



Briefing for the 2025 OSCE PA Winter Meeting

POLITICAL PRISONERS NEED YOUR SUPPORT



Oslo 17 February 2025

Political prisoners are individuals who have been “detained for political reasons, and experiencing violations of fundamental rights under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and its Protocols, disproportionate or discriminatory imprisonment, or unfair legal proceedings driven by political motives”.¹ When political prisoners are found guilty of violating codified laws, the laws or trial proceedings violate international human rights. They were often convicted of “threatening national security”, “treason”, “extremism”, or “terrorism”, or face trumped-up criminal charges of tax evasion, possession of drugs, etc. Many governments also target lawyers representing clients in politically motivated cases or who shed light on rights abuses.

There is an extensive problem of political imprisonment in the OSCE region. **Russian** authorities imprison political opposition, civil society activists, journalists, religious and ethnic minorities, alleged spies, and LGBT persons in Chechnya. The number of political prisoners increased after Mr Putin returned to the Presidency in 2012 and again because of restrictive laws and practices adopted after Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

¹ Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), Resolution 1900 (2012), “The definition of political prisoner,” adopted on 3 October 2012, available at: <https://pace.coe.int/en/files/19150/html>

In Belarus, the number of political prisoners swelled following mass arrests in the wake of the August 2020 sham re-election of Alexander Lukashenko. Local human rights group Viasna currently operates with the figure of more than [1200](#) political prisoners.

According to **Azerbaijani** human rights activists, the problem of political imprisonment in their home country remains extensive. At least 50 human rights defenders, journalists, opposition activists, religious believers and other perceived critics remain imprisoned on politically motivated charges. Eight of the political prisoners are famous [female journalists](#).

Several other OSCE Participating States imprison opposition politicians, journalists, or human rights defenders. In **Georgia**, there were significant steps backwards in human rights in 2024, including the use of legal charges to suppress political opposition.

The brief highlights some of the most vulnerable prisoners and actions that could improve their situation. The fact that a political prisoner is not mentioned should, however, not be taken as an indication that they do not need support. All political prisoners do. We should constantly remind the governments in states that hold political prisoners that these people should be released.



How to support political prisoners

Parliamentarians can support political prisoners in many ways, including helping facilitate their release, improving their conditions, and supporting their families in different ways. Publicly naming political prisoners can have a good effect, ensuring they're not forgotten and, if possible, sending them letters telling them that someone is acting for them.

Below, we have listed some ways parliamentarians can act, using their influence, legislative powers, and international networks. The list is not exhaustive, as many creative ways exist to support political prisoners. However, we hope it can be a good starting point.

Do not hesitate to contact the Norwegian Helsinki Committee if you need assistance supporting political prisoners. The contact information is available on our [webpage](#).

SUPPORT FOR RELEASE

- Consistently raise the situation of political prisoners. Show that you know their names. Ask for their release. Help create attention from mainstream media. Use video messages, online petitions, interviews, or hashtags on social media.
- Organise hearings in national parliaments or international assemblies on human rights in countries holding political prisoners.
 - Initiate resolutions and statements to condemn political imprisonment.
 - Urge for the release of political prisoners and the adoption of Magnitsky sanctions (targeted sanctions) against those responsible for imprisonment or prison abuse.
 - Propose that economic and diplomatic relations and trade are conditioned on the release of political prisoners.
- Declare publicly that you have become a guardian of specific political prisoners and commit to advocating for their release.
 - Send letters to political prisoners to boost their morale and signal to authorities that they are not forgotten.
 - Organise solidarity actions, such as demonstrations or symbolic actions, like wearing badges about a political prisoner.

- Support prisoner exchanges with states with political prisoners when feasible. Among the criteria for selecting political prisoners to be exchanged should be their health situations and the length of their prison term.
- Advocate for your foreign ministries to use diplomatic channels to raise the issue of political imprisonment and the situation of specific prisoners with the detaining country or in multilateral forums. Embassies should monitor the trials of those facing politically motivated charges and visit prisons and detention facilities to assess political prisoners' health and needs. For political prisoners held incommunicado, embassy staff are crucial in demanding to know their whereabouts, conditions, and health.
- Meet, engage with, and support released political prisoners, exiled activists and human rights organisations from the detaining country.

SUPPORT FOR IMPROVED CONDITIONS

- Ask for and, if possible, conduct visits to political prisoners.
- Support families, defence lawyers, civil society organisations, and others who contact political prisoners and can provide them with medicine, food, clothes, and other items to improve their situation.
- Propose Magnitsky sanctions (targeted sanctions) against officials responsible for the conditions of political prisoners.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

- Propose in your parliament that your country supports funds for political prisoners and their families, such as the [Belarus fund](#). Such funds are open for more contributions.
- Propose support schemes for defence lawyers and civil society organisations that work for the release and improved conditions of political prisoners.
- Ensure that financial support to political prisoners includes psychological treatment for released prisoners, families and lawyers of political prisoners.
- Engage with the business community to challenge them to provide support.



Minor political prisoners and prisoners with health issues in Russia

In the current situation, with many political prisoners who were convicted for protesting Russia's war against Ukraine and measures to mobilise Russian men to fight in the war, Russian human rights groups suggested prioritising minor political prisoners and those who have serious health problems.² No political prisoner should be forgotten, but the following needs immediate attention.

In 2024, politically motivated criminal cases were initiated against at least four minors, the [youngest](#) of whom was 14 years old at the time. As of 9 December 2024, 23 minors were victims of politically motivated prosecutions. Ten of them are now deprived of liberty.

A. Minors

1. Egor Balazeikin

The most notorious student-arsonist, Egor Balazeikin, spent 2024 coming of age in prison. He turned 18 on 6 August 2024. In April 2024, he was [sentenced](#) to six years imprisonment for trying to set fire to two military recruitment offices, and in July, he was [sent](#) to the Arkhangelsk educational colony. Balazeikin faced psychological pressure and was [tortured](#) during the transport. Balazeikin suffers from autoimmune hepatitis, and his health has further deteriorated in jail.

Balazeikin [was detained](#) on the evening of 28 February 2023 due to an attempt to set fire to the military registration and enlistment office in the Kirovsk and Kirovsky districts in the Leningrad region. According to the investigation, the young man threw a Molotov cocktail at the door of the military registration and enlistment office, but the bottle did not catch fire.

He admitted throwing bottles with flammable liquid at the military registration and enlistment office but disagreed with the wording and motives imputed to him by the prosecution. He explained his act as a desire to stop the war against Ukraine and that he did not want to harm people.

Since the beginning of the full-scale war with Ukraine, several military registration and enlistment offices and administrative buildings have been set on fire. After the announcement of "partial" mobilisation, several dozen cases of arson of military registration and enlistment offices [are known](#).

² We received information for this brief from OVD Info, the Human Rights Centre Memorial, and Radio Free Europe.

Some of the criminal cases in connection with the arson of military offices, as well as police departments, FSB departments and administrative buildings, are listed in the OVD-Info [guide](#) to “anti-war” criminal cases.

2. Gagik Grigoryan

Gagik Grigoryan was 17 years old at the time of his arrest and has been in custody for about a year. Only eight months after his detention, the [Left Socialist Action](#) and the [Solidarity Zone](#) managed to find him in Moscow’s Pre-Trial Detention Centre No. 5, «Vodnik». In a letter, Gagik said he was «charged with preparing the liquidation of a lieutenant colonel of the Russian army».

Grigoryan is originally from Kursk. He opposes Russian aggression in Ukraine and has been politically active since his youth. In the fall of 2022, at the age of 16, he became a member of the board of the Russian Social Democratic Union of Youth (RSDSM). He also participated in the activities of the Left Socialist Action (LevSD).

In a letter from the pretrial detention centre, Grigoryan said that he was accused of preparing to liquidate a lieutenant colonel of the Russian army. The charges were brought under articles on a terrorist act (paragraph "a" of Part 2 of Article 205 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation) and possession of explosives (Part 4 of Article 222.1 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation) as part of an organised group.

Despite such high-profile accusations, neither the security forces nor the state media have published any information about the case against Grigoryan. This may indicate the charges' dubiousness and the criminal case's fabrication.

3. Arseny Turbin

Arseny Turbin from Livny in the Oryol region was [sentenced](#) to five years in an educational colony in June 2024. According to the prosecution, the then 14-year-old Turbin had messaged the [Freedom of Russia Legion](#) bot and filled out a membership application form. The Freedom of Russia Legion is a Ukraine-based paramilitary unit of Russian citizens that opposes Mr Putin and the war against Ukraine. The prosecutor also alleged that he was carrying out the legion’s task by putting leaflets in private mailboxes with the slogans «Do you need a president like this?».



The Federal Security Service (FSB) claimed he shared the story about the bot and the questionnaire he had filled out during his first interrogation. However, he had [told](#) the FSB the opposite, saying he had not shared it.

Turbin is now 16 years old and detained in Moscow's «Butyrka» Pre-Trial Detention Centre. Recently, he [reported](#) to his mother that a cellmate was beating him.

4. Valery Zaitsev

In the Khabarovsk region, 15-year-old Valery Zaitsev was [sentenced](#) to four and a half years in an educational colony on 16 August 2024. He was found guilty of participating in the Azov brigade, a formation of the [National Guard of Ukraine](#) formerly based in [Mariupol](#), and undergoing training in terrorist activities.

The case files contain a video of teenagers throwing Molotov cocktails at the wall of an abandoned building. Zaitsev's grandmother suggests that the video was shot by a provocateur who acted as a secret witness at the trial.

In 2023, Zaitsev, who was 14 years old at the time, was taken from the dispensary where he was being treated for tuberculosis and placed in a pre-trial detention centre. He finished his ninth grade in the isolation ward.

5. Dmitry Sanin

Dmitry Sanin, a resident of the Belgorod region, was [sentenced](#) in June 2024 to eight years in a general-regime penal colony for alleged collaboration with the Freedom of Russia Legion. On appeal, his sentence was reduced to [seven years](#).

Prosecutors claim that in June 2023, Sanin attempted to travel to Ukraine, sending his handler “screenshots of his route, as well as audio and video messages detailing the movement and location of military equipment”.

Although Sanin is 19, he committed the alleged offences when he was only 17.

B. Prisoners with serious health concerns

6. Alexey Gorinov (born 1961)

Alexei Gorinov, a Moscow city councillor, became the first Russian to be found guilty of “discrediting” Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Gorinov committed the offence of “knowingly spreading false information” about the military when he opposed conducting a children's drawing contest while children were dying in Ukraine. Moscow Judge Olesya Mendeleyeva sentenced Gorinov to seven years for this statement.

Gorinov has been in jail since April 2022 despite having chronic health issues. A few years ago, he underwent major surgery on his lungs. The incarceration is negatively affecting his state. There are well-founded fears that Alexey will not survive his imprisonment.

In December 2022, Gorinov’s health severely deteriorated. He could not breathe normally or eat and did not have access to adequate medical treatment. Under public and media pressure, authorities sent him to the hospital for prisoners in Vladimir.

After the treatment, Gorinov was sent back to the prison camp, and his health remained critical.

7. Igor Baryshnikov (born 1959)

Igor Baryshnikov, an anti-war activist, has been sentenced to seven and a half years in prison for spreading “false” information about the Russian military in Ukraine. Diagnosed with prostatic hyperplasia before his trial, Baryshnikov has relied on a surgically inserted catheter. Despite this, the activist has been denied effective painkillers, a comprehensive cancer screening, and a procedure that would eliminate [his need for a catheter](#).



8. Zarema Musayeva (born 1969)

Zarema Musayeva is the mother of Ibragim, Abubakar, and Baisangur Yangulbayev, all of whom have fled Russia, citing harassment from Chechen authorities because of their online criticism of the Kremlin-backed Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov. Chechen police and security officers detained Musayeva in January 2022 in her apartment in the Russian city of Nizhny Novgorod, some 1,800 kilometres from Chechnya, and forcibly returned her to the North Caucasus region's capital, Grozny.

In July 2022, a court in Chechnya sentenced Musayeva to five and a half years in prison on charges of fraud and attacking a police officer, which Musayeva and her supporters have denied. In November 2024, the Russian authorities opened a new politically motivated criminal case against Musayeva.

Musaeva, who suffers from chronic diabetes, was earlier [hospitalised](#) with what her lawyer described as “critical” blood sugar levels. The [Crew Against Torture](#) said Musaeva faces up to five additional years in prison on charges of disrupting the work of a prison. Musaeva has denied the charges.

9. Yuri Dmitriev (born in 1956)

Yury Dmitriev was first arrested on 13 December 2016. Briefly released in January 2018 and acquitted in April [that](#) year, he was detained again in June 2018. Charged with similar offences (including allegations that he had child pornography), Dmitriev was put on trial two more times.

Dmitriev was convicted in July 2020 and sentenced to three years and six months imprisonment. Two years of appeals and a new trial led to his [conviction](#) in late December 2021 to a 15-year sentence in a strict-regime labour camp.

Dmitriev suffers from serious health issues, including possible cancer.

The background of Dmitriev’s imprisonment tells us about the current political climate in Russia. He spent years uncovering mass graves from Stalin’s reign of terror, against the will of the authorities. While he was increasingly recognised internationally as an important “archaeologist of terror”, Russian authorities discredited him as someone collaborating with the West.

Just as Aleksei Navalny symbolises fearless resistance to Mr Putin’s regime, Dmitriev stands as a symbol of defiance against the Russian government’s attempts to erase the crimes of the Soviet past. Dmitriev’s fight is not just his own; it is about preserving historical truth and seeking justice for the victims of Stalin’s terror.

The treatment of Dmitriev during sentencing is also telling. He has been held in inhumane conditions for over eight years, most recently in a strict regime penal colony. His health has deteriorated severely, and despite his legal rights as a prisoner, he is systematically denied essential medical care, putting his life at serious risk.

The EU has repeatedly called for Dmitriev's immediate release. A 2020 statement from the [EEAS](#) linked his prosecution to his human rights work and research into Soviet-era repression. In the decision of the [EU Council](#) in May 2024 calling for the immediate release of political prisoners in Russia, Dmitriev was named first. He remains the only named prisoner yet to be freed.

The [Dmitriev Affair](#) documentary was screened at the European Parliament on 16 October 2024, with an introduction by the historian Anne Applebaum. The film provides insight into Dmitriev's work and why the Russian authorities view him as a threat.²

Dmitriev may have been included in a shadow list of prominent human rights prisoners concerning a potential prisoner exchange. Given his severely deteriorating health, the long duration of his imprisonment, and the dire conditions in the penal colony, participation in such an exchange could mean the difference between life and death for him.

10. Maria Ponomarenko (born 1978)

Maria Ponomarenko is a journalist and activist from Barnaul in Western Siberia. On 23 April 2022, she was detained for sharing a Telegram post about the bombing of the Drama Theatre in Mariupol, Ukraine. It contained a video from the theatre made before the attack and a short comment condemning civilian deaths.

On 15 February 2023, Maria was sentenced to six years imprisonment and a five-year ban on engaging in journalism after her release. She was initially sent to a penal colony 900 kilometres from her hometown, making it impossible for her to see her daughters.

Diagnosed with histrionic personality disorder, she had self-harmed in September 2022 while in pre-trial detention, also citing mistreatment. She staged a hunger strike in October 2023. She was dragged by guards barefoot to a disciplinary hearing. Afterward, she was subjected to forced psychiatric treatment.

² The film can be seen [here](#) through a password-protected link (PW: TDA11*14-JeGo!). Please do not share the link or the password.



Political Prisoners in Belarus with critical health issues

For decades, Mr Lukashenko has sought to play Russia and the EU off against each other by releasing political prisoners to win favour with leaders in Brussels and spark a thaw in relations. That relationship ended in 2020 after he claimed victory in fraudulent presidential elections and launched waves of repressions against the opposition.

Since then, Mr Lukashenko has become reliant on Mr Putin for support after Russia sent troops to help his regime as thousands of Belarusians took to the streets in mass protests.

Although from time to time prisoners are released, the problem of political imprisonments remains systematic, with more than 1200 documented prisoners. Scores of detainees remain unheard of, while the secret police continue to arrest others accused of undermining the regime.

The following contains a list of ten seriously ill political prisoners who should be prioritised for release and a list of four high-profile prisoners who are held incommunicado and have serious health issues.

	Name	Age	Health issue (s)	Further description
1	Золотарев Никита Михайлович Mikita Zalatarou	20	Minor (at the time of arrest). Epilepsy	There were cases of refusal to issue medication necessary for epilepsy, which put his life under direct threat due to the high probability of severe head injuries. In addition, the lack of proper treatment also worsens the course of his illness. Regularly sent to the SHIZO, subjected to physical violence and beatings.
2	Гнездилов Кирилл Викторович Kirył Hniazdzilau	41	Only one kidney. Diagnosed with a tumour.	The tumour was discovered in 2022, after which he was arrested. Underwent surgery at the end of October in Borovlyany, then moved to the hospital.

3	<p>Войнич Андрей Сергеевич</p> <p>Andrei Voinich</p>	43	<p>Drastic health deterioration: terminal disease, liver cirrhosis, diabetes, adrenal gland tumour, removed gallbladder, an urgent liver transplant is required.</p>	<p>Andrei's disease requires constant insulin delivery under the control of blood glucose levels. He also needs to follow a specific diet.</p>
4	<p>Бурло Евгений Валерьевич</p> <p>Yauhen Burlo</p>	33	<p>Drastic health deterioration: hip joint necrosis, cancer.</p>	<p>Considering the disease, not only surgery but also long postoperative rehabilitation is needed. Cases of denial of access to complete examination during detention have been recorded.</p>
5	<p>Латыпов Степан Сергеевич</p> <p>Stsiapan Latypau</p>	44	<p>Drastic health deterioration: multiple suicide attempts.</p>	<p>Repeated suicide attempts in connection with torture and threats of torture to relatives. Information about the deterioration of health and pronounced avitaminosis.</p>
6	<p>Рабкова Мария (Марфа) Александров на</p> <p>Maryia Rabkova</p>	29	<p>Drastic health deterioration.</p>	<p>Thyroid disease, inflamed lymph nodes, drastic weight loss, COVID with consequences, fluid in the pelvis.</p>
7	<p>Рогашук Вячеслав Николаевич</p> <p>Viachaslau Rahashchuk</p>	38	<p>Health deterioration: microstroke, rapid weight loss, father to multiple children.</p>	<p>It is known that Vyacheslav's health complaints are systematically ignored. The complaints he describes may correspond to both stroke and brain injury as a result of beatings. There has been a rapid loss of body weight in detention.</p>
8	<p>Мовшук Елена Владимиров на</p> <p>Alena Maushuk</p>	48	<p>Depression, suicidal thoughts, termination of parental rights, mother to multiple children.</p>	<p>Mother of many children, deprived of parental rights. Severely depressed, suicidal thoughts. Mother to multiple children - 5 children. Her husband, Maushuk Siarhei, is also imprisoned in a politically motivated criminal case.</p>

9	<p>Гундарь Владимир Тадеушевич</p> <p>Vladimir Hundar</p>	64	<p>One leg missing, heart disease, arterial hypertension, possible incommunicado.</p>	<p>Despite belonging to the 2nd group of disability, he was systematically subjected to torture, reported beatings, and regularly placed in the SHIZO. At the moment, he is incommunicado. There were cases of deprivation of crutches necessary for his movement due to the amputation of his leg and forcing him to move without crutches. According to the available data, a stroke cannot be excluded. Complete hearing loss on the background of headache, followed by partial hearing recovery.</p>
10	<p>Дербыш Галина Ивановна</p> <p>Halina Dzerbysh</p>	63	<p>Cancer, 2nd disability group, heart disease.</p>	<p>She is regularly placed in the punishment cell despite belonging to the 2nd disability group, where she is deprived of the necessary medication, leaving her without medical care. She noted a sharp deterioration of her health in detention.</p>
High Profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maryia Kalesnikava • Ales Bialiatski • Viktor Babaryka • Mikalai Statkevich • Siarhei Tsikhanouski 	<p>42</p> <p>62</p> <p>61</p> <p>68</p> <p>47</p>	<p>Drastic health deterioration: multiple suicide attempts.</p>	



Political Prisoners in Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan's [ongoing](#) repression of civil society, independent media, and political dissent continues to lead to extensive political imprisonments. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) recognised in 2024 that the human rights situation in Azerbaijan is deteriorating and repression [intensifying](#). The crackdown on civil society and dissenting voices escalated over the last two years, and many were arrested based on restrictive laws on non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Among the methods the government uses are politically motivated arrests and persecutions on bogus criminal charges, as well as the arbitrary enforcement of restrictive laws regulating NGOs. Most of the arrested civil society activists since late 2023 were charged with the alleged receipt of Western funding.

Key cases include the following, some of whom suffer from serious health issues:

1. Sevinj Vagifgizi, Nargiz Absalamova, Elnara Gasimova, Aynur Elgunash, Aytaj Ahmadova, Aysel Umudova, Khayala Aghayeva, and Shahnaz Baylargizi.

Azerbaijan have imprisoned eight women journalists for their work, marking an unprecedented crackdown. Never have so many women journalists been punished since independence. Some prominent journalists have major health issues and need urgent medical care. Their lives are at risk due to unsafe prison conditions and difficulty in accessing adequate healthcare.

They were charged with smuggling and tax evasion; the journalists had their homes raided and belongings seized. They deny the charges, citing their critical reporting, and face up to eight years in prison if convicted.

2. Shamshad Agha

Chief editor of the independent news site [Argument.az](#), was arrested in February as a suspect in a criminal case against the Germany-based [Meydan TV](#), with which Agha also collaborates. Six Meydan TV journalists were detained in December on currency smuggling charges.

3. Afiaddin Mammadov

Head of the Workers' Table Trade Union, was [sentenced](#) to eight years in prison in January 2025 on bogus hooliganism charges. He has been in [detention](#) since September 2023 following a staged attack on him.

4. Bakhtiyar Hajiyev

A prominent activist, was [sentenced](#) to 10 years imprisonment in January 2025 on bogus charges of hooliganism, illegal entrepreneurship, and smuggling charges. PACE rapporteurs had [called](#) on Azerbaijan authorities to release him.

5. Rail Abbasov

An activist, was [sentenced](#) to six and a half years in prison in January 2025 on bogus fraud charges.

6. Ilhamiz Guliyev

A police whistleblower, was [sentenced](#) to three years imprisonment on fabricated drug acquisition charges in December 2024.

7. Azar Gasimli

A prominent [opposition figure](#) and director of the Institute of Political Management, was arrested in December 2024 and sent to four months of pre-trial detention on bogus extortion charges.

8. Rufat Safarov

A human rights defender, [was arrested in December 2024](#) on fabricated charges of fraud and hooliganism. PACE rapporteurs [were dismayed](#) by his arrest.

9. Nazim Baydamirli

Public activist and former lawmaker, was [sentenced](#) to 8 years in prison in September 2024 on bogus charges of extortion. Police arrested him shortly after he publicly [supported](#) the protests of villagers against environmental pollution and denounced the [police violence](#) in July 2023.

10. Iqbal Abilov and Bahruz Samadov

In July and August 2024, academics [Iqbal Abilov](#) and Bahruz Samadov were arrested on false charges, including “high treason”. Their arrests were an apparent retaliation for their academic work and activism. If convicted, they could face prison sentences of up to 20 years.

11. Anar Mammadli

Václav Havel Human Rights Prize laureate, [was arrested](#) in April 2024 on bogus currency smuggling charges shortly after spearheading climate justice advocacy ahead of COP29.

12. Gubad Ibadoglu

A renowned academic and anti-corruption activist, endured [nine months](#) of pretrial detention, where his health worsened due to inadequate care and ill-treatment. In April 2024, the authorities released Ibadoglu on parole. He faces up to 17 years imprisonment if convicted.

13. Akif Gurbanov

Václav Havel Human Rights Prize nominee and co-founder of the political movement III Republic Platform, was [arrested](#) in March 2024 on fabricated smuggling charges in connection with the criminal case against [Toplum TV](#) and Institute of Democratic Initiatives (IDI), which he chaired.

14. Tofiq Yagublu

An opposition activist who is currently on trial for bogus [fraud and forgery charges](#), is experiencing severe health issues in detention with his family, fearing for his life.

In November 2023, the authorities targeted media platforms such as Abzas Media, Toplum TV, Kanal 13 and Meydan TV, arresting reporters and other staff on spurious smuggling and economic-related charges.

In total, [since November 2023](#), authorities have detained at least 20 independent [journalists](#) and [media workers](#) and remanded them to pretrial detention on bogus criminal charges. Among those arrested are editor **Aziz Orujov**, investigative journalist **Hafiz Babali** and media expert **Alasgar Mammadli**, who have serious health problems, as well as media director **Ulvi Hasanli**, who received threats after he blew the whistle on the use of torture and ill-treatment in detention.

These cases are a few examples of the scores of human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists, opposition politicians, and activists who have been arrested and need urgent attention. Others have faced [travel bans](#) and intimidation.

The crackdown threatens to eradicate dissent and legitimate human rights work in the country, underscoring the need for decisive international intervention.



Political Prisoners in Georgia

Georgia holds several political prisoners and has enacted laws that restrict freedom of expression, assembly and association. In November 2024, the ruling Georgian Dream party suspended the EU accession talks until 2028, sparking nationwide peaceful protests. The government cracked down on the protesters and detained hundreds of individuals on administrative or criminal charges. Many detainees reported beatings and ill-treatment in police custody.

According to [the Human Rights Centre of Georgia](#), there are at least 55 political prisoners, of whom the following cases are particularly emblematic of the ongoing repression.

Key cases include the following, some of whom suffer from serious health issues:

1. Mzia Amaglobeli

Founder of the independent media outlet Batumelebi/Netgazeti, was insulted and threatened by Batumi's Chief of Police, Irakli Dgebuadze, after which she slapped him and was arrested on 12 January 2025. Her lawyers say Dgebuadze spat in her face and insulted her again during her arrest. Amaglobeli faces harsh criminal charges, which can result in seven years of imprisonment. Her case illustrates how both the police, the Prosecutor's Office, and the courts pursue opponents of the government while giving tacit approval to those who attack such opponents.

Mzia Amaglobeli has been on several weeks of hunger strikes in protest of her arrest.

2. Andro Chichinadze

A 29-year-old actor, was arrested on 5 December 2024. The Prosecutor's Office has charged him with participation in a violent group, a crime defined under Article 225 (2) of the Criminal Code of Georgia. The prosecutors claim that Chichinadze was present at a protest rally on 29 November 2024, near the Parliament, where he allegedly participated in the group's actions. They asserted that he threw a stick at law enforcement officers, thereby endangering the lives and health of law enforcement personnel and others.

Human rights groups, however, assess that Chichinadze has been charged for political purposes in response to non-violent actions. The legal proceedings against him were unfair, breaching standards established by the European Convention on Human Rights.

3. Zviad Tsetskhladze

A 19-year-old student and head of the peaceful youth group “Dapioni”, was arrested on 4 December 2024. He is accused of organising and leading group violence. He faces sentences of 6 to 9 years in prison.

4. Onise Tsetskhladze

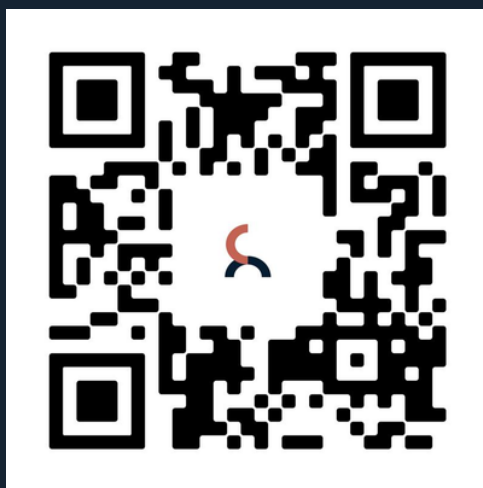
A 28-year-old comedian and standup, was arrested on 5 December 2024. The Prosecutor's Office has charged him with participation in a violent group. The prosecutors claim that Tskhadadze was present at a protest rally on 29 November 2024 near the Parliament, where he participated in the group's actions.

5. Guram Mirtskhulava

a 34-year-old translator and copywriter, was arrested on 5 December 2024. The Prosecutor's Office charged him with participation in a violent group. The prosecutors claim that Mirtskhulava was present at a protest rally on 1 December 2024, near the Parliament, where he participated in the group's actions.



Norwegian Helsinki Committee



www.nhc.no