

This report was produced as a result of a fact-finding mission to Georgia by Council of Europe's Safety of Journalists Platform and Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR) consortium

The [Platform for the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists](#) is a unique mechanism which helps the dialogue between the governments and the organisations of journalists, with the aim of stopping violations to press freedom in the member states of the Council of Europe and enabling journalists to exercise their profession without the risk of compromising their safety.

Since 2015, the Platform facilitates the compilation and dissemination of information on serious concerns about media freedom and safety of journalists in Council of Europe member states, as guaranteed by Art. 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The [Media Freedom Rapid Response](#) (MFRR) tracks, monitors and reacts to violations of press and media freedom in EU Member States and Candidate Countries. This project provides legal and practical support, public advocacy and information to protect journalists and media workers.



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On 1-2 October the Partner Organisations of the Council of Europe's Platform for the Safety of Journalists and of the Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR), including ARTICLE 19 Europe, Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF), Index on Censorship, the International Press Institute (IPI), the Justice for Journalists Foundation, and Reporters Without Borders (RSF), conducted a fact-finding mission to Georgia. The aim of the mission was to gather information on Georgia's implementation of its freedom of expression and media freedom commitments, including in relation to the ongoing election campaign.

This report presents the findings of the mission.

During the mission, we have witnessed the deterioration of press freedom amid rising authoritarianism. It has been made clear to us that a wide range of tools and mechanisms are used to discredit and curtail dissenting voices, including those of independent journalists.

We want to declare our full support and solidarity with the journalists, press freedom and civil society organisations. We came with concerns about media freedom, but we were appalled by what we heard.

Media situation ahead of the election

Exchanges with journalists, civil society, and political and institutional leaders bear witness to a democratic backsliding and to human rights violations that go far beyond the erosion of media pluralism and violations of press freedom. Civil society as a whole is facing an illiberal drift, characterised by a weakening of democratic checks and balances.

In the months leading up to the elections, the situation for press freedom has deteriorated rapidly in Georgia. According to the Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR), 38 press freedom violations were [documented](#) in Georgia in the first half of 2024. These violations included physical assaults on journalists (26.3%), attacks on property (13.2%), verbal attacks (21.1%), legal incidents (23.7%), and censorship (26.3%). Notably, nearly one-third of these incidents (31.6%) were carried out by government and public officials, while in 34.2% of cases, the perpetrators were police and state security forces.

During our mission, journalists reported operating in an extremely hostile pre-election environment, describing themselves as working "under immense pressure." They are frequently subjected to smear campaigns, online attacks, and insults from public officials, unknown individuals, and even other media workers. Despite these challenges, most cases of violence against journalists are not effectively investigated and prosecuted.

These cases include physical assaults, [threatening and insulting phone calls](#), and acts of [vandalism](#) targeting media offices and journalists' belongings, including during [protests](#) against the law on 'Transparency of Foreign Influence'. Many of those who attacked journalists during the demonstrations in [June 2019](#) and [July 2021](#) have yet to be held accountable. This cycle of impunity is driving some journalists to self-censor or to leave the profession altogether.

Another issue raised during our meetings was the rise of disinformation and misinformation. Stakeholders emphasised the overwhelming presence of Russian propaganda across broadcast, online, and social media platforms. They also noted the absence of political debates, which further exacerbates media polarisation as the country gears up for crucial elections. Public officials have been boycotting government-critical and independent media, while government-aligned outlets, or those owned by government officials, refuse to invite opposition leaders to political programs and talk shows.

The Mission is concerned by a [series of fines](#) levied on pro-opposition television channels by the broadcast regulator, the Communications Commission (ComCom), over the channels' [refusal to air](#) ruling 'Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia' party advertisements that they deem to contain hate speech and other demeaning content. Stakeholders' concerns with these sanctions echo [long-held concerns](#) over ComCom's insufficient independence from the government and application of [punitive fines](#) raised by critical broadcasters as well as the [Council of Europe](#). Although ComCom has [also fined](#) pro-government broadcasters for subsequently refusing to air opposition party advertising, [disparities in revenue](#) between pro-government and critical channels mean the issue has once again brought to the fore widespread stakeholder dissatisfaction with Georgia's broadcast regulatory framework. During a meeting with the Mission, ComCom denied accusations of a lack of independence¹ and stated that it was simply applying Georgian law².

In response to these pressing challenges, including the law on 'Transparency of Foreign Influence', some media outlets have opted to register new organisations abroad, preparing for potential exile in the future if necessary. Others, however, believe relocation is not a solution and are focusing their resources on thoroughly covering the upcoming election and pre-election campaign.

¹ Notably, ComCom representatives referred to November 2023 amendments designed to increase the independence of the appointment process for ComCom commissioners. While the Mission understands that no new appointments to ComCom have been made following these changes, and it has thus not been possible for stakeholders to appraise the changes' practical impact, interlocutors expressed doubt that they will sufficiently bolster the broadcast regulator's independence.

² The rules applying to media in the election campaign are spelt out in the Election Code (Articles 50 & 51). The broadcast media regulatory body, the Communications Commission (ComCom) oversees implementation of these provisions subject to the mandatory judicial review. By law, the broadcasters must provide free and paid airtime on equal conditions to all 'qualified electoral subjects' and observe impartiality in election-related debates. The broadcasters must ensure that the political advertising complies with the Constitution and certain other laws.

Concerns over recent legislation

The law on ‘Transparency of Foreign Influence’, which was adopted last May and entered into force in August, threatens the very existence of independent media and civil society organisations in Georgia, according to representatives of journalists’ organisations, media and civil society alike. The Venice Commission of the Council of Europe [declared](#) the law incompatible with international and European standards on freedom of expression, freedom of association and privacy. The law obliges non-commercial legal entities to register as “organisations pursuing the interests of a foreign power” if they receive at least 20 percent of their funding from abroad. The law stigmatises foreign-funded organisations and discriminates between them and organisations only funded by domestic (i.e., Georgian) donors. The approach introduced by this law disregards the stigmatising impact of labelling civil society organisations, online media, and broadcasters, which inherently limits their activities from the beginning. This erodes their public trust and hinders their access to financial resources. Due to the vague wording of the law, Georgian media representatives fear they might be required to register even if they do not receive monetary payments, but also on other grounds, such as receiving free content from foreign media organisations.

Media outlets as a whole decided not to register, but many of them will not be able to pay the fines, which range from 5000 (approximately 1,700 EUR) to 25000 GEL (approximately 8,300 EUR) and can be levied repeatedly.

The law additionally grants the Ministry of Justice extensive powers to investigate the foreign-funded organisations based on mere allegations of foreign ties. The Ministry can request personal information and interfere with the operations of independent media and civil society organisations. Moreover, amendments introduced during the third reading of the bill allow the issuing of monetary fines against organisations and individuals for failing to submit requested data, including personal and confidential information, despite earlier promises that the law would not affect individuals.

The Ministry's formal notices or sanction decisions may be appealed, but the appeal does not have suspensive effect, and the Ministry may continue to request information, levy fines, investigate the origin of funds, require media outlets to make self-declarations, and so on.

Even if the foreign influence law is not yet implemented, it already has a strong chilling effect. Some media outlets started to register their entities outside of the country this summer. Due to the high level of anxiety experienced by journalists in regard to the law, and the significant time and financial resources they have put into assessing and dealing with its effects, they find it hard to properly pursue their work, including covering the upcoming parliamentary election. Our interviewees emphasised that the law has already led to self-censorship in some newsrooms and distrust among journalists’ sources. We were informed of at least one attempt at censorship by a donor following the passage of this law, which asked a media outlet not to publish

investigations on a Georgian Dream parliamentarian. International donors, for their part, recently received fewer applications by media and NGOs, who are afraid of being targeted by the law.

Moreover, the new law on 'Family Values and the Protection of Minors', signed by the Speaker of Parliament on 3 October, censors media outlets and prevents them from covering stories related to the LGBTQA+ community.

The law is part of a legislative package that proposes amendments to 18 existing laws, including the Law on Freedom of Speech and Expression.

The most concerning section of the law for press freedom is Article 8, which explicitly [prohibits](#) broadcasters from disseminating content that "promotes identification with a gender other than one's biological sex or relationships between individuals of the same biological sex based on sexual orientation." This censorship measure is an extreme attack on the right to freedom of expression in Georgia and a manifest violation of international human rights standards.

This law will prevent journalists from freely reporting on LGBTQA+ issues and giving voice to the LGBTQA+ community. The fear of prosecution will inevitably create a chilling effect and lead to self-censorship.

Both the law on 'Transparency of Foreign Influence' and the law on 'Family Values and the Protection of Minors' are perceived as tools of the executive and the ruling party for exerting pressure on the media. When questioned about this, a representative from the ruling Georgian Dream party did not fully address our concerns.

Safety of Journalists: a feeling of fear and exodus from the profession

Our meetings with stakeholders reinforced a picture that has already been raised by previous reports. Journalists in Georgia are attacked physically, verbally, legally and financially. Journalism has become a dangerous occupation in the country. Georgia is ranked [103rd out of 180 countries](#) in RSF's 2024 World Press Freedom Index after falling 26 places, the biggest fall registered by any country in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Journalists are concerned about their safety to such a degree that some of them take chaperones on journalistic assignments. Representatives of several outlets noted that journalists leave the industry due to safety concerns. Additionally, several media outlets reported that they were making arrangements to register their media abroad.

Besides physical assaults on journalists, numerous cases of intimidation were reported to the Mission. Threats, short-term detention, and targeted smear campaigns in social media and

government-controlled TV channels were reported by journalists themselves and by media rights organisations.

All interlocutors complained about polarisation of the media sphere, fuelled by high-ranking officials and public figures. The interlocutors were also concerned about misuse of national sentiments by naming journalists and media outlets ‘anti-Georgian’, and about the attempt to discredit them by labelling them as ‘UNM’ - an opposition party that the current Prime Minister promised to ban after the election - as if they were defending this party’s interests. The lack of political debates between opposing parties exacerbates this division.

Impunity for crimes and intimidation against journalists

If media representatives cited violence and intimidation of journalists alongside the foreign influence law as the biggest threat to media freedom in Georgia, *impunity* for attacks on journalists was frequently raised as the main reason for journalists’ lack of safety. Physical assaults, threats, and other acts of intimidation against journalists frequently go unprosecuted, and when they are prosecuted, penalties are generally too light to have a deterrent effect. Investigations into crimes against journalists are notoriously slow, often failing to reach a conclusion. While the absence of comprehensive official statistics on attacks against media workers – itself a failing that needs to be remedied – makes it difficult to obtain a precise overview, evidence shared with the Mission by media rights advocates supports concerns cited in a recent [Council of Europe Technical Paper](#) that investigations into crimes against journalists are not “prompt, [and] effective.”³ This state of affairs sends a signal that authorities do not see attacks on the media as important; in fact, many media representatives believe it is part of a deliberate strategy to condone and incite such violence. Perceived impunity for violence and intimidation against journalists likely plays the key role in encouraging further attacks.

One case commonly raised by respondents is the [July 2021 attacks](#) on more than 50 journalists by a crowd protesting a planned LGBTQA+Pride event. Although, amid significant international interest in the case, [more than two dozen](#) perpetrators were relatively quickly convicted, many perpetrators, including alleged organisers of the violence, were not prosecuted, despite the availability of video evidence, which was passed to investigators by Georgia’s [Public Defender](#) (Ombudsman). Nor were law enforcement investigated for apparent negligence in failing to prevent or intervene in the violence. Sentences, such as those – reduced to four years on appeal – given to six individuals who brutally beat TV Pirveli cameraman [Aleksandre Lashkarava](#), who was subsequently [found dead](#) in his home days after being released from hospital, are widely perceived as too lenient.

A related issue is the failure to call to account politicians and state officials whose rhetoric is

³ Some statistics on attacks and prosecutions are available in the annual reports of the Public Defender (Ombudsman) of Georgia: <https://www.ombudsman.ge/eng/saparlamento-angarishebi>

seen as inciting, condoning, or inspiring violence against the media. In one shocking recent example, a ruling party MP [publicly celebrated](#) a mass campaign of intimidation against [media outlets](#) and NGOs that included threatening calls, intimidating posters and beatings. The MP [appeared to admit](#) to being behind the campaign and threatened further reprisals against two news outlets. No action was taken against this MP and it appears that no effective investigation into the intimidation campaign has been undertaken.

In order to tackle the issue of impunity, politicians and officials should, at a minimum, refrain from incendiary rhetoric against the press and instead commit to condemning all incidents of violence and intimidation against journalists.

Respondents pointed to several institutional and legislative weaknesses lying behind the problem of impunity, some of which would be comparatively easy to fix. The Special Investigation Service (SIS) – which is tasked with investigating incidents under Article 154 of the criminal code (unlawful interference with a journalist’s activities) as well as alleged crimes against a journalist by law enforcement officials – is reported to be overburdened by an excessively wide range of other duties and severely under-resourced. As a result, SIS investigations often drag on for years without resolution. Georgia’s Public Defender (Ombudsman), which is supposed to monitor compliance with human rights, is not permitted to access case files until the drawn-out investigation process is complete, adding to a lack of accountability.

Article 154 itself is observed to be too narrow in scope and wording, failing to include instances of violence and threats committed against journalists when they are not working, but which may be related to their journalistic activity, and leaving grey areas that result in under-application. Police and prosecutors, who take on cases that fall outside the scope of Article 154 or take over SIS investigations, lack necessary training in the specificity of cases involving journalists and their wider democratic importance. Detailed official statistics of attacks on journalists are only provided by the SIS about crimes under its remit, and while other agencies, such the General Prosecutor’s Office, do provide some information about other crimes committed against journalists, no unified and comprehensive data on attacks on journalists exist, rendering a full evaluation of the problem impossible, despite widespread recognition of the issue’s seriousness. Moreover, in spite of a [2021 pledge to do so](#) and the urgency of the need, authorities have yet to devise a specific action plan for the safety of journalists.

Public Service Media

During our meetings, interlocutors repeatedly raised concerns about the independence of the public service media, accusing the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) of being under the political influence of the ruling party. Interlocutors have also regretted the absence of genuine political debate on TV ahead of the parliamentary elections, GPB has since broadcast a debate

on 21 October⁴.

The public broadcaster strongly rejected these criticisms, attributing them to the polarised political environment. The leadership of the GPB also referred to the unwillingness of political parties to participate in such debates and to the pressure on the public broadcaster from both the opposition and the ruling party.

We call on the Georgian authorities to take action to ensure full editorial and financial independence and sustainability of the public broadcaster.

During the meetings a general concern was expressed that there is an acute need for debates between the ruling party and the main opponents, due to the high level of polarisation in society, the confrontational tone of the campaign, and the current absence of political dialogue, depriving the voters of the opportunity to make an informed choice.

Last year legislation changing the public broadcaster's funding rule was rushed through the Parliament without prior public consultations and no prior expert assessment. GPB's funding was reduced by amendments to the Broadcasting Law and the funding mechanism of the GPB changed, from a fixed percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) to an annual allocation in the state budget, making it more difficult for the GPB funding to keep pace with rising inflation. Public Service Media in Georgia needs stable and predictable funding, which safeguards its independence.

Despite modernisation of programmes and content, GPB has limited viewership, ranking fourth among broadcasters in the country. According to European Broadcasting Union (EBU) research, public service media funding in Georgia compared with other EBU members is already in the lowest third among 112 member organisations in over 50 countries. The [2023 EBU Funding Report](#) underlines the alarming situation in Georgia, where the average public service media funding per capita is a mere 4 EUR, compared to the European average of 45 EUR⁵.

SLAPPs/Lawsuits against media

Interlocutors reported that lawsuits concerning defamation against media are used as a tool by high-ranking politicians and businesspeople affiliated with the ruling party, less by private actors. [The Coalition Against SLAPPs in Europe \(CASE\) in 2023](#) confirmed that in Georgia, 'most lawsuits are brought by politicians [and] high-ranking officials or affiliated persons against the media'. Since 2021, 38 out of 42 defamation cases labelled as SLAPPs by a local NGO

⁴ By law, all broadcasters which offer free airtime must also organise the debates. This includes the GPB, the commercial channels with nationwide reach, Adjara TV and community broadcasters.

⁵ According to the EBU data, the average operating costs of the public broadcasters members of the EBU is 805.99 million EUR, while in Georgia it is a mere 16 million EUR.

[Georgian Democracy Initiative](#) have been directed at three media organisations with ties to the opposition—Mtavari Arkhi, TV Pirveli, and Formula—or their affiliated journalists. While it is difficult to determine the exact number of SLAPPs in Georgia, local civil society considers whether the claimant attempted to use self-regulatory tools before filing a lawsuit as one of the key factors in identifying a case as a SLAPP.

Concerns about the lack of independence of the judicial system amplify concerns about these cases. Interlocutors reported that Georgian courts have often permitted claimants to sue both media groups and individual journalists, even though Georgian law clearly specifies that in defamation cases related to a journalist's work, the media outlet's owner should be the defendant. At the same time, in order to prove their innocence journalists are indirectly pressured to reveal their sources.

Journalists in exile

During the mission, it was observed that Georgia, previously regarded as a safe haven for journalists seeking an escape from their repressive countries, is losing this status amid a decline in freedoms. Exiled journalists [from Russia](#), Belarus, Azerbaijan and Armenia have been barred from entering Georgia without any explanation. Among journalists who [recently were banned from entering Georgia](#) are Belarusian journalist Andrei Mialeshka and Armenian journalist Arsen Kharatyan.

A particularly alarming case is the [arrest](#) of Afgan Sadygov, an Azerbaijani journalist living in Georgia, and the request for his extradition to Azerbaijan. Authorities in Azerbaijan have charged Sadygov with extortion under threat of publishing negative information. Sadygov has faced severe repression in Azerbaijan and was previously jailed in his home country. During the mission, Platform partners met with his wife, who voiced deep concerns for her husband's safety, as well as her own safety and that of their children.

Another case demonstrating the extreme measures Azerbaijani authorities seem willing to take to retaliate against independent journalists in Georgia is that of [Afgan Mukhtarli](#). In 2017, Mukhtarli, an Azerbaijani journalist and activist who found shelter in Georgia after persecution in Azerbaijan, was kidnapped from the country's capital, forcibly returned to Azerbaijan, and sentenced to six years in prison. Exiled Azerbaijani journalists, many of whom have fled Azerbaijan's ongoing [media crackdown](#), [have reported](#) increasing insecurity in Georgia in recent years, including beatings and surveillance.

Georgia has consistently denied entry to Russian journalists, with at least a dozen incidents since 2022 involving reporters from independent Russian media outlets like [Dozhd TV](#), [Meduza](#), [Holod](#), and [Mediazona](#).

As for Georgian journalists, due to their fears of the enforcement of the law on ‘Transparency of Foreign Influence’, some are considering moving their operations abroad and are preparing for potential work in exile, as they refuse to register as “organisations pursuing the interests of a foreign power”. Among the countries which are considered as possible locations for exile are the Baltic states and Armenia.

Several media organisations have already relocated some of their journalists abroad and registered their outlets internationally or allocated resources to do so. A significant challenge faced by those considering relocation is the absence of long-term plans; many are only equipped with short-term strategies. All journalists remain vigilant, anticipating that conditions may deteriorate further following the upcoming elections.

It is important to acknowledge the psychological impact of this situation. Journalists reported feeling significant stress and anxiety due to the deep uncertainty over their future work and livelihoods and whether they may have to flee to avoid repression.

Journalists’ working conditions

The particularly precarious economic and social situation of many Georgian journalists is also very worrying. The Independent Association of Georgian Journalists (IAGJ) estimates that 80% of journalists in all sectors (print, online and broadcast) do not have a proper employment contract.

There is no national collective agreement setting out minimum working conditions for journalists in the media sector. The public broadcaster is one of the few companies to have a company agreement, but according to IAGJ, this agreement is not always applied by GPB, when it comes to conditions of dismissal.

IAGJ believes that the situation is even worse in the private media. Many private channels controlled by politicians, such as GDS TV, do not hesitate to dismiss journalists without any compensation. These illegal social practices are generally not followed up by the courts, given the lack of independence of the judiciary.

Journalists do not have a specific trade union to represent them and attempts to set one up have never been successful.

IAGJ believes that poor working conditions are mainly due to the fact that most media outlets cannot rely on a long-term sustainable funding model, which explains the absence of collective agreements at company level and at national level.

Access to Information

Freedom of Information (FOI) in Georgia is stipulated by chapter 3 of the General Administrative Code of Georgia, which has been in force since 1999. Any person can make a request for public information without citing reasons. Legal researchers and civil society organisations have repeatedly called for a [comprehensive act](#) which would take into account developments in international standards of freedom of information and practices which exist in the country. Updating the legislation on freedom of information was one of the commitments made by the government in the annual action plan for the implementation of the Association Agreement between the EU and Georgia, which was signed in 2014.

Interlocutors indicated that a law on establishing a body responsible for regulating access to information has remained a draft since 2014. However, even the existing norms of replies by public bodies to journalists' requests within ten days are frequently not met. Reportedly, critical and investigative journalists have the most difficulty receiving replies to their requests.

New parliamentary accreditation rules were imposed last year which limit journalists' presence in Parliament and allow accreditation to be used as a tool for curbing independent reporting. According to documents shown to the mission, in 2024 the accreditation of five journalists was temporarily suspended, so they were unable to enter the Parliament. Additionally, up to 19 journalists from online media outlets were restricted from entering the Parliament in April and May, including during the vote on the law on 'Transparency of Foreign Influence'. The Office of the Speaker of the Parliament reported that this year, 339 journalists have received annual accreditation at Parliament.

The [European Commission's Georgia 2023 Report](#), referring to the situation with access to information in the country, said the following: 'Considerable delays and a recurring refusal to access public information pose a serious challenge for media and CSOs, affecting the timeliness, accuracy and quality of their work and reporting'.

The 2022 report on [Access to Information: Public Institutions and Media](#), published by the Media Advocacy Coalition, a local coalition of media freedom NGOs, indicates both that state bodies do not respond to journalists' requests for information in a timely manner and that critical journalists or media outlets with dissenting views do not receive information or receive incomplete responses under the pretext of personal data protection and the right to privacy.

The [2024 GRECO Fifth Evaluation Round Report](#) stated that access to public information remains a problem and the situation has deteriorated in the recent years. In particular, the GRECO Report referred to inconsistent practice of issuing public information in the executive government, also noting that 'there is a clear lack of proactive disclosure of public documents by the Executive'.

Another problem is limited access of critical journalists and media outlets to public officials; they are often not notified of official events and officials often refuse to engage with them. The

interlocutors indicated that the public service broadcaster or media outlets whose coverage support the government do not invite critical analysts and journalists to their programmes.

Access to information complaints are not dealt with effectively. The Office of the Public Defender's mandate worked on at least 100 such cases last year. However their findings have a non-binding character. The judicial oversight is riddled with lengthy procedure and violations of procedural time limits.

Recommendations

- Guarantee a safe and free working environment for journalists. Ensure that journalists can cover the pre-election period and elections without obstruction or interference.
- Ensure the end of smear and disinformation campaigns as well as verbal assaults against journalists led by high-level politicians and officials.
- Legislation impacting the media, which is not in line with international freedom of expression standards should be revised. The law on 'Transparency of Foreign Influence'. and the Law on Protection of Family Values and Minors must be repealed.
- Ensure the proper implementation of the media legal framework, with a particular focus on the legislation regarding free access to information. Guarantee that state agencies provide requested public information to media outlets in a timely manner, as enshrined in the law. Establish relevant bodies where necessary to support and oversee the effective enforcement of these laws.
- Ensure an end to the cycle of impunity by conducting thorough investigations into all cases of attacks against journalists, including those physically assaulted during the demonstrations against the law on 'Transparency of Foreign Influence'. in 2023 and 2024, as well as during violence in July 2021 and June 2020. Acts of vandalism of media offices and journalists' property, as well as the unprecedented number of threatening and insulting calls journalists received, should be thoroughly investigated. Ensure efficient working of the Special Investigations Service.
- Ensure the editorial and financial independence of Georgia's public broadcaster.
- Strengthen the capacity of the body dealing with the implementation of the Law on Free Access to Information and ensure that the Freedom of Information Act is presented to Parliament.
- Tangible steps to end polarisation must be taken, including stopping the boycott of independent and government-critical media outlets by high-level government officials and agreeing to participate in political debates.
- Ensure that foreign journalists, including those residing in Georgia, can work in a free and safe environment and are not denied access to the country.
- Take concrete actions to ensure the independence of the judiciary; put an end to using

- courts as a means to discredit and silence the media and dissenting voices.
- The public authorities must organise social dialogue in the media sector to enable the adoption of a sectoral collective agreement or, failing that, collective agreements at company level, in order to establish decent working conditions in the sector, and in particular to avoid any unfair dismissals without compensation.

Background

The mission comprised of representatives from the ARTICLE 19 Europe, Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), the European Broadcasting Union, the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF), Index on Censorship, the International Press Institute (IPI), the Justice for Journalists Foundation, and Reporters Without Borders (RSF).

On the 1st and 2nd October 2024, the Mission met with the Chief of Staff of the Speaker of the Parliament of Georgia, the Communications Commission (the Georgian media regulator), the Office of the Public Defender of Georgia, representatives of the public service broadcaster GBP, representatives of political groups and MPs, representatives of civil society organisations, journalists and editors of broadcast, printed press and online media and representatives of the international community. The Mission requested meetings with the Ministries of Justice and Culture as well as the Legal Affairs Committee of the Parliament. The Ministries could not meet the Mission; the Chief of Staff spoke on behalf of the Legal Affairs Committee.

The Partner Organisations and MFRR members held a press briefing on 2 October 2024.

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